Identity, Spirituality and Dialogue in the Context of an Axiological Discourse

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IDENTITY, SPIRITUALITY AND DIALOGUE
IN THE CONTEXT OF AN AXIOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract

Identity in our multicultural world is one of the major problems of contemporary man. There are not cultures totally isolated from the others. Social groups and individuals are directly (through contacts with others) and indirectly (through the media, market products, ideologies and law systems) confronted with many problems. And the modern global society needs more than ever to take adequate decisions on different problems (ecology, inequality, terrorism). The concept of value is the central category of philosophical axiology. Is the general course of civilizational changes able to influence the axiological systems of autonomous cultures, involving them in the process of an inevitable inner change and to testify, in this manner, to its own cultural but not transcendental nature? This is one of the main questions of the present research. My article also will stress why is significant the role of philosophers in the dialogue dedicated to the contemporary role of values within our society. The philosopher’s role, besides all is to analyze a future and criticize worldview systems in order to achieve a future value synthesis.

Keywords: identity, culture, spirituality, dialogue, axiological discourse.

The concept of value is the central category of philosophical axiology. Both for believers and theologians, the religious and corresponding theological values do not represent the features of culture, but they are objectively present and defined by the features of being, or at least this is the interpretation of Christianity.

One of the reasons for the increase of religiosity in the modern world is the need for stable conceptual beliefs and opinions, in which

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science can participate, at the best case, only indirectly. Unlike it, religion with its tradition is oriented to conceptually important questions and has the power of an authority and a historical being. The world of the Christian culture assimilated in itself the metaphysical, ethical, artistic and socio-economic thought and masks pure religious perspectives. The main problem here might be expressed as it follows: is the general course of civilizational changes able to influence the axiological systems of autonomous cultures, involving them in the process of an inevitable inner change and to testify, in this manner, to its own cultural but not transcendental nature?

While the positive answer in relation to a cultural system as science is generally acknowledged, the things differ in relation to religion. The existence of the Christian myth in itself is categorically withdrawn from the power resource of the time and culture. It is not acknowledged as the exclusive fruit of the activity of the human beings and human creativity. The truth can be dependent on the time and culture, of these who believe, but not against its own existence and dogmas. This difference is not deprived of questionability and even so it has to be taken into account. When the European integration is at issue, one has not to forget that any nation has different features proceeding from its national character, history and culture. The modern global society needs more than ever to take adequate decisions on problems such as ecology, demography and terrorism. Two scenarios can be developed regarding the needed decisions. The first relies on the dominating values or priorities of modernity: a technological progress at the expense of ecology, a scientific rationality versus the tradition, the maximization of production and consumption at the expense of resources, a formal legality in relation to the person; the scenario that will lead to the aggravation of the crisis and later to cataclysm. The second scenario reckons on the radical change in axiological priorities. This requires the necessity of the analysis of the two types of an axiological discourse, in science, on the one hand, and also in theology, on the other. The ‘logic’ in the development of culture has to be also taken into account. Models for the development of knowledge that are borrowed from philosophy are established as its objective regularities – accumulation, proliferation and the change of a paradigm.
The cumulative principle of replenishment proceeds from the past (an abstract philosophical norm, in which the accent is put on identity and the leading role of a dialogue). In the same way as the accumulated theoretical generalizations and facts in science, this model of a cultural development itself is the collection of advances based on the abstract philosophical norms of excellence. Being considered in this manner, culture keeps a human identity but alienates the person from the other persons in the cultural dialogue. This form of a cultural choice is determined by the rational logic supposing the regularities, which are characteristic of social sciences.

The model of the change of a paradigm is the revolutionary phenomenology that proceeds from the present (the accent here is put on the change of identity and the change of the positions in a dialogue). It focuses on the concrete sociological norm of human behavior that supposes both the partial and complete replacement. That is to say that the culture is viewed as a field for a free choice where any norm is completely incommensurable with the other. The same applies also to a human identity and a cultural dialogue. According to this model, the history of culture is the complex of various cultural types which are not liable to a mutual comparison but the choice between them is controlled emotionally and not logically.

The third type – proliferation – is based on the principle of the relative democracy that relies on the future (the accent here is the loss of identity and the arbitrary positions in a dialogue). The formulated purpose is practically inaccessible and often does not have in common with real human behaviors.² For this reason, the future is unpredictable but simultaneously only it allows a choice between different cultural systems to be made. According to this model, there is no sense in speaking about a definite identity and the self-sufficient position in a dialogue. The motto in this model is: “a purpose is nothing, movement is anything”³.

