

War and Peace - The Culture of Civilization

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Abstract

The paper presents, in a detailed synchronic and diachronic form, the notions of culture and civilization, the intrinsic relations they establish with one another and with the society and their main contextual features. They can be delineated along two characteristics: first after the universality, and second after meaning and value, conferred by the human behavior in different eras of the society. Although they were always together in human history, the instrumentality of civilization can, through social and cultural technology subdue the vitality of culture, which tremendous consequences for human species.

Keywords: *culture, civilization, society, human condition, civilizing process.*

The sensitivity of the subject

Since the dawn of human society, people defined themselves in terms of “We” and “Them” (or the “Others”). Every human community strives to define its particular specificity, originality, and also exceptionality. This was both a synchronic and diachronic phenomenon. The conscious appurtenance to a particular society or culture was defined both through affirmation of own specificity, in opposition with other contemporary society, and by the implicit supposition of its evolution from previous forms. And because the particular social pattern shapes the psychic structure of those who constitute it, entails that social and/or cultural differences are reflected in the psychic structure differences of its members. In consequence, to state a social or/and cultural difference, and especially a social progress, is equal to stating a different, and more often, a superior structuring way of the psychic of the involved persons. In this context, the contemporary debates, both within scholar and public discourses, concerning the

cultural differences among different parts and population from the world, get a particular meaning.

Since Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* the difference between Asiatic societies and Western societies (as *shame-based culture* and *guilt-based culture*) became a common assumption for many scholars and unleashed ardent debates. This difference was used to oppose Western society to the Eastern ones mainly as regards the controlling agency. While in the former the restraint exercised over the individuals is thought to be no longer based on social agencies – because the compliance of individual impulses and desires to the social requirements is secured by an internalized self-control–, in the latter the social control is externalized, i.e. the individual conforms to social regulations in order to avoid the public shame. And because the shame is seen in Western societies as an infantile, regressive emotion (Freud, Erikson), the Eastern societies are placed, indirectly, on a lower level of cultural and civilization advancement. This covert-sense of superiority is embedded all over the (self-)laudatory Western civilization and its cultural products. This topic is full of value, so the attempts to understand cultural differences (in terms of civilization) were for a long time (and they still are) distorted by numerous biases and they are subject to various subjective, political, and ethnic implications – even after the so-called “maturing” of social sciences.

First, the *psychological bias of prestige* prejudices the process, because of the implicit self-references of the subject: any conception about a cultural difference implies the self-image of its authors.

Second, there are the cultural *distortions due to the conceptual battery used* by the researcher. Cultural particularities defines the researchers' *Weltanschauung*, their specific mode of understanding the world, and so the scientific episteme. No matter what procedures are used for assuring the objectivity of the research and its discourse on culture, as long as in this specific topic the final relevance belongs to the meaning, or significance, of any cultural reality, and hence the cultural closure of comprehension prevails. Only the ongoing hard effort to transcend the cultural peculiarity, at the individual level, can get a chance for an inter-cultural communication and mutual understanding. “Yet knowledge as an experience is something personal and private that cannot be transferred, and that we believe to be transferable, objective knowledge, must always be created by the listener: the

listener understands, and the objective knowledge is transferred, only if he is prepared to understand.”¹

In the third place, the *ethnic commandments* rear their heads too. It is enough to mention here the long and intense contest between French and German scholars on the meaning of culture and civilization.²

Fourth, the underlying *political program* involved in any cultural vision. Cultural depictions and beliefs are employed as instruments of domination and control for the sake of legitimating political practices and thus they do not allow a disinterested approach of this subject; neither from those empowered by the cultural supremacy,³ nor by those submitted to it. As Hans-Peter Duerr already warned, the Western perspective on civilization lies, all the time, under suspicion of a colonial ideology as long as it ascribes the economic, technical and military supremacy of the Western over the rest of the world to a “superiority in the modeling of drive structure”. (van Krieken)

Fifth, there are *epistemological biases*, due to the peculiarity of every specialized social science which are very powerful within the cultural sciences paradigm.

Culture versus civilization

One of the tenderest issues of anthropological research and of capital importance for our subject is the existence of some common denominators for every culture. As it was already noticed, they can be found, at least, with the incest taboo which is a universally invariable standard of human cultures, as much as with the intolerance to illegitimated killing, violence, stealing or lying within the group; with suffering which is accepted or promoted only as means and never as an end in itself (neither an end of individual – it is used for purification, redemption or achievement of mystical state, nor of society – it is merely an

¹ Humberto R. Maturana, “Biology of cognition”, in Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco Varela, (1980), *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., pp 5-58, p. 6.

