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Culture and Freedom

Romanian Philosophical Studies, II

edited by
Marin Aiftinc

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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Introduction

George F. McLean

It had been thought in 1989 that freedom would emerge fully formed once the restraints of the highly centralized systems of Eastern Europe were removed.

Retrospectively it can now be seen that while the events of 1989 were a decisive milestone, the new life that was born was only inchoate. Freedom is not something that is given by a government or a structure, but must be the developing character of the life of the people. It is not a political but an existential reality.

What is more, values orient freedom inasmuch as they constitute a stable hierarchy according to which freedom is exercised. Along with the corresponding virtues they are said, therefore, to specify to what a person's life, over the long run, eventually will add up.

Following in this same direction it can be said that culture is the broad complex of the exercise of freedom by a broad populace as this effects all aspects of their field of responsibility. Seen not only synchronically but diachronically this comes to constitute the cultural tradition of a people.

The present volume focuses upon this relation of culture and freedom, beginning from the role of value in cultural development (Part I), moving to the transformation of culture from a period of individualization to one of globalization (Part II), and concluding on the meaning of this for spirituality and democracy (Part III).

In Part I "The Relation between Value and Cultural Development", Chapter I, "Culture, Liberty and Democracy" by Marin Aiftinc, reviews the development of the notion of culture from classical times, through a sociological, to an anthropological period as spirituality and axiology are integrated. This enables him to point out democratic modes of freedom can contribute to the progress of culture.

Chapter II, "Traits and Trends of Contemporary Culture" by Laura Pana, studies the way in which recent thought has opened a second level of reflection to the various sciences. In relation to cultural values this has made it possible to add new dimensions such as ecology on the material level, self-awareness on the political level and a broad spiritual awareness on the religious level.

Chapter III, "Value as Liberating" by Victor Ernest Masek, inverts the field to show not only how freedom is the source of culture, but how value is the context of freedom. This shifts the focus as well from outer freedom of action in relation to social constraints to its inner dimension and its roots in the human heart, thereby suggesting a more integral vision of our topic.

Part II, "Cultural Transition between Individualization and Globalization," takes up the issue of change in culture, for if it would be an error to think that the removal in 1989 of the intensive external constraints automatically constituted a realm of freedom it would be erroneous as well to think that the situation had returned to the status quo ante the Marxist period. The reality is that we live in time and that all that is human is historical. Yet this does not quite reach our issue because history contains not only the good but the bad as well, not only what cultivates the soul but what is destructive to it. Hence it is necessary to look not only at history but more precisely at culture and the changes it undergoes as the context for progress in freedom. This is the work of Part II.

Chapter IV, "The Crisis of an Axiological System in Transition" by Oltea Miscol, approaches this in terms of cultural capital understood as the broad capacity for a progressive transformation of culture. This is situated in the realm of values which themselves are subject to changes in basic style. This points to the need to look at culture in terms not of human artifacts or structures, but of an axiology capable of taking us deeply into the pattern of human values and commitments.

Chapter V, "Contemporary Culture between Individualization and Globalization" by Elena Gheorghe, is concerned especially with the possibilities of multiple cultures to live with one another, and hence with tolerance. This is a common concern today, but this chapter moves the issue far ahead. It does not simply suppose that there is one dominant culture in a country or, as in a period of globalization, but one culture in the world. On the contrary, Professor Gheoghe draws on the potentialities of the renewed attention to the significance of culture to suggest that each distinctive culture constitutes a center for the coordination of life. In this light a tolerance of multiple cultures means a recognition that the future exercise of human freedom can be not monotone, but poli-centric. That is, each culture constitutes a center of coordination for the exercise of freedom, and each center or cluster is in open interchange with others. In this sense, tolerance becomes a matter of positive interaction between the creative freedoms of the many peoples of the earth interacting within and between the major civilizations of the world. The vision is uncannily similar to the open rather than centralized architecture of the world wide web and is potentially transformative of the whole field of culture and freedom.

Part III, "Democracy and Culture: Material and Spiritual," applies the above insight to the challenge of building a democratic culture. This must have a material base, but it must soar with the human spirit if freedom is to be truly democratic.

To begin this project Chapter VI, "The meaning of Civilization in the Thought of Mihai Eminescu" by Alexandru Husar, turns not to a philosophical, but to a poet and journalist. In both ways, perhaps especially as journalist, he was able to articulate a vision of life which contributed richly to the self-understanding of the Romanian people in the first half of the 20th century. In particular, by emphasizing repeatedly the importance of work as the foundation of economic sufficiency and of the economic for cultural progress, he enriched the strongly idealist and romantic culture of Romania with a strong material foundation. Patently this was pushed to the extreme in the forty years which followed; this demonstrated the essential importance of the spiritual dimension of humanity, to which the following two chapters turn.

Chapter VII, "Socrates and the European Spirit" by Sorin Vieru, takes up this onward progression to the spirit by returning, paradoxically, to Socrates or perhaps better to Socratism. In one of the most beautiful works of our times, Sorin Vieru shows how Socrates liberated religion from the anthropomorphic gods of his time so that it could gain its truly transcendental position. From there it enables us truly to live rather than merely to subsist in the world.

Chapter VIII, "Democracy and Spirituality" by Dumitru Popescu, carries this argument a step further by adding the Biblical scriptures to Socrates. Here the breadth of Romanian culture unfolds in the context of European culture and in turn in the universal moral field of the person of Christ and of Christianity as a truly world religion.

Culture and Freedom now are written in capital letters. They are not merely quaint handicrafts, or closely bargained patterns of economic or political justice. Instead they are the exercise of freedom as our life project, guided by a distinctive harmony of values, and sought in deep bonds of that love which is crowned by eternal life. This completes our theme of "Culture and Freedom" for in this light culture is life in its deepest commitments, while freedom is both now and forever.

Chapter I

Culture, Freedom and Democracy

Marin Aiftinc

The human condition is expressed completely in culture. From prehistory, to the ancient Greeks who recognized the dignity of humans placing them close to the gods, to modern times when reason became the exclusive measure of man and the world, humans have created their own reality, different from their natural condition. This reality, considered by some to be "artificial", is culture, which represents conscious life itself. Ernst Cassirer has noted that man cannot live his life without expressing it;¹ culture is made up of the forms of these expressions. We can infer that, similar to life, culture has a certain dynamism or inside energy which is converted into the achievement of values in the form of cultural assets. This is a process in which destiny is the promethean component identified with creation. As Goethe showed at the end of "Faust", creation sublimates the sense of life and is its supreme value.

Under the Faustian sign, contemporary culture — driven by the ambition "to make the world similar to man and to change all things according to his concepts"² — is indestructibly linked to freedom and democracy. Culture has never had a more favorable evolutionary background than under freedom and democracy. This is the working hypothesis guiding this chapter. It gives rise to some questions: what connection is there between culture, freedom and democracy, on the one hand, and the present globalization, on the other? Will cultural identity be stifled by the storm of consumerism, information and entertainment? Will our famous rationalism any longer be able to withstand the threats from human destiny? Will interior culture be abandoned in the presence of exteriority? These questions return insistently in the conscience of the individual in this historical time labeled post-modern, post-industrial or post-communist. This and other similar words denote the difficulty in grasping properly the content of the rapid social changes we are experiencing. However, there is a consensus of many thinkers and scientist: ideas, values, norms, life styles, ideologies, indeed the whole of human existence, are deeply troubled. The overthrow of all values, as noted by Nietzsche, did not diminish the power of culture, on the contrary, its power and intensity has increased. In essence, the crisis of culture, taken as a set back of values but not their destruction, has deepened.

Conceptual Approaches

All this requires an answer to the question: what is culture? In view of our aim, we shall not present a history of the concept of culture, nor even an exhaustive analysis of the definitions given to it in the evolution of philosophical thought. Our intention here is to specify the meaning we give this concept.

The concept of culture remains the object of much confusion concerning its content, as well as the manner in which it has been defined. This is somehow explainable as the concept designates a polymorphous reality, extremely complex and rich in meanings and significance. According to those presented above, the remark of the Romanian thinker, Vasile B ncil , is helpful: "Culture is something unique. It supposes that the individual is placed more or less consciously, but at any rate actively, at the essence of things."³ For Heidegger, grasping the essence of things is to make present what is hidden, but characteristic, of them. This is a difficult effort, often destined to

failure, but always necessary. We find here one of the most plausible explanations of the many concepts and definitions given to culture,⁴ i.e., the attempt to understand the human essence.

Polymorphous and dynamic on the whole, culture is, at bottom, a series of distinct forms, which represent the direct image of some human activities having their own ends. That is why, many times when we deal with culture, we take into account only one of its forms, or, more precisely, only one of its component fields, the part and not the whole. When approaching and defining culture, some very broad directions can be taken, each with a different meaning and definitions.

Humanistic. One direction with a long and wide history conceives culture in an intellectual and humanistic sense. In Latin classicism, the concept of culture designates the spirit (soul) as a shaping process compared to the cultivation of land. As uncultivated fields are different from the fertile ones, it is the same for men: they are different not by their nature, which is common, but by their cultural level. This is the sense Cicero took into consideration when he stated: "Cultura animi philosophia est". The analogy between *cultura animi* and *cultura agrorum* reflects the *Paideia* or educational outlook of the late Hellenistical period in Greece, where culture was taught in the schools of philosophy. According to this outlook, culture means *eruditio et institutio in bonas artes*, that is erudition and initiation in the good and useful arts or the creation and cultivation of the most noble virtues of the soul (*areté*), which are finalized in *eurhythmia*, the upper harmony of the human personality.⁵ As *Paideia* is translated by *humanitas*, the interaction between late Hellenism and classical Latinity in Rome first gave birth to humanism as a high expression of culture.

Afterwards, this concept extended its borders, culture gaining such new meanings as the capacity of expression, and the opening of the spirit to a wide range of feelings and knowledge, to all the arts and metaphysics. Hence, culture is associated with an ideal personality, equivalent to the realization of the maximum of humanity. From this point of view, the concept of culture has a humanistic content and quality. This is the form in which it has been transmitted over time, though at present this has been reduced to its functional character and level.

Anthropological. In the definition of culture, another significant direction appeared during the modern period through anthropology and ethnology. Studying the primitive communities, researchers used the word "culture" in order to characterize the traditions of various ethnic groups, in contrast to "civilization" as designating the more advanced societies. In this way, the two terms became victims of confusion. The British anthropologist, Eduard B. Tylor, formulated an extensive definition for culture, which gained prestige. In a work in 1871, he considered "culture or civilization as a complex ensemble including knowledge, faith, art, law, morals, traditions and any other capacities and customs that man assimilated as a member of the society."⁶ The author concludes that, in fact, culture consists in those nonbiological works, specific to man, and transmitted by nongenetic means. This conception is based on the idea that culture implies all the life manifestations of a people. This shaped the current thinking of anthropologists who limit themselves to concrete empirical research, without transferring the results to the level of theoretical discourse.

Tylor's theory left us without any answer to a series of questions regarding the nature and essence of culture. This resulted in the appearance, within the same field of anthropology, of other conceptual definitions enlarging the scale of the meanings of the term culture. Some asserted that culture consisted in ideas, neglecting the material component; others, on the contrary, asserted that

culture consisted in behavior (Ralph Linton), or that it was purely and simply an abstraction; some saw culture as a psychic mechanism (Geza Roheim), etc. Analysis of these definitions reveal two ways of interpreting culture: one individualizing and the other generalizing.⁷ The second is typically that of Bronislaw Malinowski and close to the presently accepted concept of culture. Postulating that the cultural answer corresponds to man's biological needs, Malinowski considers culture to be a totality characterized by a creative dynamism. This ensemble is made up of consumption assets and tools, legislative rules of various social groups, ideas and arts, faiths and customs.⁸ Conceived in this way, primitive and developed cultures offer a vast material apparatus, human and spiritual, enabling man to answer to the challenges of the world in which he lives.

Anthropology, especially the more modern, contributed to a great extent to deepening and refining the concept of culture, to a more correct comprehension of the operation of the complex mechanisms that man adds to nature. However, one cannot overlook the reductive trend of anthropological definitions, manifest in the melting of the individual into social groups, by privileging what is peculiar to group cultures and ignoring what is general and expressed by culture as a whole, that is, neglecting the inside and its metaphysical features in favor of the outside.

Sociological. The third direction mentioned above is sociological and now in fashion. It hopes to clear up and describe the dynamics of the cultural process. The pluralism, which undermines the unitary conception of culture, may be noticed here. Without insisting upon definitions and formulated theories, as this would exceed our theme, we must mention some significant views. E. Durkheim, one of the most representative sociologists, when elaborating the concept of "social solidarity" considered culture as a phenomenon of collective conscience, in which the normative aspects and the common feelings of a social group were sublimated. As warranted by the collective conscience, culture represents an action model and value system able to correct individual forms of action.

In a very different view Pitirim Sorokin imagines culture according to an integralist conception about social and cultural systems. In his opinion, the concept of a social and cultural system expresses society as the ensemble of cultural agents and culture as an ensemble of meanings and supports. Hence, culture seems to be outside society and not integrated to it.

The recent sociological approaches extend more and more the notion of culture, in an holistic sense. Some identify culture with a style or a way of life, so that the idea of culture, as an expression of high education and erudition, is replaced a living culture: "*La culture savante laisse place a la culture vivante.*"⁹ According to this idea, the sociological definition includes in the concept of culture all forms of social manifestation. Such a view can be found in an UNESCO document, where it is stated: "Culture may be considered today as an ensemble of distinct features, spiritual and material, intellectual and affective, which characterize a society or a social group. Besides arts and literature, it comprises also ways of life, the fundamental rights to human existence, systems of values, traditions and faiths."¹⁰ This is a descriptive and partial definition, trying to grasp the spiritual and material elements which are blended in the expressions of culture, which finally constitute the identity of a certain human community. As in other similar cases, the factors characterizing the social group are emphasized, while the individual as the main producer of culture is neglected.

We find here a positivist spirit, which is not bad as long as it does not assume an exclusivist tendency. Definitions of this type converge in their attempt to compromise, without hierarchy, the shallow components of a culture. This results in melting the sense of 'cultivated' into that of 'cultural', the qualitative feature being absorbed by the quantitative one.

A Necessary Reconstruction

The three directions mentioned above represent the main axes of reflection on the concept of culture. Besides the valuable clarification they bring to the specific nature of culture, they bring out some important points. First, under the pressure of the changes produced by the evolution of the theoretical sciences and of technology the concept of culture has greatly expanded during the last decades. This phenomenon took place on the horizontal plane reflecting especially the functional elements of culture, to the detriment of its depth whence springs the ontological explanation of culture as a unique human reality. On the other hand, the horizontal and partial approaches led to a real pulverization of the notion of culture,¹¹ making extremely difficult, if not impossible, a reconstruction of its essence. As a matter of fact, culture is not a simple agglomeration of individual, detachable facts, but is revealed to us only by comprehending these facts as an organic, unitary whole — which does not exclude dynamic tensions between the component parts. Ignoring this truth explains to a certain extent why the multitude of definitions did not succeed in exhausting the present configuration of the concept of culture, but on the contrary contributed to its dissolution. Certainly, it would be interesting to analyze the causes which led to the dispersion of this concept of the humanistic essence of culture into a formless nebula. This level of discourse would seem to reflect a loosening of man's inner links with the cosmic dimension of his existence. That is reflected in the remark of Vasile B ncil : according: "Man's metaphysical adherence (or basis) which provides the essence of culture disappeared or was affected with anemia, which brought us to the crisis of culture."¹²

If we take into consideration Hegel's statement, according to which "truth is always the whole," then the above critical remarks lead obviously to the need to reconstruct the concept of culture, based on a more adequate explanation of the complex reality that it designates. Two fundamental theses offer a sufficiently wide and solid basis for the theoretical reconstruction proposed. The first refers to the fact that man is a functional unity between spirit and matter. None of the two components may be subject to extrapolation without affecting the essence of the human condition. The spirit is, at the same time, immanent and transcendent to the matter, to the concrete. The spirit refines the rough matter, the biological side of man, and connects it to the metaphysical sphere, to the absolute. Matter, in its turn, supports and sharpens the spirit or intellect whose energies are consumed in a permanent thirst for knowledge and an excess of fantasy materialized in creation of all types.

The second thesis takes into consideration the fact that man, endowed with such qualities, does not automatically integrate himself with the natural condition,¹³ as do animals; he looks for and gives answer to the challenges of nature to which he adapts himself and above which he rises as well. The content of these efforts on which human life itself concentrates represents the unique and complex reality of culture

According to this outlook, culture means more than Cassirer's understanding of it, no matter how correct this outstanding thinker is when he conceives culture as a whole including language, myth, religion, art, science, history. These constitute steps in "man's progressive self-liberation"¹⁴ and define and determine the human ambit. Under the organic unity of the creative process, despite the oppositions which separate them, these activities are harmonized on a universal level and guided by a common aim. In such an integrative outlook, culture is a "remarkable work," the distinctive token of man.¹⁵

With a broader significance than that given by Heidegger, the notion of work conceived by Cassirer represents the inner manifestations of the spirit or subjectivity, that Faustian "inner

boundlessness" belonging directly to the sphere of culture. Moreover, they are of its essence; they precede and condition the work which, later on, becomes impersonal, autonomous, and purely objective. Both the subjective side, namely, the spiritual content, and the objective side, namely the exteriorization and embodiment of this content in constituting the human work in its broadest sense, are convergent with what man adds to nature. Hence, absolutely nothing which makes up the content of subjectivity — that cosmos of ideas and feelings which constitute the cultural level and depth of personality — should be neglected when forming the concept of culture: the metaphysical, moral and religious experiences; the choice of purposes and ideals which guide our being, maintain intellectual powers, and give unity to the spirit by determining its reference to reality; and the attitude towards life, exteriorized in action and in creativity of any type, and finalized in work. Therefore, in the Cassirian sense, work is nothing other than the objectification of values under the influence of conscience, or, in Heidegger's words "truth entering into play"¹⁶ (*das-in-Werk-Setzen*). This constitutes an objective reality suffused by spiritual powers. The subjective and the objective meld within the ontological unity of the "artificial" reality we call culture. In other words, the human soul, guided by reason, gives birth to the values, meanings and significances, out of which the tissue of the culture is woven.

The views presented here are convergent with Rikert's thesis according to which culture is an axiological notion,¹⁷ as the cultural reality and the interpretation of its meaning involve values. More precisely, culture represents "the essence of the assets we appreciate for their value".¹⁸ Hence, the concept of culture is more adequately defined in an axiological perspective, which alone is able to avoid the unilateral interpretations above. Therefore, we may state that culture is the ensemble of values and assets achieved by man during the process of his evolution to humanity. We say "values and assets" because not all values become assets,¹⁹ but all assets represent unions of things and values or valorized things. Also, as the achievement of values and assets in conjunction with the idea of humanity is a process, the definition grasps the cumulative character of culture. It states also the ideal which guides it, namely, humanity as the harmonious development of all man's positive features, that is, the upper harmony of personality. Hence, the double hypostasis of man is obvious as both subject and object of culture.

The definition we propose is comprehensive and sufficiently synthetic to comprise the essence of the complex reality named culture as man's way of being in the world. In a dialectical manner, it joins the subjective and objective, the sensed and intelligible, the spiritual and material, creation and action, all as factors which coexist with the same finality. In this way values are foundational; in the sphere of consciousness they are the quintessence of human spirituality. As aims and ideals they represent the ideal component of culture. Objectified in assets or value achievements, they make up the real, objective part of culture.

According to this axiological perspective, the concept of culture corresponds to the contemporary theoretical exigences which emphasize its holist character, abandoning any type of unilateral view. Its sphere comprises man and his philosophical, creative and life expressions, thoroughly integrated within society and nature.

The use of value as a reference point in structuring the definition of culture plays a significant role in overcoming the evident opposition between "culture" and "civilization," still present in various types of discourse. The distinction was proposed by Kant and has penetrated common speech. Kant saw a difference between authentic "culture" and civilization. The former means to accomplish some purpose intrinsic to the moral will, aiming at the development of some practical abilities, as well as at the discipline or liberation of the will from the constraints of desires. "Civilization", in contrast, designates a certain happiness (*Glückseligkeit*) to which the individual

can arrive by his dexterity in accomplishing some purposes specific to nature and not to man. The supporters of this opposition include philosophers, historians, men of letters and "the aesthetes who consider that it is more important to write a novel than to build an airplane motor."²⁰ They understand culture in a restrictive sense, as profound interiority, with strong feelings and the stimulation of the spiritual powers specific to the individual and/or social group. On the contrary, for them civilization means exteriority and superficiality; it designates the conditions and the means required for self-preservation and security. Briefly, culture means spiritual depth and creativity, while civilization would be reduced to the utilitarian and instrumental. The first promotes man's essence, maintaining him as human; the second leads to the person's reification and satanization, to the degradation of culture and even to its death. In contrast, the materialist point of view, lacking in depth and seeing the utilitarian as the exclusive ideal for culture, appeared as a reaction. Only what is "useful" to mankind would belong to culture; all the rest is luxury, superstition or barbarism.

The opposition between the notions of culture and civilization appearing in such theoretical debates neglect the strong correlation that exists between them. There is no culture in the absence of conditions proper to maintaining and defending life, without a minimum of comfort. Also, there is no civilization without a spiritual content. As a matter of fact, civilization is integrated into culture and serves it, being its pragmatic component. In other words, civilization is culture *in actu*, integrated in a coherent system of thinking and of life.

Engaging the debate on an axiological level, an outstanding Romanian philosopher, Tudor Vianu, states that "civilization is nothing other than a culture defined by its sphere, a partial social culture, from the point of view of a single value,"²¹ namely the technical and economic. Leaving aside the fact this considers the sphere of the notion of civilization in a limited way, which entails another debate, the point in the present context is to consider culture under the sign of the value, which opens another theoretical horizon. If we consider culture in the axiological perspective, then the trenchant dichotomy culture-civilization, can be transcended more easily. As mentioned, culture is the expression of all values achieved by man. The moral, theoretical, aesthetic, religious values, which represent our life aims, as well as the vital, economic, political and juridical values, which constitutes means for gaining the aims and the ideals that guide man's existence towards humanity, all of these are included in this wide spectrum. We cannot eliminate or ignore the means, which together correspond to civilization, for preserving and defending the spiritual aims and ideals which make up the profound content of culture. Here, the question has a different form: the relation between aims and means, that is, between culture and civilization. Normally, this relation must keep the ascendancy of the moral, theoretical, aesthetic and religious values over utilitarian ones, without despising the latter, in order to maintain the equilibrium of the human being and his evolution towards the self-transcendence, in accord with the cultural ideal. The destruction of this relation and the prevalence of the utilitarian or instrumental explains the current cultural crisis, which foreshadow another type of barbarism. Is there any solution for the contemporary crisis of culture? If so, in what does it consist?

The Relation between Culture, Freedom and Democracy

Uniting the concepts of culture, freedom and democracy is not at all forced. A deep examination enables us to see their unity, the complex relation existing between them, though sometimes manifesting contradictory accents. Culture implies, in a direct way, freedom and democracy, as conditions of its existence and, at the same time, as aims to be achieved. If we

understand culture as an "empire of values", its existence and objectivation are conditioned by the presence of freedom and democracy. Certainly this conditioning is not absolute; history offers sufficient examples proving that under some authoritarian, and even totalitarian political regimes, culture continued to develop. How this is so is a significant question. On the other hand, freedom and democracy are universal values guiding cultural forces, which benefit as a result. Let us examine succinctly the connections between these concepts.

It is obvious that freedom and culture form an inseparable couple, which may be synthesized in the following remark: "culture is an act of promoting human freedom."²² As a rational being and a cultural agent, man is free in his actions. In the Kantian sense, freedom is nothing but a characteristic of the will, which, being autonomous, cannot be determined by anything other than the law it itself prescribes. Suppressing instincts, reason founds the freedom of the will and proclaims man a member of a "kingdom of aims". Such a "kingdom" is a world of culture. Not being determined by mechanical causes, which act only in nature, culture is founded on aims and ideals; these, in turn, produce impulses constituting motives for the active will under the sign of freedom. Man's potential as a being which creates culture lies hidden behind his freedom. It reveals itself when he acts with free will, autonomously underscoring his dignity.²³

According to Hegel,²⁴ liberty is a form of reason, so that the spirit becomes free in as much as it knows. Therefore, if we recognize ourselves as free persons, we really become free. Hence to know ourselves as free persons we must be conscious of our freedom, which is, indisputably, an act of culture. This represents only one condition, though the fundamental one, for being free. But it is not sufficient, as freedom does not offer itself to everyone, neither to a person nor to a collectivity. Since the exercise of freedom has to cope with the obstacles put frequently by nature and particularly by society, freedom must be continuously conquered, to paraphrase Goethe. It is a value which sheds light on the way and continually draws on the power of the subject.

Moreover, the above-mentioned Hegelian idea forces us to differentiate, with the necessary nuances, between the inner freedom of the ego or subject and the outer objectified freedom, which is an aim of the will. This is a very important distinction from the cultural viewpoint. In the first case, theoretical reason, autonomous and active in its manifestations, sees freedom as limited only by its own determinations. The richness of our interiority is bounded only by the spirit, energies and power of action: its freedom is potentially infinite. The vast empire of values opens out before the spirit to be developed, conquered and integrated in its manifestations. Knowledge and creation are manifestations of the spirit at the interior level and represent the essential modalities of cultural expressions. The content of theoretical reason makes up the ideal world of the spirit as a first indication of the interior cultural level.

In the second case, outer freedom is correlated to the spirit moving from within to outside, that is, exiting from one's own self, and the gradual organization of the correlation with the whole of reality, cosmic and metaphysical,²⁵ out of which the cultural substance is formed. At this level, outer freedom is manifested by the attitude towards life, creativity, behavior and action. It is, in essence, practical reason in action; it is the expression of the content of subjectivity, it "is objectively where the subject reunites his own self."²⁶ In the Kantian perspective, this is reason setting aims for itself. This is the substance of the will acting freely for its objectivation as culture. Freedom is man's proper way of being in the world according to the laws of reason, of which action determines the affective presence. In the field of outer freedom, the aims set by reason, which constitute the motivations of the free will to act, represent the values and ideals out of which is formed the huge dowry of culture. To open one's soul and integrate into one's life some of these values, based on a free option, is not to be intolerant or contemptuous of others. No individual or

collectivity may avail itself of its own freedom by ignoring or denying, due to a misunderstanding or an alleged superiority, another individual or collectivity the right to other values. If such an attitude is adopted, it does not obtain greater freedom; on the contrary, it entails a limitation of one's own freedom, isolation in a restricted and poor cultural environment hostile to the ideal of humanity in man, with prejudice to the integral and universal character of culture itself. Authentic freedom supposes an option, a choice, but after making the choice, we have to keep ourselves open to the whole arch of cultural values under which we can realize ourselves as persons. Thus, freedom may be understood as a constant effort, at times with dramatic steps, meant to lead to self-transcendence and to a grasp of the whole cultural horizon. Although such an existence is difficult to attain, culture remains a fundamental duty of life. It represents the most profound motivation of the free will, oriented towards an ideal of human perfection.