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² Ксавин И.Т. Ценности новой цивилизации: основания поиска и их критическая оценка, В: Ценностный дискурс в науках и теологии, М., 2009, с. 11.
All the three cultural scenarios can be traced in history and the logic of a culture at a large degree is a projecting intentional strategy for the invasion in cultural creation and its theoretical understanding.

**Rationality as the Regulative Value of Culture**

Our attitude to the culture as a comprehended reality presupposes rationality as a cultural value. The main problem is to combine our values with the values of the other. Are the different cultures incompatible in general? To what extent is possible a cultural synthesis by means of rational ways?

Jurgen Habermas speaks about such project – the project for a communicative rationality, in which the people participating in social discussions are engaged (Habermas 1981). His project assumes that people accept the rules of a rational discourse, which contradicts to the current situation of the radicalization of controversies.

The opposition between the Western Christian or the so-called rational culture and the Eastern Islamic or traditional culture is strongly expressed. The majority of people, independently of their cultural affiliation, suffer at the time of an economic crisis, a war or terroristic outrages but no one can preliminary set the rational solution of such situations until now. The solutions are measured as rational post factum and they are taken by the victor. In fact, a cultural sense plays an important, real role only in two areas: in our own cultural area and in that belonging to another, which differs from ours. We exist in the former but the latter is only an emotional and conceptual construction for us. The culture, to which we belong, makes our knowledge culturally determined. According to Schutz, we can examine objectively and scientifically only a foreign culture (Schutz 1962-66). If we aim to a rational and conscious effort searching a cultural synthesis, we have to leave the limits of local cultures and act neutrally regarding standards, values and ideals. This is absolutely impossible due to the adherence to the ideal of a scientific objectiveness, which is adopted by the paradigm of a classical science. We are all foreigners today and we live anywhere due to global communications. Trying to understand various cultural
determinants creating conditions for the rational discourse of the culture, we can distinguish three levels:

• the level of direct life impressions – examining the native language, long-term relations in family, relatives, school, birthplace. At this level, we have the practical, unconscious emotional acquisition of a culture.

• the level of the acquisition of knowledge – an experience, namely a contact with a foreign culture (travels, learning foreign languages, a communication with foreigners). This level problematizes common sense and gives the possibility of increasing the sphere of a cultural knowledge; the individual can form his own picture of a foreign culture, a total misunderstanding or fear. Due to the separation from an indirect cultural basis, the cognition appears right at this level.

• the level of the philosophical and scientific research of the culture. Here, various cultures are examined as the equal parts of the third world, in the spirit of Popper. This sphere of an objective knowledge demonstrates the pluralism of cultural universals. Right here is the place of the rational dialogue of cultures.

The Main Dilemma: Anthropologism vs. Ecologism

A dialogue does not occur in an intercultural space but within the frameworks of a definite culture, based on the resources, which are characteristic to the corresponding culture. One of the modern myths that proceeds from sociobiology, along with the common disappointment of West intellectuals and the boom of East religious schools, is the global environmentalism – a good example of how new cultural universals emerge. The Anglo-American sociologist of science, Fuller, calls it a ‘karmic Darwinism’ (Fuller 2002) Its consequences are as follows: the elimination of a subject and the refusal of the anthropomorphic bases of

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culture; the refusal of science and technological progress; the refusal of rationality as the foundation of knowledge, communication and social regulation. Fuller suggests that in the 21st century the Western science will ally itself with the Biblical religions which will lead to an ‘anthropic perspective’ as opposed to the karmic determinism. The anthropic perspective is associated with Christianity, Judaism and Islam and is secularized from positivism in the 19th century, identifying social sciences as humanistic religions. The second combines Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism, to which is acceded also the West Epicureanism. The neo-Darwinist synthesis in the 20th century becomes its secular variant establishing as a normative framework for the world. In their works, Dawkins, Wilson and Singer defend the idea for the refusal of normative privileges for man using naturalistic arguments. This idea received the enviable support of post-modernism. Fuller proposes that monotheists should combine themselves with positivists to rehabilitate the collective humanistic project. The understanding of the participation in science as a civil obligation or even in the sense of Boyle, Newton and Comte as a religious service has a decisive significance for this project. According to Fuller, the 21st century will become a witness of the collision between the anthropic and karmic perspectives, and the main questions that will be asked are similar to the following one: Is Man the image and likeness of God and does he has the right of the privileged position in Nature because of this? The monotheistic religions from West come to an agreement on this point while the pantheistic and polytheistic religions of the East did not. In metaphysical concepts, this sounds like the opposition between universum (the unity of hierarchies and regularities) and polyuniversum (the chaotic interaction of powers and substances).