² See Norbert Elias, *The civilizing process: sociogenetic and psychogenetic investigations*, Dunning Eric, Goudsblom Johan and Mennell Stephen (eds.), second edition, Wiley-Blackwell, 2000, Vol. I, Part one. *On the Sociogenesis of the concepts of “Civilization” and “Culture”*, pp. 3-44.

³ In English and French civilization was associated from the beginning with the task of civilizing others, and in German of eighteenth-century, it was still emphasized this meaning of spreading the State (political) development to other peoples

implement for punishment, discipline, and control); with the fear of death, unavoidable for a conscious being, and hence no culture treats unconcernedly the corpses; with the common feature of minimal communication and some measure of order that makes social life possible: “all cultures define as abnormal individuals who are permanently inaccessible to communication or who fail to maintain some degree of control over their impulse life.”⁴ All these minimal universal common denominators can be regarded as forming the primary civilizing infra-structure of any structure. So, we can’t imagine a society without any form of civilization, but merely with a greater or lesser degree of civilization. Accordingly, all societies had to shape and transmit certain forms of restrained behavior. There are features of human relations which produce roughly similar forms of behavior in all cultural and historical contexts. The general direction of these shifting patterns throughout the course of human history could be described by “one single overarching civilizing process”.⁵

This process has a two-side expression at the social and individual level. Unfortunately, these attempts to understand the civilizing process under its universal character, at individual psychic level, in such rather wide manner, as the process in which “the socio-genetic apparatus of individual self-control became more differentiated, more omnipresent and more stable” (N. Elias), “all forms of restrained behaviour” (J. Goudsblom) or “aspects of increasing foresight” (S. Menzell) partially overlap features which belong more to culture than to civilization. What is described as civilizing process, by Elias and his followers, encompasses, in fact, more than one process: *psychologization* (related with interdependence and increasing mutual identification), *rationalization*, *the advance of the shame threshold*, and *increasing self-control* (self-regulated behavior or self-restrain conduct).⁶ The problem is that psychologization is just a more general process usually known under the name of socialization or enculturation; the mutual identification is also a consequence of common cultural nurturing of personality formation and is not peculiar to the civilizing process. This technical concept of the civilizing process looks like a miscellany of different ideas and thus was rightly suggested to be treated not as a concept but rather as a summary rubric (Th.

⁴ Alfred Louis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, Peabody Museum, 1952, p. 350.

⁵ Johan Goudsblom, “The Theory of the Civilizing Process and its Discontents”, at the 13th *International Sociological Association Congress*, Bielefeld, July 18-23, 1994.

⁶ Thomas J. Scheff, “Unpacking the Civilizing Process: Shame and Integration in Elias’s Work.” accessed online, June, 2007, <http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/social/elias/confpap/scheff2.html>.

Scheff) or as a particular pattern of regimes (F. Spier).⁷ In addition, the “civilizing process” of conduct is not unitary and progressively unidirectional as results from Norbert Elias’ original outline. Elias himself, in his last years, manifested a preference for the plural form, “civilizing processes” when he referred to the multilevel development of Western Europe and employed the concept of “informalization”, coined by Cas Wouters, to talk about that type of development, less rigid with the behavior and psychic patterning, that is “more varied, subtle and flexible modes of interaction” adapted for a more diverse public. Although, “self-constraints have not only become more flexible, at the same time they have also become more strict.”⁸ Elias himself considered this process as social experiments towards “controlled decontrolling of emotional control(s).” Many of Elias’ students took and developed this as an important aspect of the process, talking about “vulnerability of civilization”, “breakdown” or “decay” (explicitly versus “growth”), “de-civilization processes”, “regression to barbarism”, etc.⁹ However all of them seem to remain within the same conception which keeps the culture-civilization distinction obscure. What would be the difference between the two?

First difference: universality

First of all, we can consider the civilizing process as an establishment of common denominators and patterns of every social group which is complex enough for a conscious life to emerge (*consciousness for itself*).¹⁰ Anytime and everywhere there is a complex culture, a civilizing process was (previously) undertaken because every culture is presumably a society civilized to at least a minimal degree. If a complex culture is to emerge, in that society previously there

⁷ “Regime” = form of behavioral regulation which exhibit some temporal stability.