The above anticipate the idea that outer freedom is not infinite or absolute. Although one of the sources of the progress of culture and civilization, as of prosperity in general, is the possibility of a free development of individuals and collectivities, no one is free to do what he wants when living in society. This truth was taken into consideration by John Stuart Mill when he stated that "The individual's freedom must be thus well-defined; man is not allowed to prejudice others."²⁷ Therefore, outer freedom is determined by traditions, customs, economy, justice, morals and aesthetics, consequently, by a value system of rules, norms and laws, which regulate each one's behavior and action in order to keep one within the limits of the exigences necessary for preserving one's humanity and avoiding barbarism and animality. The knowledge and observation of this system of norms provides for more freedom and stimulates, at the same time, individual and social progress. As freedom implies knowledge, valuation and choice, it stands in direct correlation with responsibility. In everything we undertake, free will must be supervised by responsibility, in order to eliminate the arbitrary. The important part of this responsibility becomes manifest when we ask ourselves: out of the system of values giving consistency to culture, which ones shall we choose for making them the sense of our life? The answer is based, of course, on free choice. But this implies a great responsibility, because we have to decide which values we choose for guiding our being: those which exalt and satisfy the biological side of our person, placing us in a ridiculous and ephemeral world, or those which offer depth to our personality and elevate it to the maximum of humanity.

As already stated, this raises the question of the domination of contemporary culture by consumption, amusement, information, and mass media, that serve the same gods: power and profit. Evidence warns us that people are losing their sense of values, abandoning themselves to all kinds of idiosyncracies, and to an aberrant pragmatism. Of course, these elements are not to be despised, but we must not forget that their prevalence is responsible for deepening the contemporary culture crisis. The solution consists in a re-equilibration of the system of values of the world in which we live. Utilitarian values, which serve to maintain life and to put in operation the social system, must be considered only as means for achieving the spiritual values, such as Good, Justice, Truth, Beauty, Sacredness, etc., which are able to elevate the individual and society toward the human ideal. The rediscovering of spiritual values may not be left to a spontaneous conscience; it requires serious and constant education in order to assure access to them and to grasp their significance. Solely on this basis can spiritual values be included in an individual's life as aims and ideals of human existence, and can society again find the direction it has lost.

If culture is a direct expression of freedom, as we have already stated, freedom has various forms of objectivation which entail a number of very complex philosophical problems. A.J. Milne identified a scale of forms of human freedom placing them in an ascending order: negative

freedom, personal freedom, moral freedom, rational freedom and social freedom.²⁸ The last is the freedom of a free society and is situated at the top of the scale because human life is necessarily social, and a society which is free for all its members can turn to good account their capacity of self-determination.²⁹ Each form of freedom included in the above-mentioned scale, involves, the others.

Social freedom is objectified in a free society, marked by self-determination, with its own way of life which ensures its cultural identity. With these characteristics, a free society offers all its members the chance to realize their potentialities. The virtues of a free society are associated with democracy as the modality of active participation of the person as a vigorous citizen in the destiny of the community to which he or she belongs. We do not refer here to theoretical aspects dealing with the types of democracy, participation in community affairs, disputable democratic "models", or the position that there is no perfect democracy.³⁰ The need for democracy is significant for culture; at present this fact manifests itself strongly as a rejection of dictatorship and totalitarianism. The decisive free option for democracy is a result of the culture's influence on individual and community, and their need to compare their ideas and opinions in an unhindered manner in order to be freely creative in the realization of their individual and national identities.

In the context of these theoretical developments, it must be noted that individual and social freedom and democracy are confronted by a globalization which overflows on all fields of social life. This leads to the threat and even annihilation of the cultural values belonging to traditions, as well as to the domination of uniformity and apathy everywhere, the diminution of creative powers, the manipulation of consciences, disregard for civic and national liberties, and the deterioration of the moral and spiritual values which maintain persons in the infinite horizon of humanity. The appearance of the global culture of a "McWorld culture", as Benjamin R. Barber³¹ calls it, is strongly connected to the above-mentioned phenomena. Disquieting in its essence, global culture is heterogenous, being made up of such kitsch elements as slogans, advertisements, clips, stars, hits, trademarks, names of firms, cellular telephones, internet, holiday books, theme parks, etc. All of these form a global style of life, which becomes almost irresistible. This style of life is stained with violence, corruption, immorality, violation of individual and national liberties, fundamentalism, and inter-ethnic conflict. Obsessive appearances by political leaders pretend to defend the common good and right to democracy, while inducing fear in the individual's conscience and reducing man to silence. If the globalizing of the markets may have some justification, which is doubtful — globalization of culture is possible only by sacrificing it. The present globalizing tendencies endanger seriously the creative powers, specificity and identity of individuals and national communities. These, however, are the only ones able to participate in, and maintain, the required dialogue of cultures and to supply a universal culture with the values which are not the elements of global culture as described above. Culture is unique in its universality, but particularized by creation according to the place and the time it is conceived and developed.

Also, the globalizing of a completely unregulated market in its post-industrial and post-modern forms, makes the so-called "invisible hand" seriously threatening to individual and common liberties, real democracy and civil society. For it transforms them into servants of global corporatism and materialist consumerism. Democracy and civil society cannot be globalized, but they can develop only in forms able to turn to good account the inexhaustible creative resources of the free human being by engaging his characteristic ontological and historical features.

Conclusion

We conclude that culture may be understood correctly only if one takes into account the values it represents, in a broad comprehensive outlook of the ensemble of the values and assets created by man during his long evolution. This perspective on culture may lead to surpassing the trenchant dichotomy between culture and civilization maintained by some theoreticians. The preponderance acquired by utilitarian values in social life and the neglect of spiritual values has determined and deepened the crisis of contemporary culture. The solution consists in the re-equilibration of the value system, giving priority to spiritual values, without despising utilitarian values. This alone will enable man to develop within the infinite space of humanity.

The long historical evolution of culture has been stimulated by freedom and democracy. These were and remain the factors which enable cultural progress and urge man creatively to surpass himself. The present phenomenon of globalizing culture and democracy through the laws of the market, endangers individual and social freedom, the creative potential of national cultures, the dialogue between them and their stimulating contribution to universal culture. Indeed, democracy itself and civil society also are jeopardized. We cross the threshold of the millennium under these threats. Humanity can be saved if we restore spiritual values to their proper place in such a way as to preserve and enrich the sense of life.

Notes

1. Ernst Cassirer, *Eseu despre om. O introducere in filosofia culturii umane* (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 1994), p. 309.
2. Tudor Vianu, *Filosofia culturii, Opere 8* (Bucuresti: Minerva, 1979), p. 333.
3. Vasile B ncil , "Sensul culturii," in *Filosofia varstelor* (Bucuresti: Anastasia, 1997), p. 56.
4. Referring to this question, see: A.L. Kroeber and C. Kluckohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (New York: Vintage Books, 1952); Traian Herseni, *Literatura si civilizatie. Incercare de antropologie literara* (Bucuresti: Univers, 1976), pp. 22-41.
5. Cf. George Uscatescu, *Ontologia culturii*, Vol. 1 (Bucuresti, Stiintifica si Enciclopedica, 1987), p. 35.
6. Edward Burnett Taylor, *The Origins of Culture*, Vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1958), p. 1.
7. Leslie A. White, *The Concept of Culture* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Burges Publishing Company, 1974).
8. Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960).
9. Pierre-Henri Chalvidan, *Pour recreer une culture. Quelques propositions de reflection et d'action* (Paris: UNESCO, 1989).
10. *Guide Pratique de la Décennie Mondiale du Developpement Culturel* (Paris: UNESCO, 1987), p. 60.
11. Pierre-Henri Chalvidan, *Op. cit.*, p. 14.
12. Vasile B ncil , *Op. cit.*, p. 78.
13. Cf. Georg Simmel, *Philosophische Kultur, Gesammelte Essays* (Postdam: Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag), p. 236.
14. Ernest Cassirer, *Op. cit.*, p. 314.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
16. Martin Heidegger, *Originea operei de art* (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 1995), p. 63.
17. H. Rickert, *Grundprobleme der Philosophie* (Tübingen, 1936), p. 154.

18. George Uscatescu, *Kant als Philosoph der modernen Kultur* (1924).
19. We understand by assets the things comprehended by our conscience from the point of view of a value or outside a value, that is, things that are valued. The existence of the assets supposes the antecedent values. The assets represent a wide category, beginning with those which satisfy the vital functions of the organism, up to the highest spiritual assets such as good will, love and friendship. For an extended treatment of this question, see: Tudor Vianu, *Introducere în teoria valorilor*, *Opere* 8 (Bucuresti: Minerva, 1979), pp. 64-65; Nicolai Hartmann, *Estetica* (Bucuresti: Univers, 1974), pp. 367-373.
20. Oswald Spengler, *Omni si filosofia vietii* (Aion: Oradea, 1996), p. 11.
21. Tudor Vianu, *Op. cit.*, p. 196.
22. *Ibid.*, *Sociologia culturii*, *Opere* 8, p. 351.
23. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critica ratiunii practice* (Bucuresti: Stiintifica, 1972), pp. 44-78.
24. Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Filosofia spiritului* (Bucuresti: Editura Academiei Romane, 1966), pp. 212-312. See especially pp. 308-309.
25. Cf. Vasile Bncil , *Op. cit.*, p. 58.
26. G.W.F. Hegel, *Op. cit.*, p. 82.
27. John Stuart Mill, *Despre libertate* (Bucuresti: Eminescu, 1996), p. 110.
28. A.J. Milne, *Freedom and Rights* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd; New York: Humanities Press Inc., 1968), p. 298.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 299.
30. Cf. Georges Labica, "Reflecii asupra unor probleme actuale ale democratiei," in *Democratia azi* (Bucuresti: Noua Alternativa, 1995), pp. 21-33.
31. Cf. Benjamin R. Barber, "Cultura globala a lui McWorld," *Lettre internationale*, ed. rom., 24 (1997-1998), pp. 16-20.

Chapter II

Traits and Trends of Contemporary Culture

Laura Pana

Changes Between and Within Fields of Culture

Each epoch has a specific hierarchy of values; in our epoch, the prevailing values are probably technical efficiency, scientific verisimilitude, aesthetic originality and political involvement. At the same time, the content of traditional values changes. For instance, today as science develops more rapidly than ever, scientists often prefer to choose veridical rather than sure knowledge. At least such knowledge is not rejected unless it can be directly refuted through the results of tests.

There are new relations among the various fields of culture. There have always been relations between philosophy and science, religion and art, philosophy and politics, science and art, etc. Nowadays, some of these relations remain valid, while others decrease, and new relations appear or the old ones change. For instance, in the relation between science and technique, what is new today is that both terms of the relation are in tremendous transformation and by their fusion (science becoming technical, and the technique becoming scientific), there is born as a new cultural body, the so-called technoscience.¹

In the history of culture there have always been not only symbioses, but also oppositions. Now there are new tensions among the various fields, reflecting the fact that the development of specific aspects of scientific and humanistic culture have been poorly assimilated. The extent of the employment of the information sciences and technologies in public and private life, besides having great positive effects, marginalizes other aspects of culture reducing them to the function of diversions.

Moreover, there are several changes in the internal structure of some cultural fields. If we consider not only culture as a whole but also any of its fields as a determined ensemble of material and spiritual values, if we see not only the results but also the process of creating values, then each of these fields will include activities, relations, institutions, forms of awareness or knowledge, and ways of creating specific values. In other words, from this point of view, cultural fields are ensembles of activities (material and spiritual, organizational and individual), creating specific values (scientific, artistic, technical, political, religious and philosophical).

Today most changes are within science itself at the levels of technostructure (methods, techniques, procedures) and theoretical structure at the level of meta-theory or of science about science. There are changes also in the sphere of scientific consciousness within the scientific community and in the field of science policy. In the field of artistic culture, there is development of technological art. Within religious culture the changes relate not so much to religious dogma and conscience, but mainly to the organization of religious life.

Overall, the fields of culture, through internal tendencies typical to each, are building a relatively new identity for themselves. Philosophical culture shares in such trends.

Tendencies in Philosophical Culture

Certain tendencies peculiar to philosophical culture are general, due to their amplitude and complexity, their relevance to any cultural space, their development over long periods and their

influence upon the whole referential system. Other tendencies are recent, occurring only at one of the complex levels of philosophical culture; these are based on its previous and universal evolution.

One of the tendencies in philosophical culture is the union of various classical philosophical fields, the combination, within new fields of specific parts of these classical chapters, or even the formation of a symbiosis between philosophical and scientific disciplines. These processes lead to theoretical concerns that can be considered particular fields of philosophical thinking, as for instance the philosophy of culture, praxiology or anthropology.

Another more major and complex tendency is the formation of special and continuously specialized fields of philosophy. These result from either: (1) massive development of philosophical fields when several of their components: a) changed into meta-theories or b) became scientific subjects, or (2) hypertrophy and the development of a relatively unitary complex of some of the general theories of philosophy.

The result of these processes within a field of philosophical thinking and in other fields of knowledge is the creation of a meta-theoretical level of cognitive constructivism.

Here we shall take two steps, namely, reduction and differentiation. First, all philosophies of special scientific subjects (such as the philosophies of quantum or relativity physics, or cell or molecular genetics) can be reduced to aspects of meta-theories or even to meta-theories of the basic discipline to which they belong (physics, biology, etc.). Second, these meta-theories, even if they are called philosophies of the original fields because created in many cases by outstanding figures in that discipline, are a meta-theoretical level not of philosophy but scientific construction.

In many fields, knowledge has reached the meta-theoretical level through various successive or simultaneous processes with various means, obviously with different results and meanings and, therefore at different levels.

The philosophical level of meta-theory was created not only by the development and stratification of one of its general theories, namely that of knowledge, nor only by raising a scientific ideas to a philosophical level, but through a greater and even more complex process. The contemporary process of the formation of meta-theoretical cognitive levels should not be assimilated to the more simple processes from previous times, when relations among the cultural fields of philosophy and science were quite different and meta-theory was itself philosophical theory.

We distinguish between the meta-theoretical concerns of a scientific type and general philosophical reflection.² Although it is difficult to make a difference between these meta-theoretical concerns, we must not confuse them whenever we can differentiate them.

Today, the meta-theoretical level of knowledge is polystratified, and the processes through which this level was generated are multiple and diverse. Processes leading to the constitution of a meta-theoretical level of knowledge today are defined mainly by the following steps: (a) the formation of a meta-theoretical level of the theory of scientific knowledge; (b) this has been a result of the building of a meta-theoretical level of various prevailing theories in particular scientific fields and their preeminence in our time; consequently; (c) the meta-theoretical level of knowledge is not unitary, but can be studied through a general view on the meta-theoretical level of different theories more frequently accepted at the moment; and (d) study of this level requires the formation of the meta-theoretical level of philosophy of knowledge. The heterogenous dimension of the formation and present position of meta-theory is reflected also in another aspect of the specialization of the philosophy of knowledge: development in logical, psychological, historical and holistic variants of different variants of the philosophy of scientific knowledge intended to analyze, explain, reconstruct, model or even organize scientific research.

Study of the multiple aspects of these internal tendencies of philosophical culture, as well as observation of its modes of development in the actual world, particularly Romania, enable one to stress a third tendency of the present evolution: the development on the world plane, but also within the Romanian cultural space and time, of a new modality of studying and of creating philosophy, namely, meta-philosophy. Philosophers have always talked about philosophy, but now there develops a preoccupation even in philosophy with meta-philosophy as a purposeful, developed and avowed preoccupation, deliberately so entitled. On the world plane such an orientation has been promoted, among others, through an international review entitled *Metaphilosophy*, edited by Aram T. Marsoobian at the Blackwell Publishers.

This level of philosophical construction is manifest in Romanian university lectures (for instance, Marin Diaconu, "A Lecture on Metaphilosophy," and, in a work of Ion Tudosescu, *Metaphilosophy*.³ I, too, delivered a lecture on this level of philosophical discourse.⁴ The possibility of building metaphilosophy in the Romanian culture is based on the analysis of the systemic complexity and structural hierarchy of the present developments of philosophical culture, on an evaluation of the meaning of the overall historical evolution of philosophy, and on the elaboration of a vision integrating the diversity of its present fields and levels. Meta-philosophy is represented by the explanation, interpretation and evaluation of various kinds (first of all philosophical) of meta-theoretical constructions, and their integration into a unitary vision, characterized by historical, methodological and systemic dimensions.

Through the above-mentioned processes, philosophical culture becomes a cognitive, evaluative and methodological complex. This appears extremely complicated for those approaching this field accidentally, for whom the specific organization of this complex could appear as merely a rare issue of current but passing topical interest or of preferential methodological prospects. That is why it is important to stress the specific nature of present philosophical culture for the socialization of the results of philosophical activity. This must be at a level comparable with the efficiency in this field of other cultural directions directly to create more functional philosophical values. The reception of philosophical culture within larger social circles becomes possible if its organization on various levels and the possibility of access at the various levels of its hierarchical structure are explained. The following levels of philosophical culture should be considered:

I. The philosophical attitude expressed as: (a) an unexplained and non-conceptualized ability to utilize philosophy when dealing with problems of common and permanent interest, and, (b) a set of individual and group premises for action, generated by needs and providing models whenever they focus on practical problems belonging to the specific field of social action (e.g., the use of philosophy for elaborating fiscal strategy or for computer construction).

II. The level of elaboration of a specific philosophical position, of building a theoretical system including postulates, axioms, demonstrations and conclusions, not only theoretical, but methodological and sometimes even practical. At this level, we include also the history of important philosophical systems, as well as their analysis, interpretation, choice or adoption.

III. The level of meta-theoretical research, distinguishing itself not only from unsystematic philosophy, but also from determined theoretical systems aimed at various types and levels of conceptualization. The study of the general evolution of theoretical level of knowledge ("the growth" of concepts), the emphasis of dissociation and coagulation of theoretical prospects and methodological options, makes it possible to determine the specificity and position of philosophical culture related to other cultural fields.

New Fields, Traits and Functions of Culture

Today, new cultural fields are developing. Technique which traditionally has been defined as all technical means, technologies and technics, nowadays includes many concepts of theoretical knowledge which go beyond its own status of applied science and even that of science for the application of science. This develops a science of human activities directed at a set of technical values. So, if Tudor Vianu could rightly consider, in his time, that technique is a means of culture, specifically, the sum of all its objective means,⁵ today we can see that technique itself has become a distinct field of culture. In this respect, it includes all material and spiritual values with material structures and processes, specific knowledge, methods, typical techniques and procedures, abilities, skills and professional gifts (as, for instance, technical intelligence), as well as a specific way of communication. All this leads to the formation of a specific cultural community defined by the nature of its determined activities, relations and fields of knowledge, through which all these technical values are born.

Efficiency as the main value of technical culture, now becomes one of the fundamental social values. Technical activity which has both intrinsic and extrinsic efficiency is now the main way of increasing efficiency in other activities. From this point of view, we can consider as the main criterion of technical progress the growth of the efficiency of all social activity. Similarly for the scientific field of culture, the criterion regarding the degree of utility of information produced in this field and in all the other aspects of social life is sometimes considered more important than other criteria (as, for instance, the number of scientific publications and of scientists alive, as compared to the whole previous period of scientific development and the importance of financial or technical means involved in its progress). In the technical field, we should also consider human efficiency in preserving or even developing life styles, forms of community, types of communication and possibilities of evolution typical of the various social entities.

From this perspective, after Rousseau, Hegel may be one of the first to point out some of the disadvantageous consequences of technical progress for the human condition. Among other forms of human alienation, he notes the simplification of work, as a result of the invention of ever better machines. Nowadays, we can see how the continuation and acceleration of this process simplifies life and even outlooks. This leads to deterioration of the spiritual conditions of human existence, despite a high level of achievement in specialized fields. Therefore, technical culture, although it can be defined as a relatively separate and homogeneous field in the cultural area of society, is, at the same time, involved in all aspects of social life, thanks to the use of technical knowledge, methods and tools. Of all the kinds of cultural values, the technical even more than the scientific, are the most properly socialized. It follows that, within technical culture, its communicative dimension is as active as the creative ones, which is not true for other cultural fields which, for this reason, are placed at the margins of the cultural system.

The present culture is also a culture of action. Some authors, who have noted this dimension of today's culture stress that what we generally call culture is not only an object of cultural consumption, but a process of creation. Other authors consider the culture of action to be an expression of the characteristic dimensions of present social life, namely, the dynamic of its general development and the acceleration of the rhythm of the development of specific social processes.

To the above-mentioned arguments, we can add as well:

- value and action have always been connected; thus, Plato considered ideas or values to exist because they operate;

- the direction of action is based on values which as such are worth being the object of action;
- values are components of action; they are motivational, guiding and founding, standardizing and evaluating elements of the objectives, conditions, means or results of action — and surely its aim. They are present in the many stages of action;
- values such as freedom, truth, happiness and justice, or the sacred performance of the above-mentioned roles, mark the various fields of action;
- current values are changing the importance and functions of the value of efficiency both in theoretical and practical action in its relation to other kinds of values;
- we can consider cultural action to be a distinctive type of social action. This should become the most important component of cultural life understood as the creative participation of people in the circulation of values;
- at the theoretical level, the existence and real operation of the culture of action are reflected by the creation of special, particular and general theories of action.

The third argument might be the most important one since it deals with the intrinsic causes of action and identifies its main reason. In this respect we can speak not only about a culture of action, but also about cultivated action (saturated with values), as the cultural action of values creation or diffusion.

The nature of the cultural background in which man lives is new. The informational background is constituted by the direct penetration by information of our environment, whether machines, houses, buildings, and in the future, towns. Does this change of our cultural background lead to a change in the human gifts involved in its creation and use? For instance, does this new background lead to the development of new forms and degrees of human intelligence? The answers to the latter question are various and sometimes contradictory, depending on their source. Thus, the results of experiments upon animals living in an informationally "enriched" background seem to be encouraging in this respect, since important modifications, even at the level of brain structure and dynamics, were noticed. The study of brain fragments belonging to Einstein or Gauss seem to indicate that erudition and genius are provided with a similar physiological basis.⁶ Also, in the field of civilization history, solid, unique and unequal performances of cultures not assisted by any advanced technique prove, in our opinion, that this lack has been substituted for by an efficient use of intelligence, together with an efficient coordination of a long collective effort. In analyzing the future of intelligence, Mircea Eliade anticipates the dangers caused by the presence in people's minds and spiritual communities of mental schemes accompanied by the advance of pseudo-mysticism and crypto-spiritualism.⁷ Together the above-mentioned aspects (to which many others could be added) indicate that a context promoting only one kind of information could encourage the development of specific cognitive processes and structures. But making use of only specific components of intelligence (for instance, of convergent thinking), is not a stimulating context for the development of intelligence itself, and even less for the formation of the gifts needed to found creative behavior in various cultural fields. A favorable cultural background for the development of intelligence and creativity is one in which all types of cultural, not only cognitive, attitudes are present, active and interdependent.

Today there is a new attitude towards two of the prevailing forms of culture, science and technique. They are seen as potentially bivalent, constructive and destructive, factors for social development. This attitude, rejecting both scientism and anthropologism, both technomania and technophobia, could be one of the sources of sensible development of various fields of culture for a coordinated evolution of the creation and socialization of values.

Although economy now develops largely on the basis of science and technique, researchers often remark that models of economic development are "in catastrophic collision with laws of nature."⁸ This paradox is caused by the conflict of values related to scientific rationalism and technical efficiency, on the one hand, and values of economic productivity and financial profit, on the other. Consequently, based on the analysis of economic process from the point of view of entropy law N. Georgescu-Roegen noted that society tries to reduce its entropy by increasing that of nature.

Today, new elements appear within ecological thinking. For instance, there is a tendency to consider man's relation to his whole environment, both natural and social: an ecology of human relations is born. Another modern expression of ecology is interest in cultural ecology, which concerns are guided towards a human ecology. All this reveals a tendency toward generalization of ecological interests. This tendency is expressed by both theoretical and practical changes. On the one hand, theoretically the object of this field, considered as a subject, changes: according to some authors, ecology deals mainly with the aims of human activity.⁹ On the other hand, the result of ecological restructuring takes place whenever ecological activities extend and multiply. Thanks to all these tendencies, it is possible now to create an ecological outlook. Even more, some authors foresee its transformation into a "philosophy" or the birth of a new philosophical field, namely, ecosophy.

If we integrate the ecological outlook into a general concept of the cultural system itself, we can define one real condition and challenging theoretical need during the present stage of culture development. This is the interest in achieving a new balance among cultural fields as a premise for a fundamental balance between society and nature. The development of scientific and technical culture will be one of the premises of social development, along with other cultural fields. These must lead to the formulation and choice of necessary objectives, conditions, means and activities, namely, to the realization of a whole social evolution and its "cultural" implementation in the natural environment. Consequently, culture will be not only a means of man's separation from nature, but also society's means to integrate itself into nature.

The modality and degree of cultural involvement in human formation differ from one period to another. Human development is based on both natural and cultural heredity, but it is the latter which seems to prevail today. As Traian Herseni pointed out, people who are more culturally than naturally gifted succeed better in life and contribute more to social development.¹⁰ Therefore during human formation culture is becoming now not only a result, but also a tool. Nowadays, the individual's experience of itself, which is an aspect of personality formation, tends to be achieved through learned culture. We experience aspects of social life, even private life, and even more the aspects of natural reality, through an almost total cultural filter. Nowadays, not only the way of conceiving, but also the way of receiving life depends on what we already know about all its aspects, even before directly experiencing them. Various components of cultural fields are included in the ensemble of forms, levels and aspects of individual development. As a result, man is identifiable with the cultural universe where he is formed, and especially with the cultural galaxy to which he directly belongs. So the influence of culture upon the individual is total. The issue of creative personality consists of the inborn and chiefly learned skill of an individual to distinguish himself within this background, to introduce a new order in the cultural cosmos.