The key concepts of the karmic ideology are the following: the equality of humans and animals, a moral-political and religious tolerance, the predominance of the elemental forces of social development, the negation of categories such as ‘progress’ and ‘decay’, the priority of a natural (biological or cosmological) determinant over the cultural determinant, holism instead of individualism. Yet in the distant past (1960), similar ideas for a karmic ideology were criticized. Jorge Luis Borges and Roland Barthes with their theses on the “death of the
author” are the first, afterward their thesis is realized in the thesis of the “death of the subject”, in which is introduced the known statement of Nietzsche for the “death of God”.\(^5\) Any minimization of the role of Man in the Nature at the background of modern global cataclysms would be fatal. However, one thing that is positive in the idea of Fuller is the term “anthropia”. In its essence, it is a new type of humanism. Ginsburg develops the idea for a secular humanism as the alternative to religion.\(^6\) This new humanism combines in itself the values of religion and philosophy. It is destined to define the new position of Man in the rational world. The old classicism is closely related to anthropocentrism, culture-centrism (the central place of the culture in relation to economics and politics), interdisciplinarity (involvement with science as the source of a critical philosophical reflection). A dialogue between the science and the Christian theology is possible as there is a place in it also for modernization. From a theological point of view, Man is similar to God and this places him on superior positions and above all. The aspiration for an interdisciplinary synthesis is strongly expressed in the modern ‘natural theology’. Religion as a cultural form separated from policy and economics turns to the development of a person in its axiological dimensions. The religion has to be the ally of the science but not vice-versa. Hence the place of a philosopher in the dialogue for values is significant.

### The Philosopher – A Centrist or a Marginal?

The critical position of the humanist is at the crossroads of cultures. The position of the philosopher is at the intersecting point of cultural epochs. The discussed anthropic perspective is a reference to the epoch of Renaissance when Man is given the status of a hero. The person is in a competition with God, creates societies and cultures, dominates technologically the Nature and shows the abilities of demiurge. If we

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\(^5\) Ницше Ф. Так говорил Заратустра// Ницше Ф. Соч.:В.2, т. Т2, М, 1990, с. 64.

\(^6\) Гinzбург, В.Л. Об атеизме, религии и светском гуманизме, М., 2008.
look closer at the current political and religious extremism and fanaticism, we will recognize new trends toward heroism.

These are the new political leaders, anti-globalists, terroristic leaders who consider themselves new ‘crusaders’ struggling against the world evil. This heroism is a bad advisor regarding the dialogue for values, a compromise and synthesis as the goals of a rational discussion are strange to it. Such heroism cannot be the form of an axiological discourse. Only a philosophical analysis is able to show the false nature of an axiological polarization. If we return to the delineated three levels of cultural dynamics, we see that the opposition between the karmic and anthropic principles is possible only at the first two levels. Their limitation and syncretism can be seen at the third level of cultural dynamics, where the point is to put at stake a rational perspective. Therefore, the mass conscience constructs social values without being interested in their critical analysis. The ideological strategy is to justify your own values and to criticize the values of the other. Only the philosopher is able to exit from the frameworks of any axiological system trying to preserve political and axiological neutrality.

Certainly, being at the first and second levels of cultural dynamics, representing an empirical subject, the philosopher can prefer and form a definite axiological significance, using the cumulative method and the method of a paradigmatic jump. However, according to his underlying essence, after Wittgenstein, action but not just knowledge is important for him as he knows that he does not know anything. The only position that he can take directly in a dialogue is one to create the ways of achieving the dialogue which can lead to consensus. His neutrality is a guarantee of a distance. The philosopher is able to build critical analytic values in the broader context of an intellectual culture. This distance allows him to see a horizon and to act in compliance with the principle of complementarity. Aligning the anthropic project with a philosophical discourse suggests a diversion from scientific to theological positions and vice versa as an effort to reach common axiological foundations.
REFERENCES