⁸ Cas Wouters, “Formalization and Informalization; Changing Tension Balances in Civilizing Processes”, *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1986, pp. 1-18, and “Social Stratification and Informalisation in Global Perspective”, *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 7 no. 4, 1990, pp. 69-90.

⁹ Jonathan Fletcher, *Violence and Civilization. An Introduction to the Work of Norbert Elias*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1997, Johan Goudsblom, *op. cit.*, Steven Mennell, “Decivilising Processes: Theoretical Significance and Some Lines of Research”, *International Sociology* 5, 2, 1990, pp. 205-223, Robert van Krieken, “The Barbarism of Civilization: Cultural Genocide and the «Stolen Generations»”, *British Journal of Sociology*, 50, 2, 1999, pp. 297-315, Loïc J. D. Wacquant, “Dé-civilisation et Diabolisation: la Mutation du Ghetto Noir Américain” in Christine Fauré and Tom Bishop, *L’Amérique des Français*, François Bourin, Paris, 1993, pp. 103-125, *et alibi*.

¹⁰ Bogdan Popoveniuc, *Curs de Antropologie filosofică* (Philosophical Anthropology Course), “Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava Press, 2008.

has to be a minimal level of order, understanding, communication, a certain degree of integration. “No society can survive without a concentration of individual drives and affects, without a very specific control of individual behavior. No such control is possible unless people exert constraints on one another, and every constraint is converted in the person on whom it is imposed into fear of one kind or another.”¹¹ The psychic regulation and differentiated pattern of self-restraint through fear, anguish and anxiety is indissolubly accountable with the formation of individual self-consciousness within a society. As partially Clark Wissler¹² already showed, men always and everywhere are faced with certain unavoidable problems which arise out of its “given” human condition (i.e. its biology, its social fate and the existential human situation in world), hence the broad outlines of the ground arrangement of all cultures is and has to be similar. I think that the civilization process, with the characteristics described above, can be conceived as an embodiment of these common patterns.

Clear civilizing structures emerge in all societies which evolved in a high stability of the central organs of society; relatively stable central institutions which monopolized the physical force (i.e. state-like structures). “Only with the formation of this kind of relatively stable monopolies do societies acquire those characteristics as a result of which the individuals forming them get attuned, from infancy, to a highly regulated and differentiated pattern of self-restraint; only in conjunction with these monopolies does this kind of self-restraint require a higher degree of automaticity, does become, as it were, «second nature».”¹³

As its “*civis*” Latin etymology shows, civilization is related with the complexity of human settlement; with the emergence of the Big City. The civilization is related to the complexity, hierarchy and specialization settings of the Big City. The metropolis is “the nucleus of social complexity”, the first social organization homologous with the brain of *Sapiens*: “a polycentric milieu, an interpenetration of organizational complexities and random inter-communications” able to produce individualities. “The Big City is the efficient socio-cultural ecosystem of the two capital apparitions pertaining to the third birth of humanity: autonomous individual and conscience; (...) the proper event for historical societies and above all for the city is, for more or less restricted and more or less elitist populations, the relative autonomy of the individual, starting from the recognition

¹¹ N. Elias, *Civilizing process...*, ed.cit., vol. II, p. 443.

¹² Clark Wissler, *Man and Culture*, Thomas Y. Crowell, New York, 1923.

¹³ N. Elias, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 369.

of individual liberties and from the existence of stochastic liberties, the possibility to develop psychological, affective complexities, the *Self* and *I* affirmation, with all the egocentrism and egoism which, after all, any of them implies.”¹⁴ The centralizing, structuring and repressive State is a way of organizing a complexity based on a central apparatus similar with the brain activity structure. *The compulsory class hierarchy* represents the general pattern of social organization comparable (and parallel) with hierarchical, specialized brain functions and the organization of the conscious (Ego) and the unconscious (Super-Ego) relationship. The major civilization’s side-effect is the split of public and private sphere (private/public property, work/home) –conscious and unconscious, Ego/Super-Ego).