Today's culture is prospective. More than ever, both individual actions and social development are directed to coherent, anticipative models. Accompanying the sciences, there are specific activities, organizations and institutions. These emerge from the idea that the future is not a linear continuation of past and present, but on the contrary, a specific model indicating the objectives of

social action. The nature of knowledge, resources and actions necessary to its achievement determine not only the direction of development, but even the structure and dynamics of the present. Axiologically, we notice that both individual behavior and social directions are usually explained not so much through past experience and values, but through representations and visions on the possible dimensions and values of the future.

In this respect, there is special need to give up short-term vision, and pass to long-term vision for the projected future, suggested by the invitation to "reinvent" the future itself.¹¹ Consequently, even in a world of immediate efficiency and economic and financial profitability, one can conclude that being successful in the future, both in business and in politics, would be possible only through the elaboration of a set of social objectives, related to a set of proper strategies for their achievement.

In Romanian society, as well as in other cultural spaces, there is a tendency to reevaluate and promote the axiogeneous and sociogeneous nature of the sacred. This can be achieved by various methods of emphasizing the formative role of religious behavior, relations, rituals, institutions and doctrines. Religious life is an important component of individual and social life. There is a multiplication of modes of understanding and practice by which closeness to the traditional sacred religious aspects are preserved. At the same time, religious life is experienced in new forms in which religious culture is combined with elements of philosophical and scientific culture. These spiritual aspects often are associated with practical moral or even economic components. Religious preoccupation is sometimes extended by approaches to the development of human biological and/or psychic skills. These are highly valued and continuously practiced by their supporters. Sometimes, especially in other cultural spaces, such practices are utilized by firms or organizations hoping to increase, in this way, the quality of human resources or even the quantity of their financial profits.

Today, culture lacks unity, because it contains all sorts of values that are not integrated into a unitary entity: in the present cultural mixture values themselves are in search of meaning.¹² We can affirm that values give meaning to human action, but we must confirm as well that the meaning of each value depends, at the same time, on the modality of the organization of the value system in society. Lack of unity of culture within society is expressed also in the variety of values determining people's real behavior. Different authors have sought both to go beyond their traditional roles and to search for "the roots" of the cultural specificity of communities; both a modern tendency to solve any social problems politically by joining large groups and supporting great actions, and an opposite tendency to integrate themselves into smaller groups with rich interpersonal relations; both the individual need of social protection, and the refusal of social control; both expression of nonconformist behaviors and enjoyment of social comfort; both the need of freedom, and also a tendency of self-preservation; both obedience to orders, and rejection of compulsion; both adoption of ecological principles, and also agreement with nuclear power stations; both preference for women's liberation movements, and also preservation of privileges derived from the patriarchal tradition, etc.¹³ This may support both theoretically and practically the assessment that our time is a large cultural crucible where components of future systems of values are being prepared, while old systems of values are over turned and, practically, the world of values has lost its systemic dimension?

The Changing Value-System of Present Day Romanian Society

In specific cultural spaces, these tendencies are found in the context of fundamental social changes, such as those taking place nowadays in our country. Consequently, in these cultures there are also significant changes which draw attention to a specific feature of the spirituality of the Romanian people, namely, its reflexive capacity. This is expressed by seizing, preserving and cultivating, mainly theoretically, the real distinctions between different existential and action levels. Some more concrete conclusions may result from the observation of several aspects of the changing value-system of contemporary Romanian society, as compared to the apparently very stable and coherent system typical of the 1980s.

Even this steady mobility can become an element of differentiation. In terms of the content of spiritual life, we could see, during the previous time, a tendency toward making everything scientific and technical. This was induced mainly by formal education in high school and university, both through the number of types of knowledge and skills within the general process of instruction, and the importance given vocational educational institutions at the last two levels. This process took place at the same time as political propaganda, with a permanent, repetitive and pervasive presence in all forms and at all educational levels. The excellent results obtained by young mathematicians, physicists, computer specialists, who took part in international competitions and then got a job in huge industrial units, banks or research institutes from countries with long traditions in this respect are proof of their good theoretical formation and of a comparable capacity to adjust to a highly different spiritual background. On the other hand, the requirements of the prevailing ideology were not applied in fact, or only formally. Neither the above-mentioned remarkable theoretical performances nor proven human gifts are employed today in the country for an important and rapid change of social practices which would bring about also an improvement of the general or cultural living conditions. In the field of technical and engineering sciences and finances, but less in the field of management or trade, discoveries and inventions are made and new concepts are formulated. One may note a delay or even an inability in applying them, or their use in other cultural fields, but with no contribution directly to the expected renewal of Romanian economic and spiritual life. The same phenomena is true of the remarkable human resources formed in various fields of Romanian education.

This suggests that the dichotomy between the theoretical and practical dimension of action — namely the poor ability to apply theoretical results as well as the modest efficiency in using important human, social and natural resources — could be a dimension of the Romanian psychology.

This is expressed through both favorable and unfavorable results. Therefore, the results are ambivalent depending on conditions. Paradoxically, under difficult circumstances it was able to preserve the specificity of Romanian spiritual culture, while under transitory circumstances favorable to the expression of individual initiative and social creativity it seems sometimes to become a real obstacle to the progress of this spirituality.

This apparent paradox must be explained. As an obstacle it may be the result of the influence of the complex and changing aspect of the present circumstances of our country. It might also be the expression of a psychological tendency generated by transient contexts which raise hopes and expectations with various and sometimes opposite meanings within the psycho-social background of this period. These also generate different behaviors: some more efficient personally and in the short term, some aiming mainly at material interests and others at spiritual ones. Some have in mind more restricted and well-determined objectives, others more important and longer term interests, etc. The process of building the market economy also tempts one to value primarily material richness, not currently available to Romanians, although much easier to obtain more

directly and rapidly than the spiritual one. Therefore we note that at least nowadays and for some more attention is paid to material values. But, at the same time, among one of the most disadvantaged social categories — namely that of youth — we also see a striking direction towards knowledge connected with self-assertion and self-achievement. Libraries, theater halls, lecture halls and museums are crowded above all with young people.

The prevailing situation can be explained by the Romanian psychic structure and the ambivalent consequences of its application to real behavior under concrete circumstances. This capacity can be positive or negative as it operates through many alternative possibilities under specific circumstances. It is a steady expression of a common determined psychic attitude, operating as a behavioral premise. This reflexive capacity of the Romanian people is expressed by the tendency to understand, preserve and even extend, especially in its theoretical dimension, the real difference between levels of existence and activity. This is expressed either by critical discrimination and inhibition to act under unfavorable circumstances or by excessive prudence. It may be even a real contextual inability where individuals or specific groups do not experience enough positive empirical results.

At the self-reflexive level of culture a crisis of conscience appears. There are many crises (ecological, energy, financial, productive, educational, etc.), there are also explanations of the causes of these crisis which achieve theoretical generalization. For instance, when crises are considered expressions of a social-managerial crisis,¹⁴ some authors propose "crisis management".¹⁵ At another level of generalization all typically modern crises derive from a more profound cultural crisis which in all fields of social life derives from the spiritual level of the social structure, namely, from the modality of choosing consumer type values. Today's cultural crisis is due not to the lack of creativity in various cultural fields, but to the manner of socialization of the values created in these fields.

A concrete expression of this critical situation is typical of the Romanian culture. Often a considerable portion of the spiritual forms of culture — not only the moral, religious, aesthetic or philosophical, but paradoxically even the scientific — are pushed to a marginal position in society by cultural practices. For instance, scientific research or creation science can create a favorable or unfavorable social context for creation. This can influence the direction of a culture and in turn determine the level of available financial resources for work.

Cultural Alienation: Reasons and Expressions

Some dimensions and tendencies expressed within the cultural context of society lead to the cultural alienation of some aspects, fields or spaces of today's culture. The varied cultural content of identical human activities can lead to different results, both objectively and subjectively. If people have a poor spiritual life with no appreciation of "spiritual richness", then within cultural life there is a rapid and generalized over-estimation of elementary values and an under-estimation of "cultural" values. In the long term, this process may lead value creation towards elementary values and needs will change, in turn, through these learned values. Consequently, some aspects or stages of cultural development can result in a decrease of value creation and consumption.

Therefore, we notice that in all its fields, modern culture is defined by a striking professionalism, manifesting at the same time signs of an axiological thinning. On the one hand, value creators are generally very specialized and strive as much as ever to distinguish themselves in relation to the universality of values acquired in a specific field. On the other hand, in many specific cultural fields, which are more directly and rapidly received, they adjust or even purposefully create

products for commercial consumption. They take advantage of the ease of copying and multiplying to make products more available for more customers. Nowadays there is a tendency to separate the creative dimension of culture from its sharing; there is a break between values performed by personalities and those used by passive, unsteady and uncritical receivers, mainly educated through the electronically produced mass culture.¹⁶ This type of audience can then become the main basis for the loss of cultural identity, and for a tendency toward cultural uniformity.

In the above-mentioned context, there may occur also a discrepancy between cultural expectations and real progress caused by the increase of creative professional cultural performances. Therefore, although the hopes of many values creator's may be hindered, there is also another even more serious phenomenon where expectations themselves may diminish.

The formation of so-called undercultures or countercultures continues, as expressions of the alienation of human groups from the prevailing cultural system or as ways of preserving or even developing axiologically more thick spaces (as, for instance, university culture), or as ways of asserting new cultural outlooks.

Beside the aim of creating genuine values according to internal, and not external criteria, culture also plays the role of circulating values that can be the fundamentals of genuine cultural experiences within a powerful cultural life. These cultural experiences may be genuine if they reach a specific qualitative level and if they are typical of various fields of culture. But aesthetic emotion itself without the presence of modern aspects of success, the sensation of psychic comfort guaranteed by moral fairness, the enthusiasm of political participation, the feeling of religious community, the height of philosophical opinions, researchers' certainties and uncertainties in giving birth to a scientific paradigm: all these can be generated only by taking part in the creation and continuation of values within a genuine cultural life. Many events of today's cultural life express cultural alienation from these objectives.

Other aspects of cultural alienation are people's retirement from the social space of cultural life for individual consumption of cultural values created for a very large audience, and the penetration of several aspects of private life into the field of public attention, opinion and consumption. This is either by: (1) contemplation or the imaginary living of some aspects of the contemporary heroes' private lives (such as sportsmen, artists, politicians); (2) the adoption of some stars' "stage" images deprived of cultural education; or (3) repeating standard behavior within the spaces of earlier personal and singular experiences. Thus, the concrete exemplarity of classical creations are sometimes replaced by the circumstantial and transient, by the insignificance and banality of rapidly successful products.

The most dramatic form of cultural alienation in our cultural space is probably the tendency to feel the values of cultural spaces other than one's own. This tendency has the effect either of alienation from one's native culture to which one still belongs or separation from it *ipso facto* by integrating oneself, at least formally, into another cultural system. That may not be exactly deeper or axiologically richer, but larger, different and attractive in many respects.

Due to the profound, varied and prevailing dimension of the above-mentioned phenomenon, it is heartening to note that there also are tendencies to counteract it by transformation and extension of value-systems. This process takes place either (1) by emphasizing some acknowledged and practiced values, (2) by admitting as values previous relations, properties or entities, or (3) by development of new values as a result of creating or understanding the importance of new social phenomena. Can all new and valuable ideas be considered values? For the first time and in its true meaning ours is a time of ideas, which illustrates the third case. The second case is illustrated by showing that space and time are considered today not only basic dimensions of existence, objects

of philosophical and scientific study, and conditions of human action or resources for social development, but also internal determinations of the social domain of existence and social life. I. Tudosescu shows in his study, *Temps et action humains, Approche praxiologique*, that they are created objectively through practical and spiritual human activities. As objects and products of human activity, space and time are fundamental human values. We appreciate that space and time can be considered fundamental human values if we add the fact that every human being, every social group or type of civilization is provided with a specific way to understand, evaluating and using space and time. In fact, from this comes the specificity of cultural spaces and times. From this comes also the philosophical interest in studying their general dimensions, as well as particular interests in different cultural spaces. At the same time, other values become obsolete or are deeply transformed.

The Role of Philosophical Culture in the Evolution of Axiological Systems

Some evolutions of present human phenomena, chiefly their predictable consequences, prove the need to correlate knowledge and action based upon scientific and technical development with the results of activities in other fields of culture. Researchers on present tendencies of social life predict that in the next decades, the most spectacular achievements will be due not to technological changes, but to new visions regarding the meaning of human existence.¹⁷ On this basis, we appreciate that along with other ways to model social evolution, it is necessary to develop an evaluative model of the evolution of ways of being human. The building of such a model is possible through, or even within, philosophical culture. The present dimensions and tendencies specific to today's philosophical culture is fundamental to this evaluation. That a model for developing the ways of being human: (1) is necessary, (2) can be evaluative and (3) can be elaborated and promoted through philosophical culture, are supported by many arguments:

Social models usually concern dimensions more easily researched in social life than in terms of the evolution of axiological systems.

Evaluations present in such attempts at adjustment are chiefly quantitative: they regard "measurable" variables of social system.

Philosophical evaluation is generalizing, synthesizing and guiding. It can stress the poly-dimensional character of the conditions and evolution of human phenomena and project these conditions in the same complex way suitable to the nature of social life. The general evaluating prospect is one of the premises for the elaboration of a valid human model on the grounds of philosophical culture.

The evaluative prospect typical of philosophical culture is due to at least two kinds of axiological factors which prove to be complementary aspects of a single complex process:

a) values typical of other fields of culture are acknowledged and organized in the field of philosophical culture. They are selected and promoted in view of creating this field of culture, so that the same values may appear to be derived from the theoretical model built in philosophy on this basis;

b) social utilization of the values that make up a philosophical culture is conditioned by the practical achievement of other kinds of values and the harmonious combination of the respect for, and practice of, these values within the life of human communities.

Philosophical culture can unite theoretically various kinds of values; it even provides the basis for the unity of various fields of spiritual culture. Thus, philosophy can provide the theoretical foundation of the organization, direction and development of all the values typical of a culture. Philosophical culture can even model the evolution of the axiological system, for a new premise for formulating a model of human evolution is an abstract, although not only cognitive, evaluative plan.

But the foundation or even formulation of human models within philosophical culture aims to contribute to the human's self-modification, according to the well-known warning of Karl Jaspers that man faces two alternatives: either destruction or transformation. Philosophical culture also includes general human values or values capable of generalization, which through their social influence are mediated by other fields of culture. From this point of view philosophical culture is situated at the crossroad between "ideal and real culture." This dichotomy, pointed out by Ralph Linton, needs to be removed by the social operation of values typical of various fields. This facet of philosophical culture is another more practical premise of its ability to receive, evaluate and perhaps accept a model of human unity and diversity.

Philosophical culture founds, generates or includes practical values. Among these, there are distillations of theoretical and practical experience (transposed into mental or instrumental operations, procedures and techniques, and expressed in prescriptions or in abilities), standards for making decisions, methodological generalizations (methodologies), explanatory models (mythical, historical, physical, metaphysical, empirical, theoretical), argumentative approaches, practical discourse, techniques of persuasion, etc. Through its both theoretical and practical values, philosophical culture constitutes a model of directive activity, for these components are premises for elaborating a praxiological model of the evolution of the modalities of being human.

In order philosophically to realize such a model it is necessary to apply its ability to ensure continuity within the real world between the ideal world of universal values and the practical world of individual conduct. This can be achieved, among other steps by:

- 1) facilitating the access of individuals to different levels of the foundation of action and,
- 2) assuring the permanency of the regulative pattern: value-principle-standard-action-evaluation.¹⁸

Philosophical culture renders understandable and consequently sometimes possible a connection between: the ideal and practice within the real order; the necessary and the accidental within the limits of the possible; the retrospective and the prospective in the evolution of phenomena; the finite and infinite in their cosmic or human aspects; intelligence and creativity in the field of conscience; and infra- and ultra-significations in the sphere of cultural creations. It can also organize the active elements of spirituality in various fields or at different levels of culture according to the requirements of both the present and the future.

The range of the above-mentioned aspects underlines the ability of philosophical culture to elaborate, suggest and support a synthetic model, both on the whole and in the context of human development. These aspects suggest as well that within philosophical culture, one can operate with this model at various levels and with various degrees of efficiency. Moreover, under determined conditions the model of human evolution elaborated within philosophical culture can be an operational model.

Notes

1. Term used for example by J. Robin in his book *Changer d'ère* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989), p. 161.
2. If there are objections that philosophy has been only or also meta-theory we disagree on the basis that science, through its representatives, crossed that threshold long ago. But if S.W. Hawking, for example, discusses the meanings of physical theories for reconsidering such concepts as time or space, he is dealing not with philosophy of science or natural philosophy, but scientific meta-theory. On the other hand, the best philosophers have always been the specialists in some natural, social or cognitional scientific subject. This argument cannot be turned against the initial one, since only a part and only the most important scientists managed to do philosophy.
3. I. Tudosescu, *Metafilosofie* (Bucuresti: Fundatiei România de Măine, 1997).
4. This lecture presents various forms and levels of conceptualization; analyzes different kinds of concepts; designs the development of a theoretical level of knowledge; reveals specificity, evolution and variety of intellectual techniques; and deals with the formation and continuity of valid symbiosis between conceptual levels of specific fields of culture (especially philosophical, scientific and technical) through underlining the importance and evolution of fundamental philosophical ideas.
5. T. Vianu, *Filosofia culturii*, in *Opere 8* (Bucuresti: Minerva, 1980), p. 257.
6. D. Teresi, *Demain tout est possible*, trans. M. Lebailly (Paris: Denoël, 1984), p. 78.
7. M. Eliade, "Viitorul inteligentei," in *Profetism românesc*, vol. II: *România în eternitate* (Bucuresti: Roza vânturilor, 1990), p. 53.
8. N.F. Dessel, R.B. Nehrich and G.I. Voran, *Science and Human Destiny* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), p. 280.
9. A. Lipietz, *Choisir l'audace: une alternative pour le XXI-e siècle* (Paris: Editions de la Découverte, 1989), p. 59.
10. T. Herseni, *Sociologie. Teoria generala a vietii sociale* (Bucuresti: Stiintifica si Enciclopedica, 1982), p. 258.
11. R. M. Kidder, *Reinventing the Future: Global Goals for the 21-st Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1989), p. 87.
12. J. Robin, *op. cit.*, p. 211.
13. J. Lesourne, M. Godet, eds, *La fin des habitudes* (Paris: Seghers, 1985), pp. 400-401.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
15. J. Diebold, *Making the Future work* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), p. 18.
16. Electronic tools can be agents for stimulating creativity, but the way of using them can determine or cultivate passive personalities.
17. J. Naisbitt and P. Aburdene, *Megatrends 200. Ten New Directions for the 1990's* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1990), p. 16.
18. These aspects are the object of a study elaborated at the same time as the present one, but published separately.

Chapter III

Value as Liberating

Victor Ernst Maek

Do we create because we are free or in order to prove this freedom to ourselves? In other words, do we reach values through freedom or does the motivation of our hope for freedom lie in being aware of a value we wish to achieve and transmit? This question is not only rhetorical, since, while commenting upon artistic phenomena and spiritual values, freedom is very often invoked as a major motivation in creating innovative values and works. Thus "freedom" becomes a criterion of value, its condition and its result.

Freedom and Value

There is general confusion in these matters because in no field of human activity does freedom naturally transform itself into value. The freedom to say and think whatever one likes says nothing about the depth of words and whether the ideas one expresses are up to date. As Goethe noted in claiming that the master distinguishes himself especially under difficult circumstances, restriction of freedom has often obliged the artist to an originality of expression much more propitious to value than absolute freedom of expression or what can be achieved by the disintegrated, accidental and confused development of a creative process. For instance, freedom perceived as the rejection of any social and moral determination and obligation has not made our press either more important or more socially or morally useful. Since in art, as well as in any field of human activity, freedom can never be an aim, but only, a means, its value depends exclusively on the importance and the usefulness of the project whose achievement it serves. Because freedom is an axiologically neutral and conditional state, with no value in itself, the value of freedom depends exclusively upon the value of the action it makes possible. From creation to crime, an infinite series of actions and circumstances can result, in this way from the same state of freedom.

Whenever freedom is expressed by a creative, and responsible individual having something really important to share with his fellows, it becomes not only profitable, but necessary. But, whenever freedom is invoked only to justify a lack of ideas, it can only generate an accidental play of shocking and useless images.

Freedom is first of all an inner dimension which one possesses regardless of outside social or political permissiveness. Unfortunately neither in literature nor in drama have the stimulating outside conditions since the Revolution found many people to set free. On the contrary, during the dictatorship, the inner freedom which cannot be cancelled by outside constraints, found many ways to express its creative energies. That is why paradoxically important artistic works could be found during those harsh decades, while new works which benefit from a non-conditioned freedom are still awaited.

Writing about "spiritual freedom" as the essential expression of freedom, Herder said that it meant, first of all, the freedom of not lying, of clearly telling the truth, under any circumstances. In this respect, the Eastern Communist dictatorships, the most oppressive dictatorships of recent times, have never been able permanently to suppress and smother the flame of spiritual freedom, namely, the right of any individual to say only what he really thinks and never to state what he

does not believe. That is why, the main contrary and compulsory form to freedom has always been the lie. A man obliged to lie will never be really free.

The condition for a maximum creative enthusiasm is surely the fortunate case of coincidence between inner and outer freedom. Because the two aspects of freedom do not condition each other reciprocally and are not of themselves convergent, we need really to struggle to realize this type of convergence. If only because of our frustration, it is important to claim outside complementary freedom. That is why freedom should always be seen only as a stimulating means, unable itself to provide value to the expression it generates. In the hands of a tone-deaf musician, even the most brilliant Stradivarius violin would sound poorly. Like a violin, freedom too is nothing but a tool provided with value through the sensitivity and emotion of the souls that express themselves through it. We cannot save a failed concert by blaming the instrument on which a clumsy artist played.

Freedom is a particularly subjective condition of consciousness joined with appropriate circumstances, implications and attitudes. The step to free behavior from liberation as a physical, material act of doing away with laws, institutions, and a whole economic and politically oppressive system, is similar to the passage from a permissive to a participative democracy. The achievement of real and profound democracy cannot stop at the stage of permitting democratic laws and institutions to exist and operate. This is only the first step, and usually the only one achieved by the freedom brought by the Revolution, but it is not sufficient to transform the democratic ideal into a real social value. It is not enough to open the door to organizations and democratic social institutions in order that they be adopted and used as such by their beneficiaries. In other words, it is not enough to proclaim the right to free elections or to create a multi-party system, in order that people truly and consciously take advantage of this chance of self-expression.

Freedom and Participation

A democracy can become operational, therefore genuine, only through the act of participation. We must ensure not only this objective circumstances of a socio-economic and administrative background necessary to exercise democratic rights, but also the people's subjective ability to be involved effectively in the social, political and cultural life of the nation. This subjective ability of everyone to respond to democratic needs, the consciousness of the new opportunities provided by the respective organizing context can be achieved only through proper political and cultural education. There can be no real democracy for the half-educated or illiterate, because democratic participation is a conscious act, through which a person makes a decision when he knows what it is all about, and is not determined by a blind, anarchic spontaneity or as a tool of another's ideal and will.

Therefore, real participation is proved by the individual's free and specific contributions, expressing the typical hopes and ideals of a person. Whenever a proper level of education and culture is missing, the individual is less conscious of his own spiritual needs and abilities and, consequently, less free and original in his own decisions, likes and actions (for instance, when making axiological evaluations). That is why he is very easily manipulated and influenced by outside models of attitude and behavior which are strange to him, mimetically assimilated through the mass-media and other means of influencing public opinion. In the absence of a critical spirit able properly to discriminate among the available cultural goods that rightly express it, participation loses its real meaning as an opportunity to express each individual's needs and ideals. Ensuring democratic rights to an uneducated crowd is only the first necessary, but not sufficient

step for a real cultural democracy. If an individual, responsible for his own interests and opportunities (a responsibility provided by culture) does not express himself he is, in fact, no longer sincerely free, but is the unconscious bearer of others' tastes and opinions. That is why, in the absence of culture, democracy can lead only to the numerical dictatorship of mediocrity.

Participation is expressed and tested through action. But in the above-mentioned case, regardless of what they really think, individuals do not act, but are activated. That is why a cultural democracy, marked by people's ignorance and lack of education, cannot really ensure everyone's distinct and specific participation to the creation and circulation of spiritual values, but only a seeming participation. In order to put into practice the possibilities of a large cultural democracy ensured by its new socio-economical background, liberated Romania must be vitally interested in transposing cultural and spiritual values into genuine and freely agreed upon social values.

Real freedom of opinion, attitude and expression does not mean doing and saying whatever one likes. Rather, it means expressing without fear or inhibition what really defines one and not what has been induced through the mass-media or any other means of propaganda. More than previously, art seems to be directed and divided according to different political choices. Formerly, if one did not want to engage in politics or become a party member, one had no chance for administrative promotion, but there still remained professional acknowledgement among specialists. Today, writers and artists, who formerly respected and supported one another, ignore the skills and gifts that once placed them on the same side of the barricade; they offend and hurt one another from opposite political platforms. Whoever is not involved in politics, has no chance of being noticed. Being a supporter of power does not mean being neutral and minding one's own business, but proving one's political usefulness by cursing the opposition. Nor is the opposite position more favorable and free of humiliation, since there one becomes suspect if one does not state a stand politically. If one does not exclusively pronounce oneself for royalty, for Point 8 of the Timioara Proclamation, for PN-CD, CD, PAC, or any other group of letters pretending to represent honesty, good faith and political clear-sightedness, one suddenly becomes inferior in the aesthetic view of art critics and historians. One's inner value, what one did or could do professionally for the country rather than for a specific political group, or for the spread of Romanian art and culture all over the world seems to interest no one. No matter how rich and worthy the creative past or present of an artist could be, if it is not politically colored, he finds himself in "no man's land". One is forgotten by everybody, whenever one falls in between the two canons, since his political refusal can be embarrassing for both sides.

If a politically uninvolved artist celebrates an anniversary which should have been honored, no bell will ring, either in the offices of power, or in those of the opposition. Each side defends and rewards only its own members, and not always for merits specific to their field of activity, but especially for the greatness of their politically performed gesture. I do not mean that personalities, lately typologically and valuably enriching the Romanian Academy, did not deserve their immortal chairs. But were they the only deserving ones or, in any case, they before others?

The way by which the representatives of the ex-opposition granted prizes, generously sponsored by supporters, to remarkable personalities, but not when they were at the climax of their creativity, nor for aesthetic achievement, but for social and political gestures and opinions convenient to the respective political movement, is not favorable for setting a climate of justice and truth. And this only in a field that should be kept aside — not from political ideas almost always present within the structure of art — but from a reductively political approach often specific to the political struggle for power.

The major harm that politics has done to art is the monopolization and attraction of some the brightest and most creative minds and personalities from the cultural-artistic field, to a world unable and unwilling to recognize and use the benefit of their artistic and professional gifts. This is possible in a context where greed, lies, intrigue and empty rhetoric are usual. Instead of brilliant scholars, we deal with unprofessional mediocre politicians. Formerly remarkable actors — writers, musicians or plastic artists — enjoyed the esteem and consideration of their audience. Once involved in politics, without diminishing the gifts that formerly had ensured their artistic success, automatically they lose the half of their supporters with opposite political options. Is this not a pity for an artistic career, often built up with close care, professional perseverance and talent? Did Eminescu, Enescu, Grigorescu or Ion Manolescu need the support of politics to achieve success?

From Inner to Outer Freedom

I have always thought that freedom itself is an empty word, and whatever gives it value and human meaning comes only from the value of facts, attitudes and ideas whose expression becomes possible through it. That is why I do not support that interpretation of "freedom" which permits one to curse, insult, slander and distort anything and anybody, but I support the inner freedom, expressed by the right not to support what you really do not believe and think. I do not feel freer today, than in the past, since now my thoughts and words seem to be received with greater suspicion and hostility. But neither yesterday nor today can anyone take from me the freedom of not lying, of not miming beliefs and feelings that are strange to me. Today, I remark that whatever is useful of itself — the creative attitudes made possible by post revolutionary freedom — runs the risk of being unnoticed unless politically certified. This is an opposite censorship for art. Is it freer for having to self-censor its initiatives according to political criteria?

At least three fields of social activity or creativity should be safe from political influences in order to preserve their freedom: health, education and art, because all three are conditions of healing: from illness, ignorance and indifference. A hospital must treat not only patients with specific political beliefs, surgeons must not operate for the same reasons. Schools must choose and evaluate its pupils according to their level of knowledge, not according to their political opinions. Nor in the case of art would political participation be less queer and foolish.

Finally, the presence of value as a liberating element, permitting the individual to behave within the parameters of genuine action must also be noted in any study of the relation between the value-means and the value-objectives in culture. Culture cannot operate on the grounds of a value universe to whose continuous up dating and socialization it contributes, while at the same time aiming to achieve a supreme values. Born from value, culture is meant to create value in its turn. In this respect, Petre Andrei speaks about value as a means and value as an objective of culture. Tudor Vianu completes this distinction by showing that cultural phenomena cannot be fully understood unless the knowledge of the circumstances that conditioned them and of the means that make use of them, are grounded in knowledge of the ideal value objective to which all cultural activity tends, and according to which all other values are organized. Values as specific objectives of culture are conditioned by an overarching value. Hence, although the scientist apparently serves only the theoretical, the technician the practical, the artist the aesthetic, etc., together by their professional action they serve a value which is not in particular either theoretical, aesthetic, or political, but includes all these dimensions. Therefore, whenever we wonder what is the guiding ideal of our cultural life, we speak first of all, not about the particular values whose

presence conditions the existence of a cultural life, but about that overarching value, to which the creator of art aspires.

Consequently, in order to define the dimension of a specific culture, we should specify the value-means it sets into motion, as well as the guiding values or objective. Romania's culture today is marked in this respect by a supreme value justifying all efforts and directions of cultural output: the ideal of humanism, aiming to transform the circumstances of spiritual and material existence according to a complete emancipation and development of the human personality. In relation to this value as objective, several moral, political and aesthetic value as means are activated, updated and evaluated, such as: courage, devotion, firmness, frankness, responsibility, sacrifice, honesty, truth, freedom, democracy, etc.

But the relation between culture and value can also be significantly converted into the terms of relations between value and capitalization; in this context culture means capitalization of value, its updating and materialization. According to the definition of sociologist, Petre Andrei, capitalization unites two separate fields, reality and value. Values are performed in the form of cultural goods and shapes. In the context of the capitalization of transitory traditions and ideals, crystallized by humankind along its history, there are always new central, guiding values generated by specific social and historical conditions. The preexisting value that responds best to urgent needs and whose achievement is compulsory, becomes an ideal according to which the other values that give a specific dimension to culture are evaluated and achieved. Society makes the individual surpass himself and adopt a general value to which he must absolutely tend from his heart and according to which he organizes other values. Therefore, the ideal is not an abstract, cold idea, but a collective force and value, able to revive social life and bring it to the highest moments of its development.

Watching this process also provides us with an operational criterion for acknowledging the passive conserving or, on the contrary, the dynamic structure of a culture. Whenever, over decades or sometimes centuries, a culture has reduced itself only to capitalization or updating traditional values and ideals that existed before, it has been a declining culture limited to its function of preservation. On the contrary, a dynamic culture, which mirrors a lively social reality, will be first of all characterized by the creation of its own values and the enrichment of an axiological universe, with new values and ideals able to express and respond to the new needs of society. Certainly, this does not mean that a dynamic culture will give up its role of capitalization and the updating of transitory values. These values will also become important in the value hierarchy, thanks to the new, supreme value operating in the culture. It is this supreme value, known and acknowledged as explanatory within a society, that justifies the freedom of expression and behavior used to assert and impose it.

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Chapter IV The Crisis of an Axiological System in Transition

Oltea Miscol

The phrase "transition period" has meant the interval of the passage from the communist totalitarian system — with all that it represented in Romania in the political, economic and social fields — towards a democratic society of the Western kind. This is essentially a period of passing from the unique to the multiple, from the empire of artificially imposed unity to that of real and freely assumed plurality and diversity. This is a passing from a standardized community, aligned under the flag of a unique ideology and the priority of illusory collective interests, to a community of separate groups and individuals moved by various interests, values and ideologies.

Transitions are always unstable, pulling down and building everything again; for this reason the transition can be described as a period conflict at all levels of the social system.

The Definition of Transition in the Romanian Case

Changes claimed by post-totalitarian societies cannot occur outside the axiological systems, because together with systems of representations, they are seen as centers of resistance against prevailing ideologies. But, in order to achieve economic, political and cultural change, it is necessary to abolish the former ideologies and elaborate a new system of ideas. This bivalent process of ideological denial-rebuilding is a decisive element in the revolutionary process.

The post-totalitarian Romanian society inherited a system of values in deep crisis, which continues during the transition under partially similar, and partially changed forms. The destruction of that former axiological system started with the Revolution of December 1989 when a fundamental thesis of social psychology was proved in reality: Breaks and contradictions within institutionalized societies manage not only to dismantle structures, but also to disorganize systems of values and representations present within a cultural patrimony.¹ In the case of radical changes, such as those performed by a real revolution, the disorganization of systems of values and representations is much more rapid and deeper, with serious consequences for the entire social body.

Related to this dimension, the main objective of transition in the cultural field is the passage from an artificial system of values, based on unconditioned agreement with the political and ideological requirements of the former totalitarian regime, to a system liberated from external criteria. That is, to an organic axiological system in which the components are related, and mutually and naturally influence one another according to its own specific rules. From this perspective the transition can be seen as a period of rediscovering values, but, at the same time, a period of axiological confusion and of crisis of the axiological system. Theoretically and declaratorily, there is a movement towards the rehabilitation of values compromised by the totalitarian system, towards new criteria of valuation and a new axiological equilibrium. The achievement of these tendencies supposes first of all that the officials charged with the fulfillment of the reform as well as the members of society learn a new conception of culture and values, and of their social role.

The Capitalization of the Culture

The conception of "culture-capital" whose cumulative interests were to transform a cultivated spirit into a cultivator spirit (according to René Berger's phrase) is obsolete, as compared to a new and more comprehensive vision according to which culture is the space of confluence and resonance of diverse elements of axiological, cognitive, symbolic, behavioral and institutional type. In Paul Henry Chombart de Lauwe's opinion, within each group and each society, culture corresponds to a creative movement in all the fields of social life.²

In turn, Jean Ladrière thinks that the social importance of culture and values lies in the role of adjustment and control performed by these at the level of the whole society. Culture, by its various components, is able to record all disorders within the social system and supply the information necessary to correct them. In order to exercise this role, culture itself must be efficient, and its various elements must act in a complementary manner and in cooperation, supporting one another and constituting a self-stabilizing system.³ Pleading for the importance of values and culture, in a broad sense, in the present process of development, Herbert Shore points out that "culture, conscience, value and development are organically related; they are elements of the same process."⁴

Compared to cultures and social systems, the complex of values can be considered an essential subsystem, since it provides meaning and substance to culture and through it to the whole of human existence. It is a "matrix" subsystem, being a reference for the standardized, behavioral and institutional horizon of culture and society. In this respect, Jean Ladrière specifies that on the basis of values, cultural and social standards are created and certified, ways of knowledge and even the content of knowledge are organized, and objectives are settled within operational systems. Values also inspire the expressions and symbolic forms of culture. Thus, values play the role of a subsystem for adjustment so that system disorder does not bring about other disorders and troubles in the whole social system.⁵

However, values cannot play this role without being united into a coherent system, namely, unless they are balanced and interconnected. The absence of this dimension constitutes a crisis at the level of the axiological system, whose direct or mediated results will spread through different components of the social system.

In the socio-cultural field, crisis may be defined essentially as the perceptible disorder of what is considered a normal system or state of a system at a definite period of its existence. The disorder may occur as a result of the inability of appropriate elements or functions to support that system; of intrusion of heterogenous elements, unsuitable or incompatible with the system; of hypertrophy of elements or functions of the system unfavorable to the operation of the system. These raise two possible alternatives: either a structural and/or functional readjustment allowing that system to exist and survive, or its disintegration and replacement by a new system. At the level of an axiological system, a crisis usually expresses itself in all the above-mentioned dimensions, as is certified by the world history of transition periods to new types of culture and civilization.

Consequently, far from indicating only a final decline or total dissolution of a culture, a crisis of an axiological system is the expression of a necessary denial whose positive alternative is a process of spiritual renewal, of resettlement in the axiological order, and of reconciliation on a new basis of internal elements of the axiological system which at one moment had become incompatible. In fact, crisis must be seen as a complex phenomenon of adjustment, passing from a compromised equilibrium to a new, valid one.

The Axiological System in Transition

Marked by its historical or temporal dimension, the axiological horizon of a society bears the seal of its own genesis. That is why for a long time into the future the axiological system of Romanian society during transition will have an internal dimension of instability, tensions and contradictions as a reflex of the struggle between two worlds: an old world denied by the revolutionary process, and a new world which is being built. From this results the inevitable coexistence of old and new values, of axiological senses and countersenses which most seriously influence the cultural integration and axiological agreement necessary for an optimal cohesion of the social body.

In reality, during transition, various axiological systems coexist and interfere with one another:

1. the disintegrating old system is compromised, but still resistant to change;
2. the new system of prescribed values is at the level of formal ideological speech; and
3. the system of experienced values that are a mixture of the first two systems, including many subsystems of experienced values, is subordinated to different interests of social groups or micro categories.

The relations among the three axiological systems are not constant, but changing, tending to alter themselves according to the political and economic context, and the impact of reform within various social categories and groups. Taking into account the specificity of the transition period, fundamentally ambiguous and confused, especially at the beginning, the crisis of the axiological system inevitably will be marked by dimensions specific to it, as well as by recurring elements typical of dictatorship.

The following is a concise analysis of the main instances of the crisis of the axiological system in transition:

a) The first instance seems to copy, in a new variant, one of the forms of the crisis during dictatorship. This appears under the form of a disagreement between the ideal system of planned values within the reform program, and the reality of the system of experienced values. The new formal system of values, as a rationalized substitute within political speech, tends to become either fictitious or utopian. This is so at least for a short time while the new system of experienced values is unproductive from the point of view of an optimal operation of the social system, meaning that it is often marked by countervalues or negative values.

Far from representing an homogenous and integrated community, post-totalitarian Romanian society appears as differently organized both vertically and horizontally. Individuals belonging to various social strata are provided with axiological systems specific to their living conditions, to the subcultures to which they belong and to important differences in the area of their interests and expectations; while the economic factor is decisive for the axiological configuration to which an individual or a social group is attached.

Economic changes performed during the first years of transition have had a different influence upon various social categories and groups, reflected by the presence of varied axiological systems and by the gap between them and the formal system. Individuals' mistrust of the latter comes from the present discord or difference between what is prescribed and theoretically stated, and what is practiced in reality.

If, during the totalitarian system, the difference between the prescribed and the experienced values was due mainly to the utopian and obviously demagogic character of the former, during the transition the disagreement between the two types of axiological systems seems basically to derive from the crisis of authority of rules and institutions representing formal values. This explains also the crisis of value truthfulness that inspires rules and institutions, and that Alvin Toffler calls "an attitude of accepting anything , which is, in itself, an axiological position."⁶ In this case, we can speak about a feedback reaction, namely from rules institutions, towards subordinated values.

The underground institution of countervalues is a danger difficult to ignore, maintaining the axiological crisis during transition. For instance, there is almost general agreement upon the need of moral rebirth, of a recreation of the values profoundly disturbed by the totalitarian regime. In this respect, programs of parties and political groups of nonpolitical, cultural, religious and philanthropic organizations are rich in recommendations of new moral values and rules. However, in everyday life there are attitudes and behaviors ruled by negative moral values that seem to be a kind of "practical guide" for the conduct of particular social or socio-professional groups. The tacit institution of negative values, as well as of rules and practices deriving from them is a circumstance full of consequences for the opinions of individuals in the direction of divergent behaviors, centrifugal in relation to the formal axiological system.

b) Another instance of the crisis of the axiological system in transition is the crisis of axiological agreement in the individual's identity. Changes in the economy, as a result of the dissolution of the centralized system and the development of a private sector, and of political and nonpolitical organizations with the most varied and at times contradictory interests and programs, need a broad scale of values, divided and adjusted to haphazard interests. The break up of society into many economic, social and cultural groups, dominated by various sets of values is a division of values formerly shared in common, a shattering of the axiological agreement. This phenomenon is not typical of the transition within Romanian society, but is a more general and obvious in Western societies, especially in the second half of the 20th century with post-industrialism and post-modernism.

The Romanian philosopher, Tudor Vianu, remarked even in the middle of the 20th century that the modern individualism that could develop in the shade of the change in values is responsible for the disorder threatening modern society.⁷ This is much more so in contemporary society, as the two interdependent processes — value differentiation and social division — seem to have reached a dangerous level which is hard to ignore in a world seemingly still unprepared for a frontal assault by diversity. Certainly, the pluralism of a really democratic society needs an axiological pluralism, but an exaggerated diversity at the axiological level implies certain risks which are hard to overcome.

A first negative consequence can be related to the phenomenon of cultural and social integration. Cultural and social integration requires a set of shared fundamental values. The unprecedented diversity of values may induce a state of axiological confusion which is difficult to overcome for most members of society, who are deprived of a clear and coherent perception of the new socio-political and cultural context, and of the new mechanisms of the market economy. The axiological confusion, and as a result the ambiguity of rules, renders more difficult the achievement of the minimal agreement necessary for normal operation of the social system. The axiological and normative equilibrium on which the efficient operation of society depends runs the risk of being compromised by a continuously expanding relativism, disturbing the traditional processes of cultural integration and assimilation.

Under specific circumstances excessive axiological and normative relativism may turn into axiological evasion, entailing the loss of any axiological sense or criteria and the danger of choosing countervalues.

The ever growing diversification of values as a results of the increase of social diversity cannot be artificially blocked, as acknowledgement and acceptance of axiological diversity is an important sign of authentic democracy, progress towards freedom and the growth of the value of the human personality. Under these circumstances, there is an acute question: how can the growing diversity be promoted , without compromising the stability and necessary axiological minimal agreement for an efficiently operating social body? Much more than during transition, a desired direction cannot be achieved in the absence of a major agreement regarding strategic objectives, and of free consent to the sacrifices required by the austere style of life necessary to survive this stage of the economic crisis.

The answer to this question is extremely difficult because — beyond many objective obstacles, most of which reflected a continuation of the former system — there were the errors of the power structures during transition. Reform has been marked, on the one hand by conceptual errors by the authors of the reform and, on the other hand, by a faulty transposition into practical, functional terms by structures which in some cases were themselves resistant to change. Not finding their specific interest represented within the process of change, perceiving the contradiction between some (especially the economic) objectives of the reform and reality, it is natural that certain socio-professional categories and groups should not subscribe to the creative values of a process of change whose benefits proved illusory for them once the axiological agreement was dynamited from the start. The strategy for the formation of national interest would have in view the achievement of a general agreement around such fundamental values as: freedom, democracy, national sovereignty, peace, relative welfare, etc. In order that the idea of national interest not be turned into a formula with demagogical resonance, it would be necessary to elaborate a specific practical strategy. This must be able to guarantee the preservation and achievement of every creative value. At the same time, it must ensure a complete transparency of the decision making process as well as a system of public control upon practical achievement and responsibility at all levels.

The accelerated rhythm of change during the transition and the unprecedented fluctuation of axiological choices for the members of society contribute, in turn, to the crisis of the individual's identity. Transition, defined by Toffler as a new instability in everyday life, is expressed by a feeling of unsteadiness. The rapid rhythm of diversification, the versatility of group (especially political) structures, the permanent change of economic and political stakes, opportunism of all kinds and varieties, all contribute to an overturn of axiological standards within the everyday life of the individual. The loss of roots, namely, of the former socio-cultural identity and the crisis of adjustment to a new axiology constitutes a crisis of identity, a phenomenon specific not only to post-totalitarian societies but to all contemporary technosocieties. Providing few roots for a lasting identity, the new society exposes its members to the danger of losing their identity both in relation to their group and to the larger community.

Reconsideration of the individual's lasting involvement in the family and professional group representing the traditional structures that ensure a relatively stable identity, may be the only chance of reducing the negative results of this type of crisis.

c) A third crisis consists in the substitution of values-means for ideals or values-purpose. This can be one of the most serious manifestations of the crisis of an axiological system during

transition, with possible lasting negative results upon the human condition. Defined as a more or less remote purpose in the field of the imagination to which an individual, social group or community tends in the context of social and cultural processes, the ideal is a specifically human product: Man is the only being able to project, anticipate and prefigure the future. Opening the horizon of the possible, the ideal is not only a simple objective, but a value-purpose having meaning only in relation to spiritual activity. Authentic ideals found in the field of spiritual values alone can aspire to the statute of values-purpose. In this respect, we can speak about moral, socio-political, aesthetic, religious ideals, rather than only about those that are economic or technical. Beside the rational component, the sensitive-emotional dimension provides the ideal with an active role in guiding and transforming society, justifying the Romanian sociologist and philosopher, Petre Andrei, in calling it a "collective force".

The Axiological Ideal of the Culture

The social and cultural ideal of a community plays an important role in ensuring the unity of its axiological system and in guiding the individuals' axiological choices. Depending on the material changes of societies, the value-ideal changes from one epoch to another, differing within various human communities or even social groups. Inevitably, the transition periods from one epoch to another will acknowledge in history critical phenomena which will also influence the values-ideal.

At the present time, the crisis of the ideal appears in at least two ways. One is the absence of the ideal, the experience in the immediate of human existence as deprived of any prospect, or of cultural aspirations marked by an indifference to the collective and personal destiny, in other words, living in a world deprived of a future. This is experience of the most disadvantaged social categories who are living under the pressure of elementary needs without the means to respond to them. Whenever living conditions require major concern for material life there cannot be space for the expression of higher aspirations, and much less for ideals. "Under a certain level of needs fulfillment, behaviors are ordered by concerns about food, insecurity of dwelling, fear of tomorrow, professional difficulties, tensions within social relations, emotional problems, etc. There must be a certain social, material and spiritual security in order for one to benefit from free choice."⁸ The value-ideal can operate only in the field of free choice, beyond fulfillment of the individuals' reproductive needs.

A second expression of the crisis of the ideal is the substitution of an authentic ideal with value-means. This is expressed, in general, by the consideration of such economic values as profit, efficiency, wealth, etc., concretely the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of objects of consumption and of money as their universal equivalent, as the supreme aim of individual and social human existence.

From this prospect, intrinsic human development and man's spiritual richness run the risk of being ignored, minimized or taken only as means. Material success, aspiration to possess as many objects as possible, subordinates the ideal of "being"; material wealth prevails over spiritual patrimony. Even before the Second World War, in his well-known paper "Tragic Existence" (1934), the Romanian philosopher, D.D. Roca drew attention to danger of *Homo oeconomicus* for the future of European culture, due to its tendency entirely to subdue the spiritual. *Homo oeconomicus*, he noted, overturned the traditional scale of values that had ruled over the birth and duration of European civilization, turning the cult of material satisfaction, the longing for physical pleasure, the worship of pseudo-biological usefulness, into the highest values. *Homo oeconomicus*

cus turned the means of living into its goal, and spiritual values into a means to this purpose.⁹ The highest spiritual value itself, the person, D.D. Roca concludes, tends to be evaluated according to its efficiency in performing the irrational requirements and the exaggerated cult of the economic.¹⁰

These tendencies, pointed out by the Romanian philosopher in the fourth decade of the 20th century, visibly deepened as capitalist industrialization and the technical-scientific progress accompanying this process extended to all fields of human activity, leading to an overturn of the axiological hierarchy, to opacity of the criteria for distinguishing and ordering values-mean and values-purpose, and to their illicit substitution. These processes are described by many analysts and theoreticians of contemporary civilization and culture and are the source of seriously different philosophical positions.

In order that a society may become truly democratic and prosperous, not only for a narrow social category but for all, it is necessary to overcome the private, pragmatic aims of various social groups for a general value-purpose able to focus the interest and enthusiasm of everyone on rebuilding the community at the national scale. In his work, "The Philosophy of Values," published in 1945, Petre Andrei, admitting the existence of transient and variable ideals, recognized, at the same time, the existence of a supreme, invariable ideal, of an absolute value according to which we may evaluate the other values toward which we aim. This supreme ideal was considered to be humankind, namely the achievement of the concept of the most perfect morality and conscience of humankind.¹¹ Such an ideal seems to have preserved its validity almost unchanged, being nowadays more necessary than ever. It is not accidental that now it calls for an efficient relation of restructuring to moral value as the purpose of the transformation processes.

More than ever in today's technical, pragmatic world, marked by centrifugal tendencies, we need a genuine socio-cultural ideal, a value-purpose able to guide and give meaning to all values certified within the axiological field of the new society. Humankind, the value-ideal stipulated by Petre Andrei, can be considered a synthetic cultural value or axiological whole to which human fulfillment tends, reflecting the most properly human needs: creation, beauty, good relations with one's fellows, communication and emotion.

d) Directly linked to the crisis of the ideal, axiological dissonances, namely the prevalence and prevailing tendencies of specific types of value compared to others, is another crisis of the axiological system during transition. This concerns the privileged place occupied by economic and consumer values, as compared to spiritual values which tend to become peripheral or even to be ignored by many social categories in everyday life.

The privileged statute of the former values during the transition is explained, on the one hand, by their systematic neglect during the dictatorship, a time of generalized lack of consumer goods, and on the other hand, by the needs themselves of reorganizing society, and first of all the economy, in the context of free competition during post-totalitarianism. Consequently, these type of values would be justified, within certain limits, as a compensatory function with an instrumental-pragmatic function.

A hypertrophy of economic and consumer (vital and hedonist) values becomes dangerous due to its effect, namely, spiritual impoverishment and moral decline. The warning of D.D. Roca in the 1940s proves to be realistic once again: "The economic is today, in capitalism, the most real danger for the freedom of spiritual values. But it has become dangerous because of its exaggerated proportions."¹²

Without doubt, during transition, it is natural that economic values should play an important role in the strategy of restructuring because a poor society cannot promote authentic democracy and guarantee even the minimal fulfillment of its members' aspirations. Freeing private interests

and initiatives for building a strong market economy must be followed by equality of opportunity of every agent to participate in the new economic mechanism according to firm and correctly applied legislation. The absence of such circumstances has led to a chaotic evolution of the economic process, and to a growth of social tensions jeopardizing the future of the reform. These effects distract attention from considering dissonant and disintegrating tendencies within the axiological system. More exactly, this tends to dissociate economic values from juridical and moral factors or to ignoring the latter with destructive consequences.

In the field of axiological disparities, a tendency specific to contemporary times is a growing self-finality of scientific and technical values as they achieve an axiologically privileged statute due to their usefulness. They tend either to dissociate themselves from other kinds of values or to subordinate them. This tendency is based on the development of industrial societies towards maximal economic profit without boundaries, but also a prejudicial technological determinism according to which the rationality specific to scientific and technical progress is supposed automatically to lead to the solution of all social and economic problems with which present day human society has to deal. This monopoly of economic, scientific and technical values, which we called "axiological imperialism," has as its reverse side the removal of spiritual values, which therefore become unimportant and lose their specific role.

Axiological disparities during transition can be completed by the revenge of the irrational in relation to an over-scientific and over-technical society, and as a reverse side the removal or even abandonment in the totalitarian society of religious and mythical values, as well as social and emotional values. The crisis of individual and group identity, fears and especially hopes related to the new post-totalitarian world, can operate like fiction and escape to explain much of the propensity towards mythical, symbolic, astrological values.

Inbalance in the axiological system that hypostasizes one of its facets during transition comes into contradiction with to the complexity itself of the human being and of his many-valent nature. People need not only knowledge and instrumental values, but also relationships, communication, emotion, intuition and spontaneity — values which now tend to be forgotten or to be repressed. In this respect, it is necessary that the designers of the processes of socio-economic restructuring and decision-making structures elaborate programs able to renew and restate moral, juridical, religious and aesthetic values, so that development may not answer only the following question: "why?", "for what purpose?", but also "for whom?" and "with what result?".

The crisis of the axiological system should not be seen as an exclusively negative process, as a total decline of the culture and civilization of an historical period, but should be understood as a phenomenon within the dialectics of world development — the moment of denial comprising in itself the moment of its sublimation. Therefore, the dissolution of a system or of a table of values is accompanied by a process of axiological redefinition opening up a rebuilding of culture and of society as a whole.

Notes

1. Paul Henry Chombart de Lauwe, *Cultura i puterea* (Bucuresti, 1982), p. 211.
2. *Ibid.*, p.78.
3. Jean Lardrière, *Les enjeux de la rationalie. Le defi de la science et de la technologie aux cultures* (UNESCO: Aubier, Montaigne, 1977), p. 101.