The second difference: meaning and value

The meanings and values form “the essence of the organization of culture”. Different aspects of the same thing, meanings and value are not ends, but what shapes the ends of human actions; they are variable and relative, they are part of the nature, products of men having bodies and living in societies, they are social in their scope, parts of culture in substance and form, and they are the structural essence of the culture of these societies; “values and significances are «intangibles» which are «subjective» in that they can be internally experienced, but are also objective in their expressions, embodiments, or results.”¹⁵ In contrast, civilization is more related with human condition in society, it involves the increased control of the elementary human impulses through living among others. Culture and civilization correspond, in Weber’s terms, to the two different types of rationalities which underlies the social actions: instrumental rationale and value rationale.

The instrumental rationality process (*zweckrationalität*) means the rationalization of comprehension and action in relation with a scope and it is equivalent with the practical exercise of the entire knowledge for attaining that scope; but a scope which is depleted of any (other) kind of values except domination and control, is the imposition of that individual (personal or cultural) position. Product of “scientific specialization and technological differentiation”,

¹⁴ Edgar Morin, *Paradigma pierdută: natura umană*, “Al. I. Cuza” University Press, Iași, 1999, p. 195.

¹⁵ Kroeber and Kluckhohn, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

the instrumental rationality means a continuous matching of means to the end, while the ends are usually defined exclusively in brute economic terms of constantly increasing material, as well as psychological vulgar, well-being. It leads to an increasingly coordination and control, both over the physical and social environment, with the cost of oppressive routine, secularization growing, depersonalization and *individual freedom disruption*.¹⁶ At the individual level it sets supra-structural norms and values as individualism, efficiency, self-discipline, materialism and accountability. Not to forget the hyper-rationalization, that fusion between the company (or domain) and the individual rationality, which comes to control what they want from life, their personal stance towards work and life, etc. “Action is instrumentally rational (*zweckrational*) when the end, the means, and the secondary results are all rationally taken into account and weighed. This involves rational consideration of alternative means to the end, of the relations of the end to the secondary consequences, and finally of the relative importance of different possible ends” and it opposes both to the value-rationality (*wertrationalität*) – “that is, determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious or other form of behavior, independently of its prospects of success”, and to the *traditional rationality* – “that is determined by ingrained habituation”, or *affectual* (especially emotional) *rationality* – “that is, determined by the actor’s specific affects and feeling states.”¹⁷

From this perspective, civilization corresponds to the instrumental adaptation for living in high density and complex (class) hierarchical society. It is a “natural” result, of people’s forced cooperation within groups.¹⁸ And now become clear the narrowness of this version of social sciences which aims to “replicate” and to be just like the natural ones and to employ, both descriptively and explicatively, only the instrumental, mechanical, reasoning as the solely cause(s) of human actions, and remove, any explicative and/or descriptive significance for value-reasoning causation, which endorse, at the same time, with similar, if not stronger, power the human behavior.

¹⁶ See Julien Freund, *The Sociology of Max Weber*, Vintage Books, New York, 1968.

¹⁷ See Max Weber, *Economy and society: an outline of interpretive sociology*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978, pp. 24-26.

¹⁸ William Donald Hamilton, “Innate social aptitudes of man: an approach from evolutionary genetics”, in R. Fox (*ed.*), *Biosocial Anthropology*, Malaby Press, London, 1975, pp. 133-153.

Hence, the civilizing process is somewhere at the border between biology and society, it is a form of psychic structure common for all lower forms of consciousness. It provides the basic patterns for the higher modes of structuring the conscience: the value-based conscience. Being an instrumental patterning, it has no values in itself. It is obvious now how the limitation of individual (and cultural!) growing to self-control and self-retrained behavior (more differentiated, more complete and more stable) is a good account for the morbid accuracy, aesthetic and order of Nazi camps and mass-extermination programs, the high self-discipline and constitution required for concentrated actions of organized genocides in ethnic or fundamentalist wars from all over the world, all of these need a high obedience and a high level of self-control of the executants. The culture, instead, is already at the border between social and symbolic (spiritual) and it provides the patterns for higher type of consciousness. Culture is the *why*, the *how* and the *what* is appropriate to understand, and establishes a shared consciousness community, civilization is more an ideology of “Beautiful Home” and its corresponding process of “comfortable estrangement.”¹⁹