4. Herbert Shore, "Culture, Development and Human Values," *European Culture and World Development* (Corvina, Budapest: Unesco, Joint Studies for the European Cultural Forum, 1985), p. 48.
5. Jean Lardrière, *op. cit.* p. 101.
6. Alvin Toffler, *Socul viitorului* (Bucuresti: Editura Politica, 1973), p. 288.
7. Tudor Vianu, *Studii de filosofie a culturii, Opere*, 8 (Bucuresti: Minerva, 1979), p. 169-170.
8. Paul Henry Chombart de Lauwe, *Pentru o sociologie a aspiraiilor* (Cluj: Dacia, 1972), p. 44.
9. D.D. Roca, *Existena tragica* (Bucuresti: Fundaia pentru literatura i arta, 1934), p. 139.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Petre Andrei, *Filosofia valorilor* (Bucuresti: Fundaiile regale, 1945), p. 160.
12. D.D. Roca, *op.cit.*, p. 133.

Chapter V
Contemporary Culture:
Between Individualization and Globalization

Elena Gheorghe

The new century and millennium is marked by a multiplicity and rapidity of change along with unprecedented complexity of economic, social, political, and cultural phenomena. Consequently, human existence is confronted with contradictory and/or complementary tendencies, on issues regarding economic, social, political and cultural life in need of being solved, both for the present but especially for the future of mankind.

The contemporary epoch is marked by tendencies of "universalization", "globalization", "communication" and integration, but, at the same time, also by tendencies of separation, isolation and autarchism. These phenomena can be considered the extremes of two natural hypostases — unity and diversity — to be found in economic, socio-political and spiritual life.

The times are marked by general phenomena as: the evolution of world economy, the scientific and technical revolution, progress in world trade, the development of telecommunication systems, the development of a cultural industry and informatics, the proliferation of mass-media, and the amazing evolution of transport. Under their impact there "appear the beginnings of an international culture,"¹ noted by researchers of the trends and tendencies that characterize contemporary society in such important fields as the economy, trade, science, religion, politics and social life.

Identity, Difference and Diversity in Contemporary Culture

The phenomena and processes of contemporary life indicate, as notes Henry Lefebvre,² that mankind is situated "under the sign of 'worldliness' or globalization." This appears from economic life with its crisis, ecology with the ecological crisis, politics with its tensions and conflicts all over the world, the life of nations with problems related to the conquest and the assertion and preservation of national independence, or from the individual's subjective life itself with its states of discomfort, fear generated by insecurity, tensions and multiple conflicts, violence, pressures, etc.

The specific "pressures of globalization" are generated by the interdependence, interaction, connection and reciprocal openings between various systems and subsystems, either concerning economic, social, political or spiritual life. These "communitary attempts" are the only premises for a beneficent, lasting and therefore progressive development, in all the fields of human life. These, in turn, require that the integrative processes favor equally all the components of the integrated system involved in the processes of development. These requirements are true also of the fields of cultural integration, supposing an equality of opportunity for all cultures.

But, concurrent with this "globalization" of culture, there are also complementary and sometimes even contradictory tendencies in the wish to assert the culture, specific cultural traditions, cultural identity and personality of various nations, ethnic groups, etc. As researchers on the main issues at the end of this millennium in the field of economy, trade, politics, social life and culture point out: "even if living styles begin to look alike, there are signs of a strong contrary movement: inertia against uniformization, the desire of assertion of culture and language, rejection of foreign influences, etc."³

While analyzing contemporary phenomena from this point of view, there is an undeniable fact: today humankind is facing stronger tendencies toward the assertion and preservation of cultural traditions, cultural identities, cultural differences, specificities and diverse cultures. This fact is a strong and convincing argument for recovering, acknowledging and realizing cultural difference, identity and diversity. Acknowledgement and even encouragement of cultural pluralism can occur only in the complex context of communication, cooperation, cultural dialogue and integration. This implies a globalization or the entrance of cultures into the world cultural circuit. Contemporary reality as complex and dynamic implies and even certifies the international, global and world dimensions of culture, with its identity, specificity and difference, diversity and pluralism. Here two hypostases coexist: they can be either complementary if they are genuine and not extremist, or contradictory if one (or both) exceed the limits of equilibrium, adopting extremist forms of cultural imperialism. This is the case of exaggerations of the tendency to globalization in unifying culture, or of cultural nationalism and chauvinism, autarchism and segregation, whenever cultural specificity and difference are exaggerated to the point of opposition.

Both tendencies — globalization of culture, on the one hand, and, on the other, assertion and preservation of cultural identity, and hence of differentiation — have their support and basis in a unique common reality: humankind as a unity and multiplicity, as a unique species spread throughout the world and at the same time rich in that specific and exclusive human creation: culture.

Human culture is unified or unitary inasmuch as it is a human creation, but at the same time it is diverse because of the ways of interpretation of the world, of man's relation to humankind, to himself and to the others. Cultural pluralism rightly reflects that in today's complex and dynamic world human communities express a wide range of options, perceptions, objectives and ideals — in a word, their own culture. Cultural diversity is synonymous with the right to existence, but also with the privilege to a specific existence among the world's cultures. The only way to reach a united world culture is to begin from these multiple, specific cultures, as necessary premises of creating a universal world or planetary culture.

The concept of cultural diversity covers a wide range of meanings, including specificity, uniqueness, cultural identity, multiplicity, cultural diversity, etc. Cultural diversity, multiplicity and uniqueness is a consequence of the ontology of cultures itself. Each culture has specific, existential dimensions; each distinguishes itself geographically, linguistically, ethnically and psychologically as a distinct world and human conception with a characteristic sensitivity to history. This provides each culture with a specific individuality, personality, identity and particularity. These are conditions for the existence and survival of cultures. Starting from this concrete ontological determinant of culture, we may conclude that any cultural work, before "belonging to the whole of humankind", "before becoming a common good", belongs to a specific culture, people, nation, ethnic group as both its creator and receiver. This concrete affiliation, determined by specific ontological circumstances gives cultures an irreducible character as distinct, irreducible realities. The meaning attributed to cultural diversity, identity, specificity does not exclude but, on the contrary, certifies the cooperation, collaboration and mutual influences among cultures. They are conditions for their development through reciprocal, favorable fertilization. World culture is made up through the creative participation of these individual, distinctive cultures, each with their own remarkable components in the world cultural circuit.

The recognition of a diversity of world cultures generates another fertile idea in the assertion of national cultures and the promotion of the traditional values of various cultures, namely, that of the polycentrism of cultures or the multiplicity of cultural centers. This realistic and creative

principle rejects, in fact, the harmful outlook of a unique cultural center which has prevailed for some time, namely, that Western Europe was the center whence "genuine" culture "irradiated", lighting "the periphery". Many times, this "enlightening" was forced, jeopardizing the fate and identity of cultures considered as "inferior" and "peripheral".

The acknowledgement of cultural diversity and consequently of a cultural polycentrism of multiple cultural centers located all over the planet, creates favorable conditions, not only for the coexistence of various cultures, but for their cooperation and reciprocal fertilization by the preservation of their own identities and specificities, rather than by their abolition. According to this outlook, in order to exist and advance, cultures should interact, cooperate and reciprocally influence one another. They should invest in this relation everything they deem valuable, remarkable, original, typical, but never jeopardizing their existence and continuity.

This outlook is based on the encouragement of bilateral and multilateral influences among various cultures and on the rejection of the idea of "cultural irradiation" from the single center, often considered to be that of Western European culture.

Tolerance and Cultural Polycentrism

The principle of cultural polycentrism is similar to the recognition of the right to exist of all cultures, to tolerance, knowledge, acknowledgement and respect of otherness, to equality among cultures, which definitely reject segregated outlooks and the divisions of cultures into "inferior" and "superior".

Integrating processes, world exchange and free circulation of values and ideas should in no way jeopardize cultural identity, the assertion and preservation of the cultural specificity of various nations. On the contrary, in order to be a genuinely lasting process of union of world cultures, it should rely on the valuable contributions of each culture. Their genuine values cross national borders to become a common cultural good of mankind. To be genuine and viable the unity of cultures cannot rely on the reduction of the cultural power of various nations, that is, on their inner weakness. On the contrary, it implies the encouragement of cultural differences as a condition of the preservation and continuation of world culture itself. The authentic and consequently organic unity of human culture is based on the principle that the power of a nation, a people and therefore of mankind relies not only on economic or political power, but also on its spiritual force, on the capacity and quality of its cultural creation. This is a sign not only of the "internal, but also of the external richness of a nation". This is one of the main reasons for the opposition of national cultures to the tendencies to cultural homogeneity or uniformization.

In a world culture of multiple and permanent interactions and connections, equilibrium among components and equality of elements included in the integrated system become essential for the operation of the system. This implies an absolute "no" to extremist tendencies generated by the practices of "cultural imperialism". This sees one sole cultural model as valid, thereby generating nationalism, chauvinism, cultural isolation and segregation; it destroys the possibility of dialogue, communication and openness. In other words, in a continuously changing world, attention should be mainly on humankind's common destiny; extremist tendencies are destined to failure.

It is necessary therefore to avoid and condemn extremes in order to preserve an equilibrium between cultures as complementary rather than contradictory, to balance the tendency of unification (globalization) of culture with that of the preservation of cultural diversity. Disrespect for this equilibrium generates tensions among cultures. These conflicts, as the Romanian humanist, George Uscatescu, observed, are more harmful for the fate of humankind than any other conflicts,

since they destroy the deepest sources of human existence." Conflicts between nationalist mentalities and humanist concerns contribute more to the distraction of European unity than all economic and nationalistic conflicts."⁴ He adds in conclusion: "European unity is conditioned by the unity of humanism;"⁵ the unity of culture as based on humanist values. This stresses the ability of culture both to unify and to integrate human communities, and at the same time to disintegrate and desegregate these communities, through norms, values, attitudes, behaviors, mentalities and institutions that it legitimates and circulates.

In order that the unity of culture⁶ may be authentic and organic, it is necessary (a) for relations among various cultures to be deep, for influences to be reciprocally beneficial (and not unilateral or based on a hegemony), and (b) for these relations to be based on reciprocal respect, resulting in a reciprocal exchange of values, knowledge, understanding and assimilation of genuine values. As sources of conceptions, behaviors, attitudes and creative mentalities, cultures should contribute both to the positive development of a varied world culture and to the fulfillment of the human personality.

This role of culture in ensuring the unity and progress of humankind is based on its capacities to serve as a subsystem within the social system, which like a seismograph, reacts to internal and external challenges in the most dynamic manner, and to translate external changes and stimuli into an internal code of behavior and thinking, transmitted to all members of a society.⁷ In this case, there is a close relation among cultures, not as a superficial "implantations", but as an assimilation of cultural messages, values and models. Therefore, this is not to take over *tale quale*, but to integrate other cultures, while preserving their identity.

But there is always the possibility that relations among cultures might remain at a superficial level aiming at a uniformity of life styles⁸ in such fields as gastronomy, fashion, pop music, entertainment, etc. This contamination results from consumer needs at a time when scientific and technical advances infinitely multiply these needs, while at the same time limiting and standardizing them.

Two Tendencies of the Globalization of Culture

There are two tendencies in the attempt to achieve the globalization of culture: (a) a profoundly "positive" unity, aiming to share mankind's most genuine cultural models and values, responding to the common fundamental hopes and needs of humankind, and (b) a superficial unity, which we could call "negative", limited to mimicking "forms deprived of content", or a superficial "grafting".

As a society in transition, today's Romanian society and culture encourages a genuine, creative unity since it is based on such principles as: reciprocal respect; equality among various cultures related as equal components; and need for knowledge, understanding and agreement on what is specific to each culture and its contribution to the world's cultural patrimony. Respect for these principles implies that the unity of culture is not against cultural pluralism, but, on the contrary, includes it as a condition "*sine qua non*".

Integrating general processes of an international exchange of cultural values through a free circulation of values, creates a stock for "world cultural assets." This is in fact the patrimony of world culture; it should not and must not jeopardize the cultural identity and the remarkable cultural traditions of the various peoples. On the contrary, these processes should rely on the cultural specificity and identity of peoples, with their important and genuine works, which are the components of a universal culture.

The complementary — not at all contradictory — nature of the relation between the universal level of culture and the national specific levels provided by various cultural identities is evident if we examine the great cultural works of the world patrimony belonging to everybody. The works were drawn from one people which produced them and bear in and with themselves the specific mark of this cultural context without ever denying a broader final context. On the contrary, these works entered the world circuit because they managed to attract the interest and satisfy the cultural needs of large categories of people, practically "a planetary audience".

A unity of culture seems to be a polysemantic concept, with multiple openings, horizons and prospects. There is now an agreement in this respect. Most researchers conclude that to seize the unity of culture means defining it by its "invariants"; recovering, organizing and generalizing common elements of culture⁹ as a specifically and exclusively human creation. From its creators and beneficiary's point of view culture means values, therefore human meanings and choices, intentionality and purpose, human prospects and ideals. As a unitary concept with universal openings,¹⁰ humans are the basis of a universal calling also to the specific dimension: culture. That is, culture is unitary, because there is a unitary human nature from which it springs, a way of existence that is specific to humankind.

The unity of culture must also be approached temporally, namely "from the prospect of alternative cultural changes" or "of cultural time" as Raymond Tschumi¹¹ points out. Analysis of temporal changes of various fields of culture, such as science, ethics, art, literature, etc., facilitates the building of cultural models whose synthesis include both similarities and differences.

To approach culture from a temporal point of view facilitates our understanding of the continuity and discovery of connections among different cultures. Culture seems no longer an isolated phenomenon from this perspective, but a process coming from the past, going through the present and towards the future, whose continuity is ensured by the perennial and universal values. These always return, with specific variations and different relevance, from one stage to another of humankind's cultural development. Another "invariant" of cultural unity and another perspective from which this unity can be approached could represent cultural values as "proteins" that coagulate the content of the overall culture, what contains specific national cultures or world culture. Values are essential components of the cultural system and at the same time its bonding force, because they respond to the specific needs, aspirations and ideals of humankind.

Therefore, the concept of value becomes an analytical tool that is much more economical for describing and explaining similarities and differences among people, groups, nations and cultures.¹² Through their deeply human content and meaning, values may unify communities when they respond to their most authentic needs and aspirations, but they can fracture humankind when they are not genuine human values or are subject to narrow interests.

By approaching culture from the perspective of cultural values, we get a clearer outlook upon the creation of what is called world culture, by analogy with that *Weltliteratur* Goethe talked about when he referred to the human mind's capacity to go beyond the "limits of society and history" and to offer itself to the whole world. This transcendence of the spatial and temporal limits of a culture is provided by such universal cultural values, such as Good, Beauty, Truth, Freedom, Justice, Equality, etc. These are created and cultivated within all cultures of the world, but go beyond these cultures through works that embody them. Shared by all humankind, they fulfil the needs, aspirations and ideals common to all.

Today, when humankind is facing all sorts of crises (economic, social, political and spiritual), the only escape is a common cultivation of scientific, moral, political, juridical, aesthetic and philosophical values for the sake of a common ideal of humankind: freedom, equality and dignity.

This combination, along with the mutual influence of various kinds of values, responds to the wish to know, understand, and use creatively the results of this knowledge and willingness to assume responsibility for the consequences of human decisions and actions for creativity, equilibrium, harmony and beauty.

Values as Care of Culture

Values can provide answers to the common problems raised by present evolution, as for instance: where are we going; what are the immediate and remote aims and objectives of humanity; what are the most suitable means to achieve these purposes, and how can we solve present crises in all fields of existence?

The relation between development and values is very close, because development as a process implies choice and creativity. An option means the choice among many alternatives and emphasizes the values guiding and motivating human behavior by setting goals and taking the means for reaching them.

Another approach to the unity of culture is based on its functions in contemporary society. Despite their amazing diversity, cultures operate in the same way in all societies. Yet the similarity of functions does not also imply a similarity of cultures. Each culture distinguishes itself by its specific functions: the function of knowledge aiming to understand and explain man, nature, society, and man's connections to the world. Culture also includes the creation and the materialization of knowledge and human experience in cultural works, as evidence of man's creative abilities; at the same time, it is a condition for the progressive development of culture in human history. Culture includes also the accumulation of knowledge and information generated by experience and human creativity. However, not all accumulations are cultural acts but only that which has social relevance or meaning and importance for a group, community, people or humankind. Culture includes, as well, communication: the transmission of these acquisitions from one group, generation, society or time to another. Through this function, culture ensures its own continuity and survival. Culture then encompasses the preservation of worthy traditions and their transmission to present and future generations. Through all these functions, culture can transform human society by applying acquired knowledge to culture in practice. Depending on the values it promotes and on roles it plays, it is able to contribute either to social progress or to its decline and to human stagnation.

Unity of culture is therefore provided by the unity and identity of its functions, both socially and individually. Through its values, institutions, norms, traditions and mentalities, culture is able to codify and recodify social and individual behaviors, attitudes and norms, according to the demands of the epoch. Through this creative act, it contributes to society's cohesion whenever behaviors, attitudes and mentalities converge toward general aims and ideals, and to similar creative modes of their achievement.

The present epoch allows for a complete exercise of the above-mentioned functions of culture and, consequently, the generation of a close relationship between socio-economic development and culture. Present development cannot be conceived without culture.¹³ Its institutions (scientific, economic, technical, political, moral, juridical, philosophic, literary-artistic and religious), values, rules, behaviors, representations, attitudes and mentalities are all essential components of the process of development.

Individualization and Globalization in Contemporary Romania

Contemporary society is evolving at a time of multiple uncertainty in almost all of social and individual life. In this unsafe world, the only thing to be unquestionably accepted is that we live in a changing, transforming world. Contemporary society undoubtedly is experiencing such deep changes, that it is marked by an unprecedented complexity of phenomena, processes and rhythms of evolution. What raises many questions is the direction of the development, as well as the modality of change and the forms human development.

Many times, people rightly become skeptical about development when confronted by its contradictory and confusing consequences. The reasons for this skepticism lie in historical experience which has demonstrated that neither economic growth nor technological progress automatically constitute development in its most complex and humanist meaning, which often is called "human progress".

The peculiarities of today's society raise many questions about the direction of contemporary society and individual development. We observe the socio-human consequences of the evolution experienced by a number of countries just rising from the Communist totalitarian system, and not only these. In this context of change or transformation, the journal, *Freedom at Issue*, called the decade, 1990-2000, "the decade of world democracy". This statement is based on the extraordinary transformations that took place within post-totalitarian societies, in the former socialist and Communist system. But beyond this statement one notes the difficulties generated by the direction, rhythm, and consequence or socio-economic and moral "costs" of transition to market economy, democracy and a new spirituality. The issue faced by these post-totalitarian societies is more complex and confusing since it is increasingly obvious that the overturn of totalitarian regimes does not mean, automatically and immediately, the establishment of democracy, market economy, human rights, or a new culture and spirituality. This is obvious from the confused, sometimes strained and dramatic, present situation in former socialist countries.

Romanian society today is in a period of deep economic, social, political, moral and cultural crisis. This stage is characterized by the searching explorations and experiments for ways and means to democracy, market economy, human rights, and a free, genuinely humanist culture. These experiments generate many uncertainties in the community, discouraging many people and generating a lack of motivation, hope, or even of ideals. These are only a few aspects of the negative results of reform during the transition. To diminish "the cost of transition" for the people, these explorations must generate some radical changes, both economic and social, political and spiritual. Endless repetition of practical mistakes or fruitless conflicts of opinion cannot lead to real reform and the establishment of a genuinely humane society.

In such an upside-down period, marked by contradictory, unsafe tendencies and evolutions, by lack of clear programs of development and precise aims for social actions, the role of culture through its values and institutions can and must be unprecedented for social development, according to the principles of authentic democracy. Under such circumstances, culture can be an active, transforming element, an agent of progressive development. "If ruled by culture, a change of societies can be made during periods of general and fundamental crisis."¹⁴ This change of the role of culture, in the direction of increasing its role in the social and individual field is possible in periods of crisis and of deep transformations, since: "during these important periods, even previously excluded alternatives may spread and prevail, while stable institutions become unstable and society is faced with an urgent need to find new ways for development."¹⁵

Today, Romanian society also faces the need to search for new ways and means of transformation, and for new alternatives to ensure reform in all, not only in economic, fields. Under these circumstances, culture can and must provide values, theories, conceptions and visions about the world, ideals and goals. In a word it must provide alternatives and choices that can provide coordinates for social and individual development, contributing thereby to the reduction of transition "costs" to persons and society. In our opinion, during the period of transition experienced now by Romanian society, through its values culture can and must become a transforming agent with more capacities than before.

The period of transition experienced by the Romanian society is distinguished in a number of ways: the outstanding complexity of processes and phenomena; their novelty; the rapid rhythm of changes of any kind; the great number of accidental, unpredictable and uncontrolled elements; the action of centrifugal tendencies and forces; individual freedom with its tendency to express itself "*sans rivage*"; the extreme relativity of cultural values; the growth of the distance between hopes and reality (values and facts); the neglect of the human component of reform, etc. All this requires a competent governing agent endowed with authority and the ability to solve various aspects of this period of reforms. The answer cannot but be culture with its values, institutions and "cultural agents," that is, persons endowed with a set of common values, clear motivation and perspective for the actions they undertake.

Finally, we may conclude that a unity of contemporary culture can be achieved through the ability of culture to "form and direct developing processes,"¹⁶ according to the most representative, profound and democratic human values. This aim implies, in fact, the effect of the development processes on man, the assurance of the humane dimension of development, and the orientation of its various aspects along rich and firm axiological coordinates to assure contributing to the free creative development of each person. This unity becomes valid and operational only if it relies on the respect of every culture and shares a set of universal values and general interests in the shared present and future of humanity.

Notes

1. John Naisbitt, Patricia Aburdene, *Anul 2000. Megatendinte. Zece noi directii pentru anii '90* (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 1993), p. 125.

2. Interview delivered by Henry Lefebvre to the newspaper "Le Monde", in the volume *Intrebari pentru sfarsit de mileniu* (Bucuresti: Convorbiri cu "Le Monde", Humanitas, 1993), p. 137.

3. John Naisbitt, Patricia Aburdene, *op.cit.*, p. 125.

4. George Uscătescu, *Proces umanismului* (Bucuresti: Editura Politica, 1987), p. 54.

5. *Ibid.*

6. In the following, we use the concept of culture in its meaning of a totality of values, standards, representations and behaviors, and the corresponding institutions, through which individuals and groups perceive, understand and interpret their relations to the world, to their fellows and to themselves. Adjusting this meaning to culture, its role in personal and social life becomes obvious. We note that dimension of culture, as an instance of typically human creation which through its components (science, morals, politics, art, literature, religion, philosophy, law) roots the individual and the communities within spatial and temporal coordinates, providing their identity. As Herbert Shore points out, "Culture places the individual in a specific context, perspective, way of perceiving, understanding and experiencing the world". (In "Culture,

Development, Human Values" in vol. *European Cultural and World Development*, UNESCO, 1985, p. 41). This definition of culture can stress both common dimensions of culture, and the specificity and diversity of cultures. The above-mentioned components of culture are meant to provide meaning to human life, because they raise matters related to human identity, to the direction of human existence, to human aims and hopes, and to ways of fulfilling the latter through man's relation to the world, to his fellows and to himself. Man performs this understanding of the meaning of human existence only through culture.

7. A. Ágh, "The Conflict of National and Western Cultures in the Third World," in *Philosophy and Culture* (Budapest: Akademiai Kodu, 1983), p. 79.

8. John Naisbitt, Patricia Aburdene, *op.cit.*, p. 124.

9. Adrian Marino, "Spiritual comparatist modern," in *Revista de Istorie si Teorie Literarâ*, 3-4/1989; 1-3/1990, p. 66.

10. Edmund Leach, *L'Unité de l'homme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), p. 388.

11. Raymond Tschumi, *Théorie de la culture* (Lausanne, 1975), p. 36.

12. Milton Rokeach, *Beliefs, Attitudes and Values* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1970), p. 157.

13. Erwin László, "The Role of Culture in Development," in Erwin Laszlo and Ivan Vitanyi, *European Culture and World Development* (Budapest: Corvina, 1985), p. 22.

14. *Ibid.*, p.23.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Herbert Shore, "Culture, Development and Human Values," in *Culture and Development* (Budapest: Corvine, 1975), p. 41.

Chapter VI

The Meaning of Civilization in the Thought of Mihai Eminescu

Alexandru Husar

Introduction

Mihai Eminescu has been described as "a lucid man, an intellectual with an acute understanding of political life, a thinker concerned with outlining a socio-political system with clear opinions on foreign policy, and a man active in the sphere of public life."¹ He is recognized for his practical way of thinking which was quite original for a journalist in the political climate between 1876 and 1883.

Eminescu's entrance into journalism in 1873 marked the beginning of "his own philosophy of society advanced through his original thinking and public positions. This was not an abstract society in 1877 and in the following years, but a period marked by extraordinarily rapid evolution of social relations. It was the time of the modern development of the state, culture and material civilization."²

To appreciate his making "the first national contribution on an international level and (being) the bedrock of modern Romanian culture"³ we must admit that "Eminescu's role in our culture does not have a universal meaning" (Constantin Noica) and, secondly, but that "by defining the ideal of progress and civilization, Eminescu asserts ideas that are very current."⁴

First, what did Eminescu mean by civilization? Its modern and now ordinary usage was developed by the eighteenth century rationalists, mainly by Voltaire and those of his school. The definition is based on an antithesis between civilization and feudalism, between the Enlightenment and the Dark Ages, between civilization as opposed to barbarianism and as pointing to a relatively advanced stage in the development of humankind. Philosophically, it conveys an active sense of culture and of man's universal vocation. Thus, the first issue is the relation between man and civilization. In his view, civilization consisted mainly in the natural, organic development of one's powers and faculties. Furthermore, "there is no general human civilization accessible to all people in the same degree or in the same manner. Rather each people has its own civilization, although this involves many elements common to other peoples as well."⁵

By emphasizing the diversity of civilization, an idea promoted since more and more insistently by anthropological research,⁶ Eminescu's thinking proved accurate. The pragmatic obverse of this idea regarded, the relationship between culture, on the one hand, and civilization, on the other, along with history as the evolution specific to each people. Eminescu took into account and developed both of these. According to him, culture implied the existence of fundamental works in the field of the positive natural sciences; a second way of measuring the level of a nation's culture was "people's skill in substituting natural agents with physical force by the creation and use of machines."⁷

The correlative of culture, civilization, was its result or derivation. From this perspective, the degree of civilization achieved by a people was not measured, as Eminescu metaphorically put it, "in terms of the number of polished boots, French sentences, or journals, but in terms of one's capacity to make the blind forces of nature submit to man's goals." For "the more powerful is

man's way over wind, water, and steam, so that he makes them his working slaves, the higher is his degree of civilization; whereas the more man masters man, the greater is his barbarism."⁸

Culture and Work

Thus, civilization incorporates a more complex relation, including both economic and social aspects. The determining factor for the civilization of a state, Eminescu pointed out, was economic. Real freedom and economic independence were identical notions in Eminescu's opinion. If a national economy was to subdue nature, it followed that the more rigorous the domination, the more advanced the people that exerted its power. The overall result of mankind's power over nature stood for real civilization. Each nation aimed at conquering nature, and at the highest degree of this dominance."⁹

Hence, he saw "the sanctity of work" as a condition for any civilization. The beneficial habit of regular work as a source or requisite of production and welfare was the key to the economic dimension and hence the fundamental factor of civilization. The substance of a nation's life is work; its purpose is good living and good fortune which are, indeed, essential. "The wealth of a state lies neither in laws nor in money, but in labor. By gathering a lot of money in a country where work is absent, one will have to pay dearly for a day's work," for, as the poet explained, "where manpower is wanting or the quality of production is low, one can hardly speak of a wealthy country."¹⁰

On December 22, 1876, having just returned to Romania, Eminescu suggested in *Curierul de Iasi* that work was what lent significance to civilization, or, as he put it, "the substance of civilization can be achieved only through work. Not even journals, laws, academies, or the most advanced form of organization will help without work. A state of affairs that is not grounded in work is a phantasmagoria which will last a longer or shorter period, but will turn into smoke when faced with cold reality."¹¹

His arguments were based on a solid principle: "Work is the mainspring of the political economy. Only work done under the circumstances of a political economy that requires a surplus of production over consumption can resist all crises and commotions."¹² What was important was the equilibrium between consumption and production. It was bad when consumption exceeded production. The big secret concerning poverty was, in Eminescu's eyes, the increase in the number of consumers who do nothing to make up for the work of the producers who support them.¹³

Eminescu placed economic activity at the base of social life, the physical and intellectual work performed by the productive classes; for Eminescu work meant, first and foremost, "the production of material goods." As far as the value of the productive classes was concerned, Eminescu, together with the physiocrats, and, to a certain extent with Adam Smith, stressed the importance of the peasant class as the one which produced essential material goods."¹⁴

Influenced by the physiocrats, he did not include commerce in the category of productive activities. Vehemently denouncing "parasitism", he deemed merchants to be parasites. Still, the poet introduced the thesis concerning the importance of productive labor in general, being remarkably aware of its economic implications in the diversification of industrial production and the intensification of economic activity. In a broader sense, he admitted that "it is not their point of origin which accounts for a people's lasting existence, but rather their work, whether physical or spiritual."¹⁵

Eminescu claimed, more than once, that "the fundamental evil of the country springs from the lack of social organization and consequently from the lack of the diversification of the labor, its

reduction to one-sided exploitation of the land." Eminescu envisioned "a social reorganization meant to defend and to promote work, and to do away with parasites and superfluous individuals in the domain of public life."¹⁶ In his opinion, "any gain without benefit for the public good is immoral". The source of evil was identified with the phenomenon of regression to a lower social position, or as he put it, "overmultiplying the number of people who live off the labor of the same number of producers."

Eminescu acknowledged that "in a normal state which is decently governed, there is compensation for the sacrifices made by people of lower station"; but, "in other countries, the privileged classes make up for the physical work done by the lower classes through their intellectual activity."¹⁷ Starting from this assumption, Eminescu noted that "art and science are the offspring of luxury, but they also have a compensatory function. The technological inventions in all fields of modern life, in factories and manufacturing, require a thousand times more exertion than those who work manually."

Many critics have carefully focused on these economic aspects in Eminescu's work. His extensive writings, mentioned above, are representative of his economic thinking which validated the importance of work as a source of wealth, as a factor generative of values and as a guarantee of the establishment of a durable and prosperous society.¹⁸ This paper concerns itself with the sense of work within the general framework of the poet's thinking, and regarding its theoretical implications.

In this respect, work became a determining factor of economic emancipation, the only lever of improvement, and the only means of healing a society; "there is," the poet clamored, "only one remedy to this end: work. Work, rather than banqueting with the scum of French civilization; work, rather than pornography on the boulevard; work, rather than alms; this is how a nation can thrive."¹⁹ According to Eminescu, "Only a strict organization which would strengthen the people's capacity for work and production, an organization that would render social climbing more difficult when it came to public office and, by establishing another economic regime, would open a market which would protect the manpower engaged in a real working process, could heal the evils from which society suffers."²⁰

This idea was later explored in all its amplitude; it was based on the following reasoning: "there is, indeed, but one remedy against evil, and this must be administered very rigorously and exclusively: work, the mechanistic correlative of truth; truth, the intellectual correlative of work."²¹ Thus, when it comes to civilization and its logic, work is significantly important if, as Eminescu wrote in *Timpul* (13 October 1881), "civilization proper consists in the sum of truth understood and applied by a people. As civilization reaches higher levels, the larger is the sum of those truths."²²

On the other hand, work acquired a more complex meaning, both social and political, closely related to the very culture it determined: "There can be neither freedom nor culture without work. One who thinks that, by professing a few sentences, he has replaced work, and consequently freedom and culture, unknowingly becomes one of the parasites of Romanian society."²³

Admitting that "there is no real remedy against misery other than work and culture,"²⁴ Eminescu repeatedly asserted, that "it is work, and only work, that is the spring of freedom and happiness."²⁵ In many of his articles the poet emphasized the moral value of work for any civilization; in his eyes, the lack of real culture was equated with the "lack of morality in a higher sense of the word" and, in consequence, he emphasized also the judicial value of labor: "Work is the only creative factor among all rights; finally, earnest work is what is justified on this earth."²⁶

The relationship between work and culture became a criterion of civilization in Eminescu's analysis. In the modern age, work and culture represented and still represent the terms by which the civilization of a people is measured. Besides its economic basis, work constituted the judicial ground of civilization, and also its ethical underpinning. A close connection between truth, justice and virtue (in his opinion justice was truth, virtue was truth, an absolute truth, not a relative one) led to the conclusion that "truth, justice, virtue, are so closely interrelated that you might think of them as one."²⁷ Hence, the corollary: "Civilization means love of truth, virtue and justice."²⁸ Civilization thus implied a stage in the moral and judicial, not only the economic, evolution of a people.

The Substance and Forms of Civilization

Eminescu dealt with the issue of civilization in realistic, not abstract and speculative terms. He referred to "not modern civilization" in itself as opposed to past forms of civilization, but to a certain hypostasis of modern civilization in a given society. Thus, his thinking had a precise, definite aim: "The phenomena that interested him were Romanian."²⁹

During Eminescu's time, a serious process of internal organization was initiated on the basis and through the elements of civilization that emerged or took shape between 1840-1880. It was a period in which modern Romania was being formed, when modern civilization and culture penetrated the three Romanian provinces and the question of the assimilation of foreign culture was urgent and topical. The fundamental problems had to do with the development of Romanian civilization struggling against this historical context. This context also circumscribed Eminescu's thinking (or what has been called his "practical thinking") as revealed in his journalism, written at a distinct moment in the movement of ideas in Romania. The poet's contribution lay in the fact that he was "the first to see in the events of the seventh and eighth decades of the 19th century the crystallization of a civilization, of a coherently articulated state of the society."³⁰

Eminescu condemned this civilization which consisted, in his eyes, "in maintaining the external forms of Western culture" and their incongruity with the organic development of his country. "The advanced forms of the superficial civilization which have been brought to our territory like an exotic plant are, indeed, inappropriate."³¹ He thought that "the empty forms of foreign culture were a simulacrum, devoid of substance, nothing more than soap bubbles." He denounced this "French smattering, this infinitesimal civilization, misunderstood and borrowed from foreigners."³²

His statements were based on two criteria: the first is the logic of the evolutionary process; the second, its rhythm. Eminescu asserted that: 1) by introducing forms borrowed from the more advanced civilizations of other nations, the thread of historical development was broken; 2) the hasty attempt at reaching, without the support offered by culture and material prosperity, the advanced level of Western civilization resulted in a gap between real civilization and its appearances.

Distinguishing between appearance and essence, forms and substance, Eminescu noticed that, dazzled by Western civilization, the past generation thought that by introducing its external forms, its content could also be brought in."³³ Hence the utopian character of this civilization: "Not only one utopia," as he put it, "but thousands of utopias filled the heads of the past generation, which believed freedom was possible without work, culture without analogous economic development."³⁴

Aware of both the economic and cultural complexity of this problem, Eminescu acknowledged that "to insert the forms of a foreign civilization where its economic correlative is missing is a futile endeavor."³⁵ This is because, as the poet explained, "in our country the former economic dependency is unfortunately turning into the economic extermination of that person to whom the place where he works or his level of culture do not offer the same advantages as those of his happier neighbor; when competition is given free rein, things turn out to be very threatening for the economically weak and for the uneducated."³⁶

It was obvious to him that "No man of even shallow learning questions the fact that a relatively backward people, brought too soon into contact with a foreign civilization, is in danger of perishing." Eminescu anxiously wrote, explaining with the clear-sightedness of an economist, the consequences of this state of things: "Once a Romanian has entered into contact with thousands of people with more energetic economic habits, more selfish, and more developed from a cultural point of view, it is clear that those people have become the hunters and he the prey. . . ." Having been forewarned, Eminescu saw confirmation of this fact: "Each time we think of the development of Romanian economic life," he wrote on October 21, 1882, "we are reminded of an apparently paradoxical, yet truer, idea asserted by an American economist: `for a culturally backward country, communication with foreign countries is dangerous.'"³⁷

On another occasion, the poet attacked the false belief that the establishment of the external forms of Western culture could supplement for the lack of a solid and substantial indigenous culture. "An uneducated nation can enjoy the pleasures of civilization, but at the price of degeneration."³⁸ It was a consistent principle of his practical thinking that: "It is mathematically certain that whatever is done without a parallel preliminary development of culture is futile, that any real progress takes place not outside, but inside people."³⁹

The poet's thinking was receptive to the premises or more exactly, its generative conditions of civilization on Romanian territory. What Eminescu actually criticized was the fact that "nobody thinks about this. Everyone hopes to benefit from the advantage of foreign civilization, but no one thinks of introducing into the country those cultural conditions by which such results would be self-productive."⁴⁰ However, it was "not so much the actual introduction of forms of (imported) foreign civilization that bothered Eminescu, but the fact that, in the given circumstances, the conditions that would assure an organic assimilation of these forms of civilization, if not their content as well, were not also introduced.

Eminescu was convinced that "a people's real civilization consists not in the arbitrary enforcement of laws, forms, institutions, labels, clothes, etc., but in the natural development of its own powers, its own faculties." As far as the essence of civilization was concerned, one of the ideas that was frequently and consistently sustained by him concerned "the multi-dimensional development of peoples and nations, which represents the goal and the result of real civilization."⁴¹ In Eminescu's opinion, a real civilization was one whose supreme value was man, who through intelligence and work combined made possible the development for "all physical and moral abilities. The idea is that all the abilities of a people should be cultivated and that a nation should not be condemned to a single type of work."⁴²

Needless to say, this idea, which was perhaps one of Eminescu's most valuable, had theoretical support in the logical meaning of civilization. On the other hand, the pragmatic obverse of this idea concerned the evolution of society in terms of its needs: "When a society such as ours develops new needs, it is likely also to contract new abilities." Steadfast to this principle, he condemned the introduction of a pseudo-civilization through a multiplication of needs, but without a parallel evolution of intellectual and economic abilities.⁴³ This was an inevitable result of the division of

labor as a condition of civilization, both economic and social, as well as its direct premise on the cultural plane.

Eminescu obviously also had in mind industrial production. At a certain point, Eminescu saw the "lack of real culture" in the fact that, with the exception of few centers, Romanian youth was no longer interested in any of the branches of industrial production.⁴⁴ The progress of industry implied successive changes in both social and state responsibilities. The substitution of the physical force of workers with a mechanical force, which made it more intellectual, involved a cultural process, but also primordially an economic approach. This approach included encouraging mechanical work, diversifying it, creating it where it was nonexistent, applying national abilities each in its own way to the diversity of productive branches, and bringing the nation, agricultural as it still is, to the stage of the division of labor⁴⁵ through skillfully combined measures.

Despite the tendencies of estrangement manifested by Romanian industry, Eminescu undoubtedly had in mind the establishment of an indigenous national industry.⁴⁶ More than once, Eminescu expressed his belief that "we must not remain agricultural; we must become an industrialized nation, in order to be able at least to meet our needs." "The columns of this paper," he wrote in *Timpul* in 1882, "have been in the past years witnesses to the fact. Within the practical limits dictated by experience, I have supported the encouragement and protection of national industry."⁴⁷

In his century, Eminescu was aware of what later would be necessary in organizing work at the national level including: (1) the organization of agricultural labor; (2) the establishment and protection of industrial work, each equally valued and necessary to protect the national existence of Romania against "the possible dangers from northeastern Europe, (the economic dominance which may come from the West)."⁴⁸ It was also true that "defense against the external danger is coupled with the need to assure a real civilization in the historical space of our people and with the principle of nationality which gains more and more ground."⁴⁹ Viewing civilization in the light of the ideas embraced by the *Junimea* cultural society, Eminescu foresaw, in this spirit the creation, first, of the substance, and then of the forms of civilization, not vice versa. "A nation should be in the first place industrial and then have the laws and institutions of industrial nations".

Civilization and National Context

This doctrine concerning civilization could be derived from what already has been said. As noted, this doctrine is the expression of a profound conception about building civilization and culture in a national context. Eminescu emphasizes the importance of the creative capacity of each national community in the process of building a civilization.⁵⁰

Convinced that a nation's real civilization rose out of "that nation's roots and depths and not out of the imitation of foreign habits, languages, and institution,"⁵¹ Eminescu frequently pointed out: "If there is ever going to be on this earth a real civilization, it will have emerged from the elements of the old civilization." This implied a law of continuity which, if lacking in the development process, would lead to "fragmentarism".⁵² It was in this sense that Eminescu severely criticized the hasty imitation of certain foreign "forms". In his opinion, national identity and continuity are assured not through cultural leaps, but through the evolution of the very substance of civilization.

The idea of organic development (contrary to the so-called theory of "forms without substance"), of willed progress, did not imply stagnation or the elimination of change. The entry of Romanian society into a new evolutionary cycle was a necessity and could not be questioned.

Isolation was not a solution in the poet's eyes, rather the cultural community of civilized Europe was "so absolutely necessary" for the Romanian people "that the attempt to weaken it would mean today the paralysis of any progress of our schools and, generally, of the Romanian state."⁵³

Thus, while working at *Timpul*, Eminescu relentlessly developed and applied to contingent reality his old political philosophy outlined at the Iasi Conference, a philosophy akin to Maiorescu's ideas about the relationship between forms and substance. *Junimea's* fundamental idea was, as G. C. Ionescu remarked, the creation of a natural political life, born out of a slow advancement toward progress by contact with Western civilization,⁵⁴ and not by excluding it.

In the dialectical game of the relationship between form and substance, it will be obvious for anyone intent on defining the great mystery of existence that this consists of the ongoing revitalization of substance and in the maintenance of the forms. As a particular example, Eminescu, agreeing with *Junimea*, had in mind England "which is the most civilized country in all respects" and which, the poet remarks, "still preserves the old historical forms, always refreshed by the modern spirit, by modern work."⁵⁵ This fact does not imply the immutability of forms, which can be always organically and naturally refreshed by the modern spirit and by modern work, without affecting the national identity or what Eminescu called "the nation's soul." On the contrary, throughout his journalistic work, Eminescu emphasized the authentic modern spirit, the way it existed in countries with traditions of modern development and the way he wished it also existed in Romania. What absorbed him were the fundamentals of the modern development processes which were, according to him, work, nation, the productive classes, tradition, etc. Being modern meant for Eminescu acknowledging the option of each national state to build a civilization originating from its own traditions. Real civilization was deeply rooted in national ground. The country's modern development was conceived by Eminescu in such a way that it was determined by conditions and factors specific to the Romanian nation.⁵⁶

In view of this approach, the art of ruling was, in Eminescu's opinion, that of harmonizing the interests of society because "everything that exists is a result of society: language, spirit, learning, wealth, civilization and power. The main thing is that these should result from a society named *nation*, and not the whole universe."⁵⁷ Consequently, it was the civilization which stimulated the shaping of a nation, that is, for Eminescu a people's abilities represented the most authentic civilization. "Besides this", Eminescu argued, "a people's civilization consists mainly in the development of those human pursuits common to all people, rich or poor, great or small; those guiding principles constitute the foundation of the entire life and of all human activity. The more developed these general principles and faculties, the more civilized is that nation." For, the poet concluded, "civilization is not represented only by the intellectual class, but must encompass all social strata."⁵⁸

Such an idea had with Eminescu a pronounced social implication, which nowadays is profoundly democratic and posed fundamentally theoretic interests. Admitting that "an uneducated people that gradually but persistently strives to reach a level of civilization, that learns how to assimilate other people's abilities and wisdom does succeed in becoming equal to them." Eminescu also admitted a corollary, "the complete correspondence between territory and nation, between physical force and intelligence. Complete harmony: proportionality between main and collateral powers," was, in his eyes, "the climax of civilization."⁵⁹ Thus, civilization held a very deep meaning for Eminescu. Civilization was first seen as a phenomenon of great breadth. It implied a relation between "territory" and "nation," as well as between a people and their abilities. Within the framework of society, civilization, in its modern sense, implied differences between people and classes in terms of their social role concerning the national potential or the competence of

society, more exactly its work. Civilization, thus became a total social phenomenon, as Mauss conceived it. This excluded any one-sided limits, whether economic or cultural.

Secondly, what was called the "national theoretical model" accounted, in Eminescu's opinion, for the shaping of modern civilization by asserting needs and ideals which stemmed from a national community's specific aspirations. The national theoretical model displays the pluralism of the means of modern development determined by cultural differences and by the existence of different systems of value. It also emphasizes the preeminence of the national and, at the same time, it acknowledges the interplay between "the national and the universal."⁶⁰ It thus was rightly assumed that "in spite of certain historical limits which are fully accountable, in many respects Eminescu promoted an amazingly new and correct understanding of civilization, of the relation between the national and the universal that were involved in its building, and of the relation between continuity and discontinuity that marked its evolution."⁶¹

More than that, "Eminescu is the first among Romanian analysts to perceive, through the eyes of a sociologist, the consequence of connecting backward societies to modern forms of civilization, of interaction between areas of civilization." Surprisingly, Eminescu tackled another side of the problem: the objective impact of drawing a backward society into the flux of modern Western civilization, and the costs implied by the multiple articulations of the worldwide capitalist system. Although, "the poet did not insist on this matter, but only inferred it."⁶² he did so with keen insight, a vivid sense of evolution, and a premonition of actuality.

Issues concerning methods of development of certain countries desirous of an accelerated progress are much debated nowadays, which renders Eminescu's approach very topical with regard to development. Yet, "this does not mean that we artificially relate the Romanian thinker to contemporary ideological and theoretical trends."

Eminescu's doctrine is confirmed by the theories (of the "One-Dimensional Man") expounded by Herbert Marcuse, a member of the Frankfurt School, and by Arnold Toynbee, an English historian and sociologist, about "parallel civilizations." Thus, the thesis of the unity of civilization is rejected. Although, Toynbee remarks, "the states of the contemporary world are part of a unique political system, of occidental origin, still considering them as a proof of the unity of civilization would be indeed superficial." Besides a few illusions generated by the worldwide success of Occidental civilization, especially with respect to material wealth, the error in this conception of a "unity of history," endorsing the opinion that "there is only one civilizing trend, that is ours, and that the others are all subject to it or are lost in a desert"⁶³ has to do with prejudices which are subtly signalled.

Studying the contacts between civilizations, both in space and in time, and including the consequences, both positive and negative, of the interplay between contemporary societies, Eminescu pointed out that "the insertion of occidental ideals and institutions in non-occidental societies often entails confusing results; . . . 'one man's food is another's poison.' The attempt at introducing an element of foreign culture by excluding the rest is doomed to fail."⁶⁴

The concept of nation, "which is specific to European culture and has spread it all over the world,"⁶⁵ represents nowadays "one of the most important and irrefutable issues of political science and of the contemporary historical process."⁶⁶ Eminescu's doctrine thus conveyed a fundamental necessity: the development of a modern Romanian civilization starting from within the national community and then naturally expanding to other European cultural horizons. By conceiving of civilization in these terms, Eminescu proved that he had, in his time, an important message to convey, perhaps not only to the Romanian nation of that time, but to our epoch as well.

Notes

1. M. Gafita, "Mihai Eminescu," in *Studii de istorie literara* (Bucuresti, 1979), p. 157.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
3. P. Geogescu, "Eminescu i contemporanii s i," in *Studii eminesciene* (Bucuresti, 1965), p. 591.
4. Th. Ghideanu, "Mihai Eminescu," in *Istoria filosofiei romanesti*, I (Bucuresti, 1985), p. 593.
5. *Timpul*, VI, 1881, no.233, 25 October (1881); Cf. Mihai Eminescu, *Despre cultura i art* (Iai, 1970), pp. 15-16.
6. For more details see Clifford Geertz, *Savoir local, savoir global* (Paris, 1986); Constantin Schifirnet, *Civilizatie moderna si natiune* (Bucuresti, 1996), p. 91.
7. M. Eminescu, *Opera politic* , II (Bucuresti, 1941), p. 148.
8. *Antologia gândirii româneti* (Bucuresti, 1973), p. 558.
9. M. Eminescu, *Fragmentarium* (1981), p. 154.
10. Idem, *Opera politic* , I, p. 140.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 89-99.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
13. M. Eminescu, *Opere*, XI (Bucuresti, 1984), pp. 148-149.
14. Idem, *Opera politica*, II, p.140.
15. Idem, *Opere*, XI, p. 157.
16. Idem, *Opera politic* , II, pp.323-324.
17. *Ibid.*, pp.252
18. D. Vatamaniuc retraces the itinerary of the poet's economic readings and follows the way in which he integrates the ideas of H.C. Cary, J.B.Say. Sismonde de Sismonde, Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Paul Leroy-Baulieu, etc., in the laboratory of his own intellectual and journalistic activity. Cf. D. Vatamaniuc, *Eminescu* (Bucuresti, 1988), chapter "Jurnal al form rii intelectuale".
19. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 466.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 475 ff. and M. Eminescu, *Opere*, XIII (Bucuresti, 1985), p. 146.
22. M. Eminescu, *Opere*, XIII, p. 189.
23. *Timpul*, 17 February (1880).
24. M. Eminescu, *Opere*, XIII, p. 189.
25. Al. T nase, *Introducere in filosofia culturii* (Bucuresti, 1968), p. 196.
26. M. Eminescu, *Opere*, p. 290.
27. *Fragmentarium* (manuscript 2 257), p.1 117.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Damian Hurezeanu, "Analist al civilizaiei romane," in *Eminescu — sens, timp i devenire istorica* (Iasi, 1989), p. 673.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 654-659.
31. M. Eminescu, *Opera politic* , II, p.555.
32. Idem, *Opere*, IV (Bucuresti, 1938), p. 365.
33. *Ibid.*, IX, pp. 291-292.
34. *Ibid.*, XI, p.18.
35. *Ibid.*, X, p. 187.
36. Idem., *Opera politic* , II, p. 293.

37. *Idem.*, *Opere*, XIII, p. 193.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 331-332, 201.
39. *Idem.*, *Opera politic*, II, p. 498.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 497.
41. Al. Tan se, *op. cit.*, p. 195.
42. *Antologia gândirii româneți*, p. 558.
43. M. Eminescu, *Opere*, XIII, pp. 201-202.
44. *Ibid.*, III, p. 403.
45. *Ibid.*, XIII, p. 173.
46. *Curierul de Iasi*, nos. 64 and 65 (1876).
47. M. Eminescu, *Opere*, XII, p. 178.
48. *Idem*, *Opera politica*, p. 398.
49. I. Saizu and Gh. Buzatu, "Sintagma eminescian `strat de cultura'", ca necesitate istoric permanenta," in *Eminescu, sens, timp si devenire istorica* (Iasi, 1990), p. 202.
50. I. Constantin chifirne, *op. cit.*, p. 70.
51. M. Eminescu, *Opere*, XII, p. 379.
52. *Fragmentarium* (manuscript 2 28f, f. 148).
53. M. Eminescu, *Opere*, XI, p. 65.
54. G. C linescu, *Viata lui M. Eminescu* (Bucuresti, 1938), pp. 354-355.
55. M. Eminescu, *Opera politica*, II, p. 247.
56. Constantin Schifrinet, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-70.
57. *Fragmentarium*, (manuscript 2 262), p. 232.
58. Federatiunea, III, no.38, (1870); M. Eminescu, *Opera politica*, I, 34.
59. *Fragmentarium*, manuscript 2 255, p. 116.
60. Constantin Schifrinet, *op. cit.* p. 71.
61. Al. T nase, *Introducere in filosofia culturii*, p. 195.
62. Damian Hurezeanu, *op. cit.*, p. 675.
63. *Panorama des sciences humaine* (Paris: sous la direction de Denis Holler, 1973), p. 607.
64. Arnold J. Toynbee, *Estudio de la Historia*, 3, Compendio IX-XIII (Madrid, 1971), pp. 1368-1375.
65. G. Petrillo, *Nazionalismo* (Milan, 1995); Cf. E. Chabod, *L'idea di nazione* (Bari, 1972).
66. Guido Ravasi, "Reflexions sur le nationalisme: De la critique de `l'objectivisme aprioriste' a une nouvelle approche du nationalisme," in *Bulletin europeen*, no. 10 (569), 1997, p. 14.

Chapter VII

Socrates and the European Spirit

Sorin Vieru

In this chapter we plan to write about Socrates. Words are hard to come by and little new can be written about Socrates. Whereas Socrates was an unrepeatable, unmistakable presence, the words to celebrate him are borrowed from a hackneyed, outworn didactic rhetoric. This pious dozing of the spirit, this humdrum celebration, how will we shake it off? To eliminate this solemn boredom, we will point out that endless celebration cannot substitute for effective presence. Once we have realized the uniqueness of Socratism, its everlasting presence in the past and its great absence here-and-now, conventional celebration becomes out of place. For the sake of this thematic metamorphosis, we may be allowed to mention even the unavoidable clichés, the moments history has handed down to us as popular fables from an Epinal-like cultural imagery: Socrates in court, Socrates and the *prosopopoeia* of the Laws, and Socrates drinking hemlock before his weeping disciples.