Unfortunately, *civilization bears in its core, from the beginning, the seeds of human conflict*. It seems that on the basis of the Social Contract was a procedural flaw. Employed for solving the generalized conflict between people, the *bellum omni contra omnes*, civilization wasn't other than the transfiguration in a new more impersonal form – among statuses – and at a new level – intra-psychic – of this inter-personal conflict. The primary engine of the civilizing process was, from the beginning, the human need/desire for recognition, magnificently depicted by Hegel, as the fight for recognition of the first two people which led to the first master and servant relation, the truly founding act of human civilization. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* it is shown how the need for recognition determined the two first men to risk their lives in a violent struggle to death to make the others “recognize” their humanness. Once the natural fear of death makes one of them to give up and surrender himself, emerge the first hierarchic, and most powerful, relationship of lordship and bondage. And if the desire for recognition is the one which defines the field of social freedom and human civilization from its origin, than the nucleus of the civilizing mechanism are the anxieties;²⁰ and among these,

¹⁹ In Peter Sloterdijk's terms.

²⁰ See Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, W. W. Norton New York, 1961.

the ones which inspire man most powerfully are those created by himself. The general organizing principle of historic society was constraining a hierarchy, which has as primary consequence the strengthening of coercive and repressive State apparatus and, in parallel, the crystallization of (hierarchized) structure of individual psychic. “Moreover – and this is of decisive importance for the standard of civilization nowadays – the restraint and self-control characteristic of all phases of the civilizing process up to now, results not merely from the necessity of each individual to cooperate constantly with many others; they are no less determined by the split of society into upper and lower classes.”²¹ The psychological mechanism of the civilizing process is to be found in this need to be recognized as superior, and this is equally true for individuals and societies. The concealment of the recognition need entails a “compartmentalization” both of psychic and society. This term refers to Ego’s defense mechanisms which operate through the precise isolation of problematic or “dangerous” impressions and emotions,²² but it also evokes in addition, as de Swaan noticed, along with other terms – e.g. “suppression” – social correlations at every level of the society. The intensive and extensive globalization of conduct and civilized social relations through specialization, formalization, ritualization and through social and cultural bureaucratization, support the compartmentalization of individual psychic and social space and potentially open the paths to unimaginable atrocities, in the name of civilization. “Both at the personal and group level, this compartmentalization proceeds through disidentification from the designated victim population, the withdrawal of the identification affect, the denial that the target population might be similar to oneself and the repression of emotions that result from identification, such as sympathy, pity, concern, jealousy etc.”²³

Nowadays, at personal level, the civilized conduct is still seen as the landmark of a superior being, although these feelings are well camouflaged in daily relationships.²⁴ An psychoanalytical look on daily intercourse shows that

²¹ Norbert Elias, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 429.

²² Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*, International Universities Press, New York, 1966.

²³ Abram de Swaan, “Dyscivilization, Mass extermination, and the State”, *Theory, Culture and Society*, 18, 2-3, April-June, 2001, see. Abram de Swaan, “Widening circles of disidentification; On the Psycho- and sociogenesis of the hatred of distant strangers - Reflections on Rwanda”, *Theory, Culture and Society*, 14, 2, May, 1997, pp. 105-122.

²⁴ Let’s think only on what was considered until recently as a common truth in social psychology, that aggressiveness is associated with a very low self esteem, i.e. lower (uncivilized) strata profile,

although the amplification of social interdependence entails a strong pressure towards growing mutual sensibility on other emotional life, which allows a wider social acceptability for alternative behaviors and for an increasing variety of emotional expression, a sort of taboo over expressions of superiority and inferiority emotions had generalized, the censorship which becomes more and more stronger. “We are in an age when people will sooner confess their sexual secrets - much sooner in many cases - than their status secrets, whether in the sense of longings and triumphs or humiliations and defeats.”²⁵

The real nature of the civilizing process becomes more evident if we take into account the general framework of its emergence. The aggressiveness (*aggrēdi*) is an intrinsic characteristic of the living matter, of life in general.²⁶ Within the already civilized human world understanding and explanation of its tolerated, organized and cultivated (!) violent manifestation can be made on three levels. At the first level, the individual one, the impulsive conduct, tolerated within the public space, can be understood as a way of relaxation or of escape, as a pressure regulating the valves used by civilized persons in a civilized society.²⁷ At the social level, these manifestations are “inflection points” in which impulses and urges which were banned in the past, become acceptable and are even cultivated. This is the case of the profit motivation²⁸ (Weber), some sexual

while the new studies indicate a more nuanced relationship. The high and unrealistic levels of self esteem generate easy aggressiveness when the self image is threatened. See for example, R. F. Baumeister, J. Brad, and W. K. Campbell, “Self-esteem, narcissism, and aggression: Does violence result from low self-esteem or from threatened egotism?”, *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9, 2000, pp. 26-29, and R. F. Baumeister, L. Smart and J. Boden, “Relation of threatened egotism to violence and aggression: The dark side of high self-esteem”, *Psychological Review*, 103, 1996, pp. 5-33.