The Ways of Talking about Socrates

We can examine the philosophy of Socrates from two viewpoints. We may conjure up the forces of negative thinking and, with the sweeping fury of a Nietzsche or Cioran, revile Socratic "wisdom" and denounce where it has led us, to an historical impasse. Or we may pick a somewhat more benign approach, refer to Heidegger, and consider Socrates the ill-starred turning point that led to an "oblivion of being" in Western culture — an oblivion that has gradually escalated into the global crisis which now afflicts Western civilization. Alternatively, we may describe the slow erosion which wears away great paradigms into didactic models, edifying patterns, increasingly more frayed, until they turn into stale anecdotes, into a catechism of glorious banality, a philosophical "bald singer."

However, we will not conjure evil to look it in the eye, depending overconfidently on our power to challenge it and then leave it all behind. We will resist the all too modern, nihilistic trend of overall denial, and refuse to engage in a complete repudiation of Socratism as an obsolete, bygone moment in the history of spirit.

Instead, as mentioned before, we will stress that Socratism, far from being outmoded, is in reality a goal that is hard to reach — an almost inaccessible goal; and the emphasis must here be laid alternatively on each term: almost and inaccessible. One may grasp what Socratism is about, yet find it hard to integrate it with everyday reality. Likewise, it is nearly impossible to reach *satori*, the unaccountable illumination, which few are capable of reaching and then only with the aid of a spiritual guide that takes them down the risky path of Zen; it entails going out of one's mind quite radically and unpreparedly, without any precaution to guarantee both a genuine "madness" and a safe return to normalcy.

Socratizing is no easy job. Everybody knows the famous adage, "I know that I know nothing" — which is supposed to be the very gist of Socratism. We fondly repeat it in some context or another. But stubborn repetition does not necessarily mean we already dwell in the truth of an assertion, or will persist in it. Repetition is more often than not paying lip service to old wisdom. For the rest, we like to think that our knowledge is extensive and that we can learn more from

anyone: from history, from experts, as well as from our own experience and mistakes. It is widely accepted that the future is unknowable. But even the future is somehow apprehended by our mental schemes as an indefinite extension and expansion of current tendencies. We rightly pride ourselves on the achievements of our civilization, on the transfer of scientific knowledge to technology. We believe progress is being made in history, science and technology. We believe in moral progress, or at least in a slow improvement of our civilized European customs along political and spiritual dimensions. This is founded; moreover, this very awareness of our European culture prompts us to acknowledge our indebtedness to Socratism. On second thought, however, we must admit that our spiritual beings are not really convinced that we know nothing, more specifically that we know nothing about the things that are of highest relevance for our own lives, for the care we ought to take of ourselves and the political order that surrounds us. We know much and trust we will learn and know even more in time. Nor are we lacking in historical awareness. Our European civilization is of Christian descent, and therefore a viable synthesis of values that were developed in Athens, Rome, Jerusalem, Alexandria and Byzantium and countless European centers. It is more than Socratism. We may eventually admit we are not really Socratic, that there is something in the structure of our world that would not let us be so. What will be harder to accept, however, is that Socratism still is almost unreachable. How could we have moved past it? We must now adopt the Socratic position of basic questioning. Indeed, we like to take this pose at times, but imitation will lead us nowhere.

Of course, there are also a number of people who take an 'I know that I know nothing position'. But this rather widespread brand of skepticism is easily seen to diverge from the Socratic stand. What it actually tries to prove is that we cannot know anything and that ultimately there is not much to know anyway. In brief, it is a futile search. Let us point out that a faith-inspired criticism of science, denouncing it as false, demonic, wicked, conceited, and deceptive knowledge, is just as far from Socratism.

So, we are not Socratic, though we certainly like to claim Socrates as part of our legacy. We may be skeptical, disillusioned, nihilistic, and whatnot, but that does not take us any closer to Socrates. How can we account for this strange finding? Wouldn't this be an appropriate point to set off in an attempt to recover Socrates himself and even the cliches which are inevitably attached to his name?

Let us, for instance, take up irony as yet another example of a feature that seems essential to Socratism.¹ Once in a while, we all use irony or at least admire it in others. Irony has an unquestionable place in European culture. It is a sort of playing hide-and-seek with the truth (and with anything that postures as the truth, such as the untruth). Irony is a way to reveal the truth (or something that pretends to be true) under the disguise of its opposite. It is a transparent disguise. What we call 'ironic' is a valuation which, with a more or less thinly veiled or half-apparent intent, is diverted from its normal function and converted into its contrary. A courtesy can be ironic; a smile or an assertion or a compliment can be so, too. Hence, irony is a valuing judgment imparted through its reverse. Consequently, irony is at first sight a playful stance. But irony is not confined to human stances. On further consideration, developments, circumstances, destinies, and the truth itself may also be ironic. Irony will, thus, appear to us as a conversion of something into its opposite and the ability of this conversion to evoke a smile in response. If we admit there is an unseen side of things, that theirs is an ambiguous message, that fundamental ambiguity is apt to elicit a smile which in turn is ambiguous, then we will define irony as a figure in the world's complex game.

As for Socratic irony, there seems to be something special about it, which is almost instantly discerned, but defies imitation. Socratic irony is, therefore, just as unreachable as is the whole of Socratism itself. Socratism's presence in European culture is manifest in, among other forms, a lingering ironic smile. Yet it should be noted that we, as non-Socratic beings, can only comment on Socratic irony. Worse still, we are exposed to it; we are its subjects and have to bear it in a way, without going as far as to assume we have got over it.

We are saying all this to make it clear just how far we are from genuine Socratism. The same conclusion would emerge for any other basic components of the Socratic doctrine. How many people, say, would bear injustice rather than commit it? Only the largely unsung champions of right causes! How many communities or states have ever implemented this doctrine and how consistently? How many dialogues start with an admission of our own stand being no less precarious than that of our collocutor?

We may exalt Socrates's stand. His presence may seem familiar to us. Still, his example can hardly be followed, and it takes real heroism to translate his exhortations into deeds.

Socratizing as a Religions Paradigm

Socrates conceals a mysterious, paradoxical presence under his soothing appearance. Looking at him from different angles, we can shed some light on him. Everything, including crass misunderstandings, groundless legends and even slanderous allegations, can be significant if we perceive their background. The people of Athens, for example, considered Socrates a sophist, that is to say a trafficker of verbal subtleties, one who could glibly provide arguments for any cause, and seemingly turn justice into injustice, and truth into untruth — a most unfair charge to be sure, yet even such a distorting mirror captures some glimpses of his real figure. Socrates was a sophist *sui generis*, if we take sophist to mean someone who can move about at ease in the entire culture of his age and can detect the flaws and vices in both form and substance of any train of thought. The fact is that Socrates, the so-called sophist, was the very opposite of sophistry. Whereas the Sophist claimed to be master of the truth, Socrates was aware he was its servant. Whereas sophists claimed to be omniscient, Socrates would avow his fundamental ignorance and carefully examine his ignorance, the sophist's ignorance, the politician's ignorance, and human ignorance in general. Hence his well-deserved fame as an illuminist, an enemy of every superstition and every ignorance. But this 'illuminist', this champion of free thought, was at the same time deeply religious. It was in fact his deep religiousness that raised against him the charges of atheism against him. No, Socrates did not bring new gods into the city, but he did bring in new, unfamiliar ideas about the gods, a deeper understanding of the divine as such. His gods are not in the image of man as Greek mythology depicted them, neither is divine wisdom the fledgling wisdom of the human being! By such views, Socrates deeply subverted and unsettled the established *religious paradigm* of his times, disturbed cozy thinking routines and paved the ground to a transcendence of the divine, removing it or leading the way to its removal from the area of familiar representations. That is why Socrates would easily accede not just to the purgatory, but even to the heavens of Christian thinking. Imaginary pictures of him may occur equally among the wise men of Athens, as in a famous Raphael painting, and in church frescoes in our Romanian Bukovina province. Socratism is a landmark moment in both free philosophical inquiry and religious thinking. This looks like a paradox, but is in fact one of those ironies Socrates himself loved to comment on in his inimitable way.

This is precisely why, slipping away from the Elysian fields, Socrates's worried spirit must have been around many centuries later when, according to Plutarch, travelers sailing by a Greek island heard a mysterious voice proclaiming, "The Great Pan is dead!" For Socrates himself was in a way responsible for Pan's death. He with his Silenus appearance, with the attractive ugliness and wisdom of a Silenus! A healthy mind in a healthy body, a turmoil of powerful instincts, mastered nevertheless by an even more powerful superego. The character could be seen anywhere in Athens, talking, inquiring, driving others into aporia, raising confusion, anger, yet also some lofty aspirations here and there, as he infected some with an anxiety of bettering and beautifying their inner selves. A colorful presence he was — fueling gossip all around the city, as he would fuel legends and great myths throughout posterity, inviting others to a world which, by contrast with his immediate exterior surroundings, could not be seen but with the mind.

This was the man of whom Alcibiades said, in Plato's *Symposium*, that he regarded him likest to the Silenus-figures that sit in the statuaries' shops; those, I mean, which our craftsmen make with pipes or flutes in their hands: when their two halves are pulled open, they are found to contain images of gods. And I further suggest that he resembles the satyr Marsyas. . . . Socrates resembled the satyr not only in his figure, but also in his ability to entrance listeners with simple prose that left deep imprints on their souls. . . . If you chose to listen to the discourses of Socrates you would feel them at first to be quite ridiculous; on the outside they are clothed with such absurd words and phrases — all, of course, the gift of a mocking satyr. His talk is of pack-asses, smiths, cobblers, and tanners, and he seems always to be using the same terms for the same things; so that anyone inexpert and thoughtless might laugh his speeches to scorn. But when these are opened, and you obtain a fresh view of them by getting inside, first of all you will discover that they are the only speeches which have any sense in them; and secondly, that none are so divine, so rich in images of virtue, so largely — nay, so completely — intent on all things proper for the study of such as would attain both grace and worth.²

Attaining grace and worth as man, attaining grace and worth as a city are great words: goals that are still pursued by human thinking. For all our historical experience, for all the influence Socratism may have had on our European spirit, Socratism as it seems has neither been resolved nor annulled. It has been left behind, that's all. It looks as though we could return to it, but this, as we have mentioned, is almost impossible. Or rather, to make an essential distinction, Socratism as a repertoire of accomplished themes is quite within our reach either directly or relayed by Plato and Christianity and the entire history of thought. But beyond discrete themes, Socratism as a model and practice of human accomplishment in its full unmitigated form is an irreproducible experience. Segments of it may have been imitated, for many have been doubtful, the same as Socrates; or have annoyed the way he did; or taught like he that one should rather bear injustice than commit it; or accepted the cup of hemlock as he did. Experiences in history and culture have replicated separate moments of Socratism, but not Socratism as a whole.

Socratizing as Dwelling in the World

In the light of the above, the character of Socrates is exemplary. His life becomes a fable whose moral anyone is free to pick. Socratizing does not mean teaching a particular doctrine from any dais or pulpit, but rather taking a firm, articulate, unswerving stand. Socratically speaking, philosophy itself is not some kind of a doctrine, but a way of life devoted to philosophical reflection, namely to seeking after and questioning the goals and purposes of everything.

Socrates is generally regarded as a great teacher of mankind.³ What does Socrates teach? There is between Socrates's teachings and what his life itself would teach a seamless merger. No one has managed to dissociate Jesus's life from his teachings, because his life as such was meant to teach. Socrates is in turn one of the few in history who lived exactly what he preached and whose biographies are part of their works. This is what the legend of Socrates is about — a legend woven out of the incidents of his life, which look like mere accidents, and yet, when put together, add up to a mysterious necessity. In fact, Socrates sovereignly mastered those incidents as he had come to understand the law of his own life, the necessity and mission that governed it. All the rest was just faithful observance of that law. Furthermore, Socrates knew it all right. He knew his life was governed by a law. He tried in his *Apology* before the court of Athens, as described by Plato, to explain his life's law to his fellow citizens. And there was one Athenian who clearly understood what he meant. This was, of course, Plato.

Plato's presence was just as necessary in the spiritual scenario of Socratism as the apostles were for the fulfillment of Jesus's mission. Without Plato, Socratism would have remained an 'in-itself,' whose outward showing would have been restricted to the influence of a colorful, heroic mentor on a group of more or less faithful, more or less creative disciples — the "small Socratics" plus, of course, Xenophon. It is owing to Plato, who took up Socratism in part and spread it out in full, that Socrates will remain engraved forever in the conscience of humankind.

Let us revert to the capital question: What was Socrates after? What did he teach us? To what extent is Socratism not just a memory but also an effective presence?

Socrates launched a critical, questioning attitude towards the *polis*, towards the community of free citizens, towards common opinion, the aggregate of uncritically emitted and received convictions and beliefs. He argued for making a distinction between knowledge and opinion, and for the wisdom that derives from suspecting the limits of knowledge. He permanently gauged human wisdom against the unattainable ideal of superhuman wisdom, an attribute of the gods, of the divinity as such. The distance between what we can know and what we just suspect, or pre-think, was not meant to deter a freeman's thirst for knowledge. Quite the reverse, the ideal, pure shining brightness, was the beacon forever guiding human reason through the dark pits of ignorance. Irony is the smile of a human mind, which good-naturedly accepts the limits of its knowledge, yet persists in applying reason to the search for the real better by constant reference to the idea and ideal of goodness. This typical Socratic irony was the expression of a criticism, which apart from being amicable and self-directed, encompassed everything. Socratic criticism was aimed at toppling the sham idols of opinion and replacing them with the milestones of knowledge — the great ideas, the forms in their true sense, shining like beacons in the dark. This was the really useful knowledge, apt to help man establish his proper stand in his city and the world at large, in relation with the gods, his fellow citizens and ideas.

Socratism should be perceived as an ethic, yet not in the narrow sense as customs and morality, but rather in its broadest sense as the quest for an *ethos*. Ethos means a stand, a location, a dwelling. Ethic is man's ideal form of dwelling in the world. The Socratic pursuit is the quest for an optimum way of dwelling in the world. The message of Socratism is that an individual cannot be happy, nor can a city ensure the happiness of its sons, unless the good, the real good, is pursued. And the good, which is the source of happiness, justice, courage, and fulfillment of duty, cannot be the subject of an unwavering pursuit unless one knows what it is. Such knowledge in turn is not by far a relative, incidental, circumstantial knowledge, but rather one that is directed towards the supreme Good. Admittedly, the supreme Good is an attribute of gods rather than man, but its pursuit is good *per se* and is the beginning of all wisdom. This quest for the supreme Good is a purpose in

life, namely philosophical reflection, and the individual dedicated to this quest is the philosopher, the wise man.

This is primarily what the message of Socrates is about, and we may ask ourselves what point it has today. We know this message; everybody knows it. Say it aloud and no one will be struck by its novelty. This means that the Socratic message has become widespread, actually common, knowledge in the world of the European spirit. One would rather consider it an impersonal message, which in various, mostly vague and watered-down forms, pervades the entire system of culture and education. It is a general European message, and at the same time an ecumenical, universal, global message; a message that seeps into us through schools, books, sermons, and edifying words; a message often countered by common opinion which seemingly is confirmed by down-to-earth experience. That message assails Socratism with the same brassbound arguments Socrates used to hear from his collocutors — rhetors, sophists and politicians — namely, that the Good is my/our benefit, which often clashes with, and always prevails over, your benefit. The good as such is impotent — it has no power, or anyway has little power compared with power in itself, namely, that of the powerful who seek their own good, imposing their benefits and interests on others.

The teachings of Socrates are generally acknowledged as similar at core to Christian teachings, hence are a cornerstone of the European spirit. Nevertheless, such teachings are often the target of non-Socratic irony, which mocks the sublime weakness of searching for the supreme Good, aside from real circumstances and conflicting interests. The advice of Socrates is relayed to us, but is constantly prevented from turning into information. The message is never fully taken in because of common opinion, which counters ethical altruism with a healthy egoism, and brandishes "empirical realism," based on "granite-like facts," against the so-called "moral idealism." On the other hand, the Socratic message has been opposed with fiery objections and a demonic passion of denial by the nihilistic, negativistic trend of our century. This is a scathing pessimistic, misanthropic brand of sophistry, an anti-philosophy centered around denying the rationale and rationality of any values.

In addition to its pursuit of the Good, Socratism has yet another, no less beneficial quest to suggest, namely critical examination. Socrates said (or rather Plato had him say in the *Apology*) that, "the unexamined life is not worth living."⁴ A life that does not question its own goals and purposes is not worth living! "Know thyself," the Oracle of Delphi urged. Socrates took up the Apollonian commandment, explained it and set it on a broader moral base. "I have examined myself," Heraclitus once said (in a somewhat enigmatic fragment whose original context we don't know). An unending examination, an unending journey, since, as Heraclitus elsewhere said, "No matter how far you travel, you will never reach the borders of the soul, so deep is its purpose (*logos*)." This *logos* of the soul "thrives upon itself." All these extraordinary intuitions of Heraclitus need to be cited to get a better understanding of Socratic examination. *Exetasis*, examination, evidently means searching oneself, not in the way of psychological introspection, but as a moral search. Besides, it is not just confined to self-examination, but also involves openness to dialogue: one must be prepared to answer and account for one's actions, for one's entire life, just as Socrates did before the heliastic court. Any life must have its *logos*, no matter which sense is given to this word: it must have a meaning, a purpose, a proportion; a life must tell something, make sense, be an argument for a cause or even a theory. Any life, whether a success or a failure, must have its meaning. The meaning can be found by examination: examining oneself, allowing others to examine one, examining one's neighbors, preparing constantly for death and what, if anything, comes after it. One must be ready anytime to answer and account.

From Socrates onward, the freeman adequately informed and advised by culture can no longer consider life a mere excursion through this finite vale (a Vale of Tears); it is above all an examination by the court of thought. This is a monologic court of the self, but also a dialogic or collective court; a moral court and a cognitive court as well; an understanding of myself *per se* and of the world I live in.

This moral and philosophical commandment of examination seems to be taken for granted as an inherent feature of the European spirit. Essentially, it originates from Socrates. It was then that philosophy made its great U-turn from nature to spirit, from things to ideas, from its quest for the substance of *physis* to one for the ideal purpose. Philosophy and the other forms of specialized thinking have on and off in their wanderings forgotten and remembered these essentials. The Socratic drive towards scrutiny seems poised to make a well-deserved comeback in the current stage of Western philosophical reflection. We are now going through a post-positivistic era of post-modern philosophy, sometimes unjustly called the era of post-philosophy. We are witnessing a reaction against the excess of explanation and the deficit of understanding, accompanied by a call for dialogue. The ideal of scientific demonstration seems to be waning as it becomes increasingly apparent that scientific knowledge is just as limited as scientific progress is virtually unlimited. Meanwhile, dialectic debate, a debate of the pros and cons, is gaining ground. The scientific approach does not fill the need for examination. On the contrary, science and its methods require such renewed examination of themselves.

A life worth living, life as examination — a Socratic theme *par excellence* — is resurfacing as a theme for the philosophy to come. Insofar as taking up this theme can be defined as ‘Socratizing’, it is a safe guess that the coming philosophy will ‘Socratize’, namely will explore the "empire of fundamental goals," and will perhaps do so with irony, as one who knows what he embarks upon and yet will have a go at it.

In addition to the two Socratic commandments instilled in the European spirit — i.e., the quest for the Good and life as scrutiny and exploration of fundamental goals — a third Socratic commandment, constantly asserted but also constantly denied and undermined, seems likely to make its way in the European spirit. This is: Take care of yourself! Take care of yourselves! The needs of the being, of the person, take first place to other needs. ‘To be’ prevails over ‘to have’. The spirit is ahead of the body, and care for the spirit — through learning, exercise and philosophy — takes absolute priority. The city has a soul and body of its own. Before tending to its body (or rather its hardware, as they would call it in this late age), before providing for weapons, stockpiles and fortifications, finances and buildings, the city should look after its soul and spirit — working out a constitution and laws, setting good rules and goals, building up education and culture, and above all, ensuring justice.

European culture, as I said, is imbued with these needs: they breathe its spirit and are in its spirit. Interrogation, irony, a measure of healthy skepticism (though not so healthy sometimes), an anti-dogmatic trend, an inclination for logical thinking, and a practice of checking everything through arguments are pervasive in Western culture, even in its "superficial structures," and are the positive features of European personality. This means that some Socratic elements are alive and working. The true essence of Socratism, however, lies not in some sparse features, but in adherence to a certain path: the quest for ultimate goals, for the Good as such; looking after one’s self and the collective self; and a critical approach to culture, as an alternative to the Enlightenment-sophistic criticism of culture. Putting all this in contemporary terms, one finds Socratism is not, by far, in short supply in European culture, but neither is it the dominant trend at present. This latter fact has to be underscored, for it is not evident.

A Socratic revival nowadays would imply a radical rejection of relativism, skepticism and negativism, on the one hand, and on the other hand, an equally resolute rejection of pragmatism, empiricism and bogus optimism. It would also suppose an amicable criticism of democracy. In brief, present day Socratism would involve a critical spirit, absolute lucidity, and at the same time a pinch of irony and an unlimited amicability, culminating in love. By contrast, we are faced with a shortage of Socratism at present. An unamicable criticism of the democratic political culture, deriving from and/or aimed at a totalitarian stand (whether Fascism or some "real socialism"), has ironically developed hand in hand with an indiscriminate glorification of Western culture, which overlooks its impasses, its value crises, and its imbalances between political rhetoric, technical innovation and poetry. The shortfalls of political reflection, the scant impact of art, technology's inability to resolve nontechnical problems, or even the serious problems it generates itself, are just as evident today as they were twenty-four centuries ago. Only today they beset not just Athens, but the world.

We will not engage in any foolish conjectures about the coming of another Socrates. We will confine ourselves to diagnose the scarcity or relative lack of an element that would be vital for a reinvigoration of European culture, namely Socratism resurrected. We must not delude ourselves about the crisis of Western culture and civilization. Late in the 20th century we lived through an exhilarating moment in European history: the fall of the totalitarian regimes. Five decades after the defeat of Fascism, this triumph of freedom has rightly bolstered our confidence in the virtues and power of democracy. But the failure of totalitarian thinking, the development of a post-totalitarian spirit, confirming the victory of Athens over Sparta, of democracy over tyranny, does in no way resolve the serious homegrown problems of Western civilization. Since the crisis of European conscience is not a consequence of totalitarian thinking or practices (but rather the other way around!), it has survived totalitarianism. Sparta's assault has been rejected, but Athens must take better care of itself and of the cosmopolitan community for which it has a major moral responsibility. Triumph and crisis will coexist as long as European culture remains an active presence. Deep, structural, endemic problems go on unresolved. Europe's well-being depends on what happens not just inside the continent, but all around the world. By asserting its superiority, Western civilization has taken on a heavy charge. The citizen of a European country is not only a European, but also an outright cosmopolite: he or she seems to care about and take care of the entire world, the Global City, the *Civitas Terrae*. What are Good and Justice today? What is the relation between City and Nature? What about political culture, artistic creation and technical innovation? What is the moral misery of selfishness today when it occurs not just in individuals, but also on a collective scale in, say, a rich nation or a wealthy community of nations? The issues Socrates used to take up in the familiar atmosphere of a city-state of a few hundred thousand people, currently arise, *mutatis mutandis*, on a full global scale. They may be worded differently, but something at their core remains unchanged. It is all about the groundwork of values on which human communities are based: about political culture; about happiness, dignified life and dignified death; about examination, dialogue and knowledge of oneself; about the divine urge of discerning the truth; about the daimon that must prevent us from any ill-advised step; and about the astonishment one feels at observing the pandemonium of the world.

So, the problems of a rejuvenated Socratism are quite alive in our troubled here-and-now, on this current spiral loop of our civilization. Once again, there is an intense need for concreteness, for setting off in search of knowledge from everyday experience, from small facts — from the practice of a craftsman, a doctor or an architect, from a young man's curiosity, from the bewilderment of simple questions. But who is going to address these intensely concrete dilemmas?

What will we call this renewed Socratism? Right now, it is a pious memory and a need of the European spirit. May the needs connected to this ancient memory be always refreshed; may they never become an archaism; may they always arise again under whatever names? That an immense personality should emerge again — one apt to reach the limits of human condition, as Jaspers put it, meaning of course the upper limits, for the lower ones have, alas, been reached several times this century in our very dearest Europe — is probably a dream. A dream indeed, but one that springs from the intimate recesses of real life, to the extent that dreams express the spirit's deepest needs. A dream which fades away at dawn, caught in the sleep of unreflective action, but which comes back again. The world today has a huge thirst for myth and arguments, for bold projection and lucid examination, supplementing each other and keeping each other in check, both wrapped in an all-encompassing, amicable irony. It is up to the human community and to the European genius to take up the collective task of piercing towards the upper limits of the human condition. It is up to philosophical thinking not to neglect myth for the sake of arguments, or leave the solid ground of arguments as it develops the myths of the future. The singular, unique nature of the bequeather is no obstacle that many heirs be called and that some of them be chosen. There will never be another Socrates, but Socratism is alive and the strain of small Socratics will only be extinguished with the civilization that begot them.

Notes

1. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony with Constant Reference to Socrates*.
2. Plato, *Symp.*, 215.
3. See, e.g., Karl Jaspers' world history of philosophy entitled. *Die grossen Philosophen* (1957).
4. *Apology*, 38a.

Chapter VIII

Democracy and Spirituality

Dumitru Popescu

Initially, European culture had a Christian origin, but in the course of time it underwent deep changes, having become secularized against its Christian background. The great change occurred in the modern epoch. Under the influence of the Enlightenment in the 18th century, European culture declined the deductive method whose center of gravity was divine Revelation and oriented itself towards the inductive method stemming from natural revelation, or, more precisely, from the concrete reality of the world we live in. Therefore, a substantial mutation occurred in the field of knowledge, as one passed from supernatural knowledge, which had its origin in God, to natural knowledge, completely dependent on man. This has great consequences from a spiritual point of view: the process of knowledge promoted by the Enlightenment ceases to appeal to theology, and lays stress on science and technology.