²⁵ Tom Wolfe, *Mauve Gloves and Madmen, Clutter and Vine*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Girouz, 1976, p. 189, in Cas Wouters, “On the Sociogenesis of a «Third Nature» in the Civilizing of Emotions: Developments in Dealing with Strangers and «Strangeness» and with Feelings of Superiority and Inferiority”, accessed online May, 2007, <http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/social/elias/confpap.html>.

²⁶ Bogdan Popoveniuc, “Violența ca sport” (Violence as Sports) in Sorin-Tudor Maxim, Dan Ioan Dascălu, Bogdan Popoveniuc, Eusebiu Ionescu (eds.), *Violența în sport* (Violence in Sports), “Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava Press, 2006, pp. 27-65.

²⁷ Bogdan Popoveniuc, “Sportul ca violență instituționalizată” (The Sports as Institutionalized Violence), in *op. cit.*, pp. 75-105.

²⁸ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Talcott Parsons, Courier Dover Publications, 2003.

behavior²⁹ (Foucault) or belligerence in the age of Crusades.³⁰ We can notice the same discordant tendencies, the same cleavage within the social space, which exist at the core of the civilizing process. “While the state continues to monopolize the exercise of violence and promotes and protects the civilized types of behavior and expression in society, at the same time it perpetrates massive and organized acts of extreme violence towards specific categories of its citizens.”³¹

In addition, “there is, however, an even more important third level of explanation. This concerns the conditions under which the civilizing process can turn against itself, where the question is no longer simply a paradoxical compromise between the civilizing process and its opposite, the impulses set loose by a previous dissolution of order, but *where the fundamental mechanisms of the civilizing process are effectively, purposefully and explicitly undermined. It is at that level that the totalitarian movements of the twentieth century can be located*, with the important mention that they are very closely related to the previously mentioned inflections of the civilizing process, therefore they cannot be fully externalized and exorcised, restricted to the cases of Nazism and Bolshevism.”³²

These sublime, but nonetheless concrete and painful appearances of aggressiveness in modern world, are noting but the social and cultural (transfigured) form of primary biological aggressiveness, the individuals' need for surviving and preservation, for domination of (natural) environment. The transformation of the social, the inter-relational and symbolic-informational medium, in a critical factor for human individual surviving, changed the form and consistency of primary aggressiveness. But it still can be recognized as the same fundamental process of identity preservation and imposing. At the socio-cultural level, this compound of personality which forms the ground of recognition had labelled and was acknowledged over time under different aspects. “Plato spoke of *thymos*, or «spiritedness,» Machiavelli of man's desire for glory, Hobbes of his pride or vainglory, Rousseau of his *amour-propre*, Alexander Hamilton of the love

²⁹ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, Vintage Books, 1990.

³⁰ See Árpád Szokolczai, “Decivilizing Processes and the Dissolution of Order; with Reference to the Case of East Europe”, paper delivered at the Norbert Elias centenary conference, Bielefeld, 2-22 June in Abram de Swaan, „Dyscivilization,...”.

³¹ But “compartmentalization is the social arrangement and the psychic defence mechanism *par excellence* in a dyscivilizing society” and not at all of a civilized one (or being in a civilizing process). Abram de Swaan, „Dyscivilization,...”.

³² Árpád Szokolczai, *ibidem*. At this point the CIA flights scandal and Guantanamo-like American prison camps supposed to be functioned on some European countries territory is very illustrative example.

of fame and James Madison of ambition, Hegel of recognition, and Nietzsche of man as the «beast with red cheeks».³³ All stand for the same part of the human soul which has the urge to assign a value to itself and, with this, to people, events or things which surround it. “It is the part of the personality which is the fundamental source of the emotions of pride, anger, and shame, and is not reducible to desire, on the one hand, or reason on the other. The desire for recognition is the most specifically political part of the human personality because it is what drives men to want to assert themselves over other men, and thereby into Kant’s condition of «asocial sociability»³⁴ Thymos is the expression of human need for inflict its social existence, it is the expression of *consciousness* to be *for itself*, as the *aggrēdi* is the need of any biological organism to put forth its organic existence. This need for recognition was the one which leads, through unimaginable violence, to the establishment of modern democracies, the noblest flower of the civilizing process.

At the individual level, “the desire for recognition arising out of *thymos* is a deeply paradoxical phenomenon because the latter is the psychological seat of justice and selflessness while at the same time it is closely related to the selfishness.”³⁵ Given its dialectic and asocial nature, it is not wonder that the two forms in which it had been recognized, esteem and self-esteem, which are two different stems which share the same root, were often confounded. Outcome of social second, but not derivative, the human nature “*thymos* is something like an innate human sense of justice, it is rather a self-entitlement sense. “People believe that they have a certain worth, and when other people act as though they are worth less – when they do not *recognize* their worth at its correct value – then they become angry.” If the thymos is that capacity of the human being to value, to “invest objects with value”, the need for esteem or the “desire for recognition” is “an activity of *thymos* that demands that another consciousness share the same evaluation.”³⁶ From this result also its megalothymotic forms which cause, and still generate, so much agitation and suffering in modern societies. Unfortunately,

³³ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press, New York, 1992, p. 162.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 163.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 172.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 165.

the megalothymotic³⁷ origin of civilization itself and its anxiogenous foundation render impossible, in the absence of an isothymotic,³⁸ emphatic and tolerant culture, intra-psychic and social harmonization within any particular civilization. Tolerance as isothymia, and not the one founded in megalothymotic or fortuitous, is the only one which “makes possible the passage from autarchic culture to multi-culture and, from here, to inter-culture, the richest and most promising for the future of humanity, cultural paradigm.” This is required because “we are not living in a world of certitudes: the more scientific, cultural, and even social progress we have, the more dangerous risks factors become. The future of mankind requires spirit of tolerance for the present moment. The ultimate aim of tolerance is to substitute for the intransigent attitude a veritable cultural dialogue; but for this a partner must be present another culture for dialogue.”³⁹ To be present means to be equally entitled, recognized and accepted as different cultural existence, despite, or more correct quite *because*, it is other. But, the nurture of isothymia is a process beyond the civilization instrumental capacities and, as long as it supposed deep reorganizations and capitulation at the level of the comprehension of reality and the creation of the entire *Weltanschauung* insomuch that it transcends the oneness of understanding conditioning – oriented towards the preservation of symbolic and informational (cultural) identity of the conscious being – that is to say the breakaway of the individual consciousness from the autarchic conditioning of its particular culture where it happened to be formed.

The culture of civilization

If we admit the high veracity of the meaning gave to the civilizing process, such a convincing being described by Norbert Elias, it become clear why the exasperating ritualized (civilized) gentlemen’ conduct was kept for so long as one of the most desirable and enviable model of personality. It wasn’t accidentally that the reputed (feared, admired and envied) personality of “thoroughly knight”, the ultimate manager of emotional reactions, emerged in the last, the only one actually, global empire of human history: the Cultural British Empire. As long as

³⁷ From the Greek *thymos* [θυμος], and *megas-* [μέγας]. The term originated in Plato’s work and denotes the human needs to be recognized as superior to other and to receive, in this way, the consequent respect, unlike isothymy which involve only the mutual recognition as equal.

³⁸ From the Greek [ἴσος (the same) + θυμος] = the need to be recognized (only) as equal.

³⁹ Sorin Tudor Maxim, *Toleranța. Dreptul la diferență* (Tolerance. The Right to Difference), Didactică and Pedagogică Publishing House, Bucharest, 2004, p. 122.

this civilizing process was dominating, in the direction of formalizing the conduct regulation as the symbol of control for power relations, this prototype of personality was the supreme figure. But this conception on the civilizing process, as collective solution for the fundamental social human need for recognition and its reflex at individual level, through this psychological mechanism of being recognized as superior, reveals, at the same time, the fact that civilization bears in its heart the conflict between people, societies and culture.