The Meaning of the Christian Origin of the European Contemporary Culture

Moreover, scientific knowledge was considered to be completely opposed to theological knowledge. Due to such errors as geocentrism, instead of the heliocentric system, the latter was accused of obscurantism. "The Enlightenment thinkers," says an English theologian, spoke of their epoch as one of reason, considering reason to be especially the analytical and mathematical forces by which man could reach, at least in principle, a complete understanding of reality in all its forms and so become master of all nature. There was no more room for miracles and interventions of divine providence understood as a category of explanation. God could still be conceived, at best, in a deistic sense (that is isolated in transcendence), as the last Author of all things, but one no longer needed to know the Author personally, in order to read the book of nature. Nature, as the sum of all existent things, represented the only real truth. And the man of science was the priest who could discover the secrets of nature for us and offer us the practical skills of his job. Thus, reason remained sovereign in its action. It could not be subordinated to any authority, other than that of facts. It was no longer allowed that the divine Revelation, tradition or the holy dogma have the right to control its observance. Having answered the question concerning the essence of Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant gave a very inclusive answer: *Aude sapere*, that is "dare to know". The century of light launched this challenge and ever since then, this assertion of Kant has defined the heart of European culture, in spite of all the changes occurring in the philosophy of science."¹

Emerging as a reaction against religious obscurantism (which had nothing in common with the Holy Scripture as geocentrism is not of biblical origin), Enlightenment culture opened the way to unexpected progress which proved favorable to man. The progress made in the study of macrocosms due, e.g., to the spaceships launched; the incursion into the microcosmic world through basic physics, which discovered that the visible world is based on the invisible world of particles; the alleviation of suffering and the extension of men's life on earth due to the progress of medical science and especially surgery; the more decent and comfortable life man lives today due to the gadgets at his disposal and to the machines which considerably increase man's power over nature; the fight for human rights, for democracy and political freedom — all these give us a

more comprehensive image of the positive role which the Enlightenment has played in the life of humankind.

Like any other anthropocentric culture, with both positive and negative aspects, the Enlightenment culture, which moved the center of gravity of knowledge from God to man, implies, besides the remarkable achievements mentioned above, other less brilliant aspects. As the same English thinker said, "Science acquired victories beyond the expectations of the 18th century, but the world created as such could not be more reasonable than the one which the previous centuries knew. More and more people from the most powerful nations on the earth feel caught in the claws of certain irrational forces, hard to control."² The more man seems to rule over nature through science and technology, the more helpless he is when faced with the irrational forces stemming from his own being. The outburst of violence, terrorism and Satanism of all kinds is one more evident proof of this sad reality. The paradox of Enlightenment culture consists in the fact that man's freedom and democracy have been accompanied by the loss of his inner freedom. As long as this side of freedom is ignored in order to stress only political freedom as a characteristic feature of democracy, people will not be able to find their own inner equilibrium.

So, we have reached a point whence we cannot move forward in the analysis of this issue unless we discover the spiritual cause at the origin of the above paradox. This cause was emphasized by the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Canberra, Australia, at the beginning of 1991. On that occasion it was shown that the real cause of deism and anthropocentrism, which represent the two major dimensions of the process of secularization, come from a theology which created a confusion between the transcendence of God and His absence from creation. In order to understand the deeper spiritual significance of these phenomena, let us analyze each of them.

Deism is the result of a philosophical and theological conception which appreciates that after he created the world, God isolated Himself in inaccessible transcendence. A well known theologian, Yves Congar, said that "one of the greatest misfortunes which affected contemporary Christianity consisted in the fact that the Trinity was isolated both from the people and from the cosmos in transcendence."³ If the Christian doctrine on Trinity implies, on one hand, a divine nature and three persons, then to explain the assertions of the theologian cited a logical priority, must be given to the divine nature over the three persons. Thus, through the divine nature which remains incommunicable, the expression of the Christian God in the Trinity has been completely isolated in transcendence both from the people and from the cosmos. Another well-known theologian, Karl Rahner, showed that "the separation between nature and person occurred in the scholastics due to some causes not yet very clear. Here one no longer deals with God-the-Father as an unborn principle both in Divinity and in the reality of the world, but first of all with the divine nature common to all the Three Persons. Therefore, the Trinity has been closed in a deep isolation, which risks being considered to have no interest for religious existence."⁴

The ideas expressed in the above-mentioned text above are very important for understanding the issue with which we are concerned. If God in Trinity has no longer been seen as a personal reality, but as an impersonal nature, then the relation between God and man ceased to be a relation of personal love, but a simple formal abstract knowledge of God, which diminished the interest of the faithful in divinity and made man focus on himself. One who understood this drama of the contemporary man very well was Dostoyevsky, for whom intelligence or reason considered in itself, detached from life, appears as a means by which the main values of modern life are permanently changing, moving from essential and primary to secondary.⁵

Ivan Karamazov, the embodiment of the Euclidean spirit of discursive reason, repeated the famous idea of Descartes, without uttering his name: *Cogito, ergo sum*. To this Dostoyevsky opposes the formula which sums up the thought of Abbot Zosima: "I exist to love", as a formula comprising the very existence of life, which is not *cogito*, but *sum* (I exist). *Cogito* is a secondary value, as first of all we exist and then think, while the assertion: I exist, and so, my destiny is to love, is a brilliant correction which Dostoyevsky makes to the error committed by discursive reason. If we seek *rapprochement* between Dostoyevsky's thought and contemporary philosophy, then we must think of Henri Bergson. There is a great *rapprochement* between Bergson's spirit and that of Dostoyevsky's. It is absolutely incidental, as Bergson did not know Dostoyevsky when he formulated the first elements of his philosophy, nor did Dostoyevsky ever suppose Henri Bergson's existence, as the latter's philosophy had not appeared at the time. But in this reaction against discursive reason, both adopt the same attitude. Bergson's philosophy is a strong reaction against the errors committed by a discursive intelligence which did not want to know anything about either intuition or love.⁶

Reason and Love in the Field of the Culture

If we are to apply these considerations concerning the relation between reason and love to our knowledge of God, then, we should quote a great theologian, Gregory Palamas, who says

When you speak of the eyes of the soul, which have the experience of the heavenly treasures, you must not refer to reason. Reason exerts itself satisfactorily either over the sensible things or over ideas. If you imagine a city which you have never seen before, you cannot get an experience only because you thought of it; similarly, you cannot have an experience of God if you only look at Him with your sensible eyes, . . . even if the idea of God goes through your head one thousand times. The same, if you think one thousand times about the heavenly treasures without observing them through experience and with spiritual eyes which surpass reason, you do not see anything and you do not master anything divine.⁷

One could have the impression that these considerations are against reason as such. That would be a false impression, as the theologians and writers mentioned above do not leave reason aside but put first experience and love on the basis of their meeting with God, and then reason. Discursive reason can speak of God in an abstract manner, from a distance, but God can be met in reality only through living experience. Reason can refer to God, with full knowledge of the case, only to the extent to which it starts from the experience of the personal meeting of man with God. If Divinity turns into an impersonal reality, then one can no longer speak of a personal meeting between man and God able to fill man's soul with divine light and love. Everything is reduced to a discursive knowledge of God, a formal and abstract one, which represents a simple mental exercise with no deep spiritual consequences as it places man in a spiritual vacuum. As Karl Rahner has said, an impersonal divine nature in the place of the God of personal love cannot but undermine the interest of the faithful in Christianity and spiritual life. A discursive or abstract knowledge of God cannot give man inner freedom. That is acquired only through personal meeting with God, as only this purifies and releases man from the passions and irrational forces arising from within.

To deal with anthropocentrism, we should specify from the very beginning that it is the product of a deist mentality which encloses Divinity in a transcendence, as shown above, allowing

man to enclose himself in his own autonomy. This autonomy becomes so real that contemporary man tries to avoid any divine restriction. In this regard Mircea Eliade notes eloquently:

Contemporary man considers himself as the only agent of history and refuses any appeal to transcendence. More precisely, he does not accept another model of man outside the human condition . . . (of) various historical situations. Man realizes himself and succeeds in doing so only to the extent to which he de-sacralizes himself and the world he lives in. The sacred is the main obstacle in the way of his freedom. Man will not really become himself unless he de-mystifies himself completely. He will not be really free until he shall have exterminated the last divinity.⁸

Contemporary man is aware of his autonomy or liberty even in relation to the divine transcendence. Far from appealing to the help of God in order to release himself from the domination by the world, man today manifests an unlimited trust in himself. In this regard Berdiaev makes an eloquent and extremely telling comparison between the attitudes of Dante, Shakespeare and Dostoyevsky towards man. Dante situates man in the objective order of the cosmos as imagined by the medieval world with heaven above him as one floor is above another. Hell is below. Heaven and hell — above and below — are exterior to Dante's medieval man. Like a little wheel man is strictly integrated into this medieval cosmos considered as a divine work.

In contrast, in the Renaissance Shakespeare's man emerges in empty space. The heaven above him is now empty; it is no longer the heaven of the medieval hierarchy, while the hell below him can no longer be seen. Man is no longer integrated in the cosmic hierarchy of the medieval conception, but now lives in isolation relying on his own powers. Therefore, the empty space around him creates panic in his soul, which panic makes him analyze himself in order to know better his own soul. Thus, Shakespeare's man reaches into his own inner dimensions through descriptions of his soul. It is what we could call the psychological man, who having lost the points of reference upon which to rely in the exterior world, looks for them in his own power, in himself, discovering thus his own soul. But this discovery does not reach its ultimate consequences; it discovers a psychological phenomenon which does not penetrate to the mysterious roots of modern psychology.⁹

According to Berdiaev, that was reserved to Dostoyevsky, as in his vision man appears isolated in the gap created by modern culture and civilization. But through his isolation, in the panic seizing him, he goes more deeper into his soul than did Shakespeare's man before. It is in this depth into which modern man always digs that Dostoyevsky discovers the spiritual, beyond the soul. Modern man also deals with a heaven and a hell, but heaven is no longer above nor is hell below as for Dante's medieval man. In the soul of contemporary man both heaven and hell are open as perspectives of light or of an Inferno in this descent of the modern soul to its ultimate roots where lies the eternal value of the soul. This is Dostoyevsky's man, different from Dante's medieval type and from Shakespeare's Renaissance type. It is man who carries in himself both heaven and hell and in whom this great fight between the principles of evil and that of good is being waged. Some of Dostoyevsky's characters are triumphant in this encounter, but most let themselves be dominated by the force of evil. His heroes arise above the substance of arbitrary freedom arbitrarily used. They rise also above the excesses of passion, for passions are irrational forces which dull man's mind and make him commit evil deeds. If Shakespeare is considered a psychologist by Berdiaev, one must consider Dostoyevsky to be more than a psychologist. He is called a pneumatologist by Berdiaev, the man who discovered the spirit in the human structure.¹⁰

All these considerations prove that contemporary man tends to rely more on himself than on God, as he tries to descend into himself in an individual way. The great problem of man nowadays consists in the feeling of a secret dependence upon the elements he carries in himself, which he ignores or does not understand, or wills not to understand. Whether ignored or accomplice, his psychic equilibrium becomes fragile and unstable. Although the rapid evolution of psychology overturned knowledge about the human soul, science refuses to specify the unstable boundary between health and illness. One who ignores his inner life is extremely vulnerable. In his moments of loneliness or suffering there is no social form to protect him or to resolve the conflicts of his soul. Freud sees in mental disease a diversion and a way out of the dissonance which has become almost impossible to bear. When the limit is reached, the instinct of conservation prefers madness to suicide. Moreover, Jung considers that many outside clinics suffer due to the fact that their life lacks both sense and positive creative content. Man gets bored in his own environment; he wears himself out in all kind of worries until he reaches the point when "his complexes look very much like demons". It is the threshold of temptation which causes despair or even suicide in some cases. Such people indulge themselves from the very beginning and until the end in a hard indifference towards life and its events. Their hearts are completely defeated, and one in good health, turns almost into a ghost. In the absence of God from one's inner life, one hardens his heart, leading to indifference to everything that goes on around him.¹¹

Individualism is a characteristic feature of contemporary man which directs him to give little importance to his inner spiritual life; instead of changing it, he prefers to create a religion according to his own individuality. The opinions of a Catholic analyst are quite remarkable from this point of view.

Everything occurs as if Christianity ceased to be a global unifying system that is to be considered as a whole, in order to become an ensemble of "detached pieces" offered for personal, free compositions as selective affiliations to a limited number of faiths, practices or recommendations. This system of "à la carte" religion rejects an institution designed to regularize practices and faiths, in favor of the principle of individual sovereignty. The imagination of those who declare themselves Christians is rather often a dismantled imagination. This is made up essentially of four types of elements: Christian elements, cosmic elements (universal energy), elements of a sublime self (the force of the psychic being), and such deified values as freedom or peace. Each person organizes one's own universe out of different faiths, coordinating within it Christian and cosmic, psycho-spiritual and moral elements. So, in an imaginary complete product we meet both providence and the universal cosmic force, love and violence as landmarks of the personal search for salvation. From an objective point of view the combinations achieved may seem incoherent, but from a subjective point of view, from that of the people who use them, they are coherent. For those who discover the center of gravity in themselves, in an individualist way, no longer change themselves according to the divine law, but changes the divine law according to their own interest, imposing on this world the order they prefer.¹²

Nationalism and Internationalism in the Democratic Order

For the above reasons under the screen of the democratic order we witness the confrontation between two tendencies in the contemporary world, namely, between nationalism and internationalism. Let us deal with each of them. The advantage of nationalism consists in the fact that it starts from the concrete reality of a people with a well-defined ethnic identity. The human reality of the world we live in is not made up of abstract nations or uniform communities, but of the

diversity of the peoples descended from man. Just as everyone has a psycho-physical aspect which distinguishes him or her from another person, so a people has its particular features which cannot identify it with another people. That is why one rightly says that a nation, as a people, means "the amount of the forces which live in the same territory and have common origin, history, customs and language."¹³ Or, from the state's point of view, nation means "a community made up of an ensemble of people ruled by the same Constitution."¹⁴

All the same, nationalism is not a very clear term, as it may have several meanings. On one hand, as we have already mentioned above, it may have a positive meaning, as rather often it is invoked in favor of the idea of the ethnic identity of a people. From this point of view, nationalism is legitimate. On the other hand, the same idea of nationalism gets a pejorative meaning when identified with the idea of chauvinism, extremism or xenophobia, often causing tension, conflicts, damage and crimes. The conflicts in Yugoslavia, North Ireland, Spain or the Middle East are weighty examples from this point of view. In such cases, nationalism represents a selfish stress of the nation upon itself, for reasons of selfishness or superiority, which causes a serious degradation of the relations with neighboring peoples or nations. Everyone agrees that such nationalism is unacceptable. According to the way in which it influences the relationships between various peoples, nationalism can be considered normal or extremist.

Unlike nationalism, which stems from the concrete reality of a people, internationalism stems from abstract ideologies which allow certain internationalist circles to extend their power and influence over other nations. Or, as an encyclopedic dictionary says, internationalism represents "the doctrine according to which various national interests should be subordinated to a general, supranational one."¹⁵ More precisely, it is the confrontation between national societies and the open society, as a transnational society. While the open society becomes more and more transnational and separate from the national societies, the latter societies consider themselves increasingly eliminated from the international exchange, which becomes more and more abstract (the electronic coin) and speculative (monetary credit and speculative stock exchange). Thus national societies are more and more separated from access to the "networks" of world exchange. In this fierce struggle, transnational societies take advantage of freedom, while the national societies invoke in their support the idea of equality. The confrontation between them can lead national societies to resort to national dictatorships, hoping that they will change the position of the whole nation in the world and in the hierarchy of the disadvantaged nations on the world scale.

This confrontation between a society taking advantage of freedom and another adhering to equality is the result of a secularized mentality which overlooks the inner freedom which generates love. "If we opened the pages of the Holy Scripture," an English thinker says,

We would discover that what is really important here, for man, is neither equality nor freedom, but the inter-personal relations among people. Man and woman have been created by God to live in the deepest mutual relationship. Meanwhile, the peoples and nations are called to live in a covenant or relational alliance of brotherhood. Man can find the real purpose of his life in such a communion, in the bond of mutual love and obedience which reflects the communion of love typical for God.¹⁶

Neither freedom nor equality bring us to the depth of the issue, the same theologian continues.

The tearing of the communion destroys both equality and freedom and none of them will be achieved when they are considered in themselves. True freedom will no longer be acquired through the unlimited development of its own power, as the human being is not made for autonomy, but for true communion in love which comes out of man's inner freedom from evil and his affiliation

to love. Nor can the simple search of equality create social justice, as justice (that is, to give everybody what he or she deserves) can be done only in mutual communion.¹⁷

The United Nations Organization frequently speaks of the international community of nations. If we were to apply the spiritual principles mentioned above to this community, then we should say that in order to resolve the confrontation between a society taking advantage of freedom and another one of equality, two basic principles should be taken into consideration. On the one hand, the right of each nation to keep its specific identity intact, so that it may bring its own contribution to the treasure of international values. On the other hand, each national society should remain an open society able to live and cooperate with the other nations for the common welfare. This is the only way to establish among the nations of the international community natural relations designed to avoid extremely painful conflicts in the life of the whole of humankind and to contribute to the mutual enrichment of all people.

God, Man and the World Game

The game of human existence is played within the frame of a basic triangle: God, man and world. The chief point consists in the fact that it is not the relation of man with nature or himself which can reveal the ultimate mystery of his existence, but only his relation with God. A real culture must surpass the deism of contemporary culture, affirming at the same time both God's transcendence towards creation and God's presence in creation. The transcendence of God towards creation is explained by the fact that while the world remains created and temporal, God is uncreated and exists from eternity. The immanence of God in creation does not lead to the pantheist confusion between creation and Creator, because God is not present in creation with His being, but with His work, given in the uncreated light of divinity. The same as the sun does not identify itself with the earth but sends its rays of light, life and warmth over our planet, so God, as heavenly sun, does not identify Himself with the creation, but bestows the divine light, life and love on it through the divine rays of His uncreated energies. That is the reason the Holy Scripture speaks from the very beginning about "the power of God which was moving over the water" (Genesis 1,2).

So, Maxim the Confessor tells us that

the Holy Spirit is not absent from any being and especially from those worthy of receiving reason. He supports them all in their existence, as through His providential power God is present in all of them. He activates natural reason in everybody, He makes able to feel the one who is willing to receive the right thoughts of nature, aware of the wrong deeds committed against nature. So, we happen to find many people from various nations who live a life of good deeds and reject the wrong laws which once used to rule them. So, we can generally say that the Holy Spirit is present in everybody.¹⁸

Here we are in a universe quite different from a world which exists and functions through itself. This universe is a dependent world which maintains a dynamic relation with God. God is the one who permanently supports the existence of the world and leads it to the accomplishment of the purpose for which it was built, that is the new heaven and earth of the Kingdom of God in Christ.

The presence of God in creation is very important for a democratic society, as it proves that the purpose of Christianity is neither to sacralize or to dominate the world in the name of Christ,

nor to turn it into an object of irrational exploitation, as we have seen above. Its purpose is to transfigure man and creation in Christ, as well as the Church, through the work of the Holy Spirit. This process of transfiguration of man and creation is possible both from a scientific point of view, as science shows us that matter is a concentration of spirit and energy, and from a theological point of view, as the Scripture tells us that the face of Christ on Mount Tabor was shining like the sun and His clothes were dazzling white (Matthew 17, 20).

An outstanding theologian, Gregory Palamas, says that this transfiguration of man and of creation is not a natural work of man, but is achieved through the uncreated grace of God. "All those who assert that the union with God is done only through imitation, and natural impulse — without the transfiguring grace of the Spirit, just like between those who have the same habits and who love each other — and consider the grace of God to be an impulse of reasonable nature acquired only through imitation and not through supernatural illumination and through the help of the lasting spiritual work seen by those worthy of seeing it, must know that they are completely wrong."¹⁹ Some others, although they speak about the uncreated energy of God, yet consider that its effects in the human being are created. The same theologian says the following when answering such a theory:

If the transfiguration or deification had no other effect than the improvement of human nature, without lifting it above the level of the ordinary man built in the image of God, if man remains only a rational being who establishes a relation with God only through a natural power, then the transfigured ones cannot exceed their own nature and are not born of God, because Christ, having come into the world through the Holy Spirit, did not give those who believe in His name the power to become children of God.²⁰

This process of transfiguration has two aspects. First of all it is an exterior process, achieved through science and technology. In this process, achieved according to the will of the Creator, technology represents the bridge between the shapes of the spirit and the structure of nature, namely a transfiguration of nature. Just as the artistic genius introduces a part of the spiritual world into the material world, so the technical genius imposes on nature expressions and requirements of the spirit. That is so much more possible today when science has come to the conclusion that the world of the macrocosm is so complex that it can no longer be explained through the natural laws. It is not surprising then if scholars assert that science is knocking at the door of transcendence.

We learn from the Holy Scripture that technics appeared in the world after the fall of man into sin. In the fourth chapter of Genesis we are told that, after man is sent out of Paradise, Cain used all kinds of tools of bronze and iron (line 22). In his earlier state man had not needed technics, as he disposed of a special spiritual power which enabled him to act directly upon nature. In fact, even Christ, who re-established man in his early state, healed diseases, brought the dead back to life and calmed the enraged forces of nature without using technics, but only by His spiritual power. One of the Fathers of the Church, John Chrisostom, says that "as the first man created had no needs of any kind, he was not obliged to use craftsmanship and technics to satisfy his needs."²¹ After man's fall into sin "technics progressively developed on the earth and made the world better off."²² Technics has an extremely positive role, as it enables man to contribute to the transfiguration of creation. Contemporary man has lost so much of his spiritual power that he abuses technics when dealing with nature. The massive pollution of nature, which has reached a planetary level, is the result of this irrational usage of technics.

But transfiguration concerns not only the exterior nature of man through technology, but also his inner nature through the Holy Spirit. Due to the power of the Spirit which embraces both body and soul, according to the Apostle Paul, "Man's body is the temple of the Spirit" (I Cor. 6,19). A real revolution is produced within the human being, designed to turn passions — irrational forces which separate man from God and make him their slave — into virtues or rational forces which enable man to rise up to the resemblance of God in Christ. This is neither self-flagellation nor eroticism, but the dynamic conversion of passions into virtues, through the work both of the Spirit and of the faithful man. This is because the purpose of Christianity is not to do away with the passionate side of man, but to move it from evil to good, giving man his real inner freedom. Man can never be rid of passions or obtain the real inner freedom and openness towards his fellows all by himself. Only the power of God presents the fulcrum which enables humans to be free and true masters of creation.

The transfiguration of the human being in Christ has outstanding importance for democracy. As long as humans remain prisoners of irrational forces in their inner life which they cannot control, democracy becomes an opportunity for the manifestation of aggressive forces which deeply affect social life. The outburst of aggression, violence and hate, which we meet everywhere in the world, is a telling proof of this point of view. The more inner freedom man obtains through the power of divine uncreated energies, the more he becomes the promoter of the spiritual values and of the strengthening of democracy as well. Real democracy is based both on the external and the internal freedom of man. Only in these terms can one fill the great gap between the huge scientific progress of the contemporary world and its low spiritual progress. True democracy must rely on the equilibrium between spiritual and scientific values, as only the spiritual power of man will allow him to put technics in the service of life and common welfare.

As we tried to show in the content of this essay, contemporary man can choose between an independent conception of the world and a dependent one. André Malraux says that the 21st century will be religious or will not be at all. This provision depends upon the choice contemporary man will make between the two conceptions: dependent or autonomous.

Notes

1. Leslie Bewbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks* (Geneva: WCC, 1986), p. 15.
2. Idem, *The Other Side of 1984* (Geneva: WCC, 1983), p. 17.
3. Yves Congar, "Le Christ dans l'économie salutaire et dans nos traités dogmatiques," *Concilium*, 11 (1966), p. 2.
4. Karl Rahner, "Quelques remarques sur le traité dogmatique" *De Trinitate, Ecrits theologiques* tom. VIII (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1967,), p. 115.
5. Nichifor Crainic, *Dostoyevsky si crestinismul rus* (Bucuresti, 1998), p. 182.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 278
7. Yannis Spiteris, *Palama: graie i experien* (Bucuresti: Lipa, 1996), p. 7.
8. Dumitru Popescu, *Ortodoxie i contemporaneitate* (Bucuresti: Diogene, 1996), p. 182.
9. Nichifor Crainic, *Op. cit.* p. 278.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
11. Paul Evdochimov, *Varstele vieii spirituale*, (Paris: Christiana, 1993), p. 53
12. Jean Delumeau, *Religiile lumii* (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 1993), p. 70.
13. *Larousse en couleurs*, Cinq volumes (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1997), vol. IV, p. 213.
14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*
16. Leslie Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1984* (Geneva: WCC, 1983), p. 156.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Maxim Marturisitorul, *R spunsuri c tre Talasie, Filocalia* (Bucuresti, 1948), vol. III, p. 51.
19. Grigore Palama. Tomul Aghioritic, *Filocalia* (Bucuresti), III, p. 415.
20. Yannis Spiteris, *op. cit.* p. 87.
21. Dumitru Popescu, *op. cit.* p. 1.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

Epilogue

Obligated by vital requirements and delighted by the exactness of natural sciences, by their geometric character and the precision of their applications, man committed himself to the wide path they opened to the exterior world. In this he neglected himself and cultivated to a much smaller extent the spiritual sciences in comparison with material science. The basic needs of living obliged man to take interest in the conquest of the exterior world, focusing attention on this world at the expense of the analysis of the wonderful powers within the human being. As these make up a much more complex world, much more mysterious, more difficult to understand and more fluid than the physical world, human intelligence prefers the precision, simplicity, fixity, solidity, precision and geometrical forms which is found in the world outside human beings. So, a great discrepancy emerged between the development of the exact sciences and that of the spiritual sciences. The most serious danger of technics, says Berdiaev, is that it affects both the spiritual life and the human soul. The old culture neglected the body, while the technical civilization, as it was cold, with no feeling at all, ravaged the soul so that it was hard for the human heart to bear the ice cold contact with the metal. "Technical civilization does not feel the warmth of the human soul". All this reminds us of the Saviour's words: "What does a man gain if he wins the whole world but loses his soul?"

Then, one should also say that the autonomous technics tends to change into a purpose in itself and to make man forget the meaning of his life and existence. Technics is not and cannot be but an instrument, not a purpose. There are no technical purposes of life, only technical means. Its purpose belongs to the field of the spirit. The technical instrument, due to its own nature, remains heterogeneous to the human soul, spirit and meaning. Nevertheless, it tends to substitute itself for the purpose pursued and. Due to the importance it gets today, it can mask, or even wipe out the very meaning of life from man's mind. The definition characterizing the human being as "*homo faber*" reveals man only as a creator of tools; it points out that means have substituted themselves for the purposes pursued. Man is, certainly, *homo faber*, by his own nature, but only when reaching some higher purposes. Hence, the metaphysical and religious issue of technics. According to the teaching of the Holy Fathers, the meaning of life is not to be found in man himself, but is hidden with Christ in the Trinity. Man, built according to the image of God, is designed to attain resemblance with God. That is why Christ said: "I am the way, the truth and the life". The changing of the technical means into the "reason to be" of life may mean not only the diminution of the spirit, but also its extinction.