The instrumental side of civilizing consists in the structure of patterns of conduct regulation that aims the final scope, the individual conduct regulation for the profit of collective structures stability. It implies and could employ an entire collection of values and cultural perspectives through which it calibrates individuals' conduct. This axiological liberty of the operative side of the civilizing process does not guarantee an evolution towards humanization of interpersonal relationships and individual viewpoints over others, at all. This value-neutrality of civilization is a concealed and even disavowed subject, both in common understanding and academic settings. In fact, any regulate, learned, "more differentiated, more all-round and more stable" behavior can be considered civilized. This explained the ghoulish aesthetic of Nazi extermination camps, the sardonic efficacy of soviet pogroms, and the thoroughness of national or fundamentalist war genocides or even the current "anti-terrorism" measures (Guantanamo-like). Some of these require an unimaginable conduct and a regulation of social structures, an amazing rigor in execution and details. And as long as the supposition and belief of superiority and that of subordinator differentiation form the very core of the civilizing process, the civilization conditioning automatism will be impossible to be surpassed, and hence the uncontrollable evolution due to the contingent conjunction of historical factors.

Now, we can become aware of the accursed side of present-day globalization. What is spreading is just the instrumental part of the Occidental culture and not the entire culture. The instrumental rationality of the civilizing process is adaptive and humanity has no future with it, other than the one reserved by the blind faith, if it is not balanced by a healthy cultural value-rationality. We meet in the end, in a different manner, the Spengler thesis that the civilization is only the marker of a declining culture. From this perspective the global civilization (both extensive – encompassing the entire globe, and intensive sense – regulating the whole aspects of human culture), or better said, *a culture of civilization*, is the

final, petrified phase of (a) dying torpid culture(s). Globalization is an original and new phenomenon. It is the first time in human history when a civilization widespread over the entire globe. This civilization grows ensuing its inner (megalo) thymotic needs and it produces its own culture. If until now civilization “entered” within the encountered cultural form, from now on it develops quasi-autonomously. It fosters its own culture and it is in quarrel with all other cultures. But the civilization is not the one which generates, in a direct manner, the conflict, but its culture is the one which contradicts dissimilar others cultures, and it starts and carries the war in the name of its culture. There is no bellicose culture, only martial civilizations (which adapted or built instrumental cultural forms up to fulfil its growth). *The cultures are the peace of the Spirit in one of its forms, while civilizations are the tensional equilibrium setting imposed on nature, human psychic, and society, altogether.* Globalization is only the peak of this phenomenon. When civilization at the end of its accomplishment attains to rule the World, it has only one thing to eliminate: its subordinate culture which happened to serve to its completion. A culture of civilization is lifeless, it is impersonal and artificial, and because of this it has no future. For not becoming self-destructive, it is mandatory that the culture of the globalizing civilization be tolerant in its essence. In the present situation we can only hope that a culture of civilization would form in the future. “The human culture, as it is today, is far from fulfilling its all natural potential. We don’t know how «ripened» are the times, how many time the great crucible of the history has to boil until the Phoenix Bird will reborn from its own ash.”⁴⁰ We don’t know if the imposition of an artificial culture, as it is that of civilization, settles down to the unique aim of preservation the balance of inter-relations structure at the level of modern societies, impersonal and aseptic, des-affected and de-worlded, could be viable after all. It is possible, as *Matrix*⁴¹ movie shows, that human brain and spirit can’t be accommodated with such world as an artificial ideal system built for the satisfaction of basic needs, with a well-defined and well-regularized social structure or with a cultural (political) rational-correct world and is impossible for it to survive in a such an aseptic reality. The dismissal, in a cynical style, of the refuge, of the artificial supra-structure (“Überbau-Verweigerung”) of civilization could be vital for keeping the man within the Shelter of the Being (*Haus des Seins*). The artificiality of this structure

⁴⁰ Marius Dumitrescu, *Alchimia devenirii umane* (The alchemy of human becoming), Tipografia Moldova, Iași, 2007, p. 352.

⁴¹ *Matrix*, written and directed by Andy and Larry Wachowski, Warner Bros. Pictures, 1999.

results from its instrumentality. “The superstructure in this sense would be that civilization offers ways of comfortable seduction to the people to serve for its ends: ideals, ideas of duty, promises of redemption, hopes for immortality, goals for ambition, solutions of power, careers, arts, richness.” From a cynical perspective, they are all compensations for something man “does not let himself be robbed of in the first place: freedom, awareness, joy in living.”⁴² And all these fundamental coordinates of life process require the support of a “natural” culture with pain and pleasure, winnings and defeats, apprehension and confidence and not only a comfortable “artificial” and, therefore, alienating civilization.

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