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THE MEANING
OF CULTURAL
SUBSTRATUM IN
THE PROCESSES
OF EUROPEAN
INTEGRATION

“A true European does not live in one nation, but within an order of nations. (...) Different languages and different cultures are inextricably bound to Europe's being.”

I.

If we were to evaluate the prospects of European integration in the upcoming century against the background of the “Old” Continent's *political* history, there would be no reason for exaggerated optimism. Within that scope (of diplomatic deals at the expense of third parties, conflict and war) the human position can be sarcastically revealed as *destruction*. As an initiating mechanism, *historiae* generates *instinct*, the selfish interest of the individual, disguised as “the vital interest of a broader community”: i.e., of the clan, tribe, (social) rank, religious denomination and community, class, nation – depending upon which epoch we are talking about. This is the native locus of *Clausewitz's* axiom: war is nothing but the continuation of *policy* with other means. This was best confirmed by the catastrophe named the two World Wars, even though, from the viewpoint of internal structural connection, the “interwar” period (1919–1939) was just a breather between two (unequal) halftimes of the same match. Therefore, when globalization, which *is already* a process is talked about today, then one must bear in mind that it is a dimension and that its negative connotations appeared back in 1914. By 1945, Europe definitely had lost its privileged *world historical* position and soon began to search for itself.

Yet, albeit quite convincing, a picture of the European past as “a series of causally linked destructions” is nevertheless not a picture of the *entire* past. With regard to the next century, i.e., Europe's future, one should definitely bear this in mind, because, without any doubt, Europe will (only) be a part of the global, world process. Moreover, given the nuclear potential that is available,

there is no choice: the world will either exist without war as a global confrontation, or it will cease to exist. This means that the set of policies, which follow the Clausewitz axiom, which is no longer relevant, will have to be replaced by a *differently* constituted set of policies. On which foundations? Do these lie, still unrecognized, in the future, or have some although surely ineffective, been present? In other words, can we juxtapose the *old policy* with a new position, which focuses on an image of a *constructive*, rather than a *destructive* front when considering the historical activities of European Man?

Undoubtedly, different answers are possible. I believe that one of them is to focus on *culture* if European integration is a part of a global process. Culture as an eminently creative, *constructive activity* of the human spirit and energy (on the condition that the “condition humaine” is not considered as *absolute* but as *limited, stripped* of the new age arrogance concerning the self-sufficiency of “a world without God”, which culminated in the totalitarianisms of the 20th century).

2.

Having determined that *culture* and *integration* are the key operative concepts of this discussion, one must immediately state that their content in *colloquial usage* is often confusing, and in this sense, they cannot be satisfactory. This is borne out by two, for this occasion randomly chosen and widely circulated contemporary dictionaries, a Croatian one (Anić's Croatian dictionary¹), and a foreign one (Wahrig's German dictionary²). Hence, it is necessary to try to find the *original*, that nowadays has become perhaps concealed or its meanings forgotten.

I. The Notion of Culture

Both dictionaries, essentially in the same way, illustrate that, the **central** meaning of the word is found by highlighting the *result* of the activity, and not in the *activity itself* “**1. A totality of spiritual, moral, social and productive activity of a human society**”³; or: “**1. A totality of spiritual and artistic expressive forms of a nation (art, science, etc.)**”⁴. *Wahrig* precisely points to the Latin origin (and meaning)⁵, whereas *Anić* only registers a wider source (classical Europeanism). It is worth referring to the source when searching for the original meaning of *activity*, and not just its present visible *results*. To retain the lexicographic source, two more dictionaries were consulted, spe-

cifically Divković's large Latin (school) dictionary⁶, and Šulek's German-Croatian dictionary⁷.

1.a. The word *cultura* in Latin, according to an ordinary "school" dictionary (1,162 large format pages), originally meant primordial. As one of the earliest human *creative activities*: **cultivating, tilling, working** (land or fields); the notion soon acquired a figurative meaning: **moral education, ennoblement**. In the singular, the adjective *cultus* means **one who is aspired**, whereas in the plural *culta* turns into a substantive: **cultivated, tilled land**; *cultus* hereafter, figuratively speaking, is one who is **educated, refined**. *Cultus*⁸ as a noun has the same meaning as well as a new one: **cultivating and training of the spirit**.

1.b. Thus, the key feature of these activities is *cultivation* and *care*, so, having our operational needs in mind, we may say that culture, as a *constructive human activity*, represents a *provident creation of what is created*. Hence, while the colloquial definition is limited to what has *already been created*, our suggestion and interpretation, expanded by the original meanings, emphasizes that the need for cultivating and care is not completed by a created totality, but is *a continuous and consequently a present-day and future task of historical (human) practice*.

2. The Notion of *Integration*

2.a. If we open our contemporary dictionaries again, we will see that *integration* according to *Anić* (again denoted as *classical Europeanism*) means **transformation or merging of parts into a whole**,⁹ and according to *Wabrig* **creation of a whole, assembly, unification/association**. *To integrate* according to *Wabrig* means **shape into a whole**; he also lists the modern syntagm *European integration* which is explained as a dynamic political project: **the cooperation of European states by creating supranational bodies**¹⁰. No doubt, we are dealing with a *process*. *Wabrig* also indicates that the root of the word should be sought for in the Latin adjective *integer* and the verb *integrare*, which he translates as **renew, complete**¹¹. This is a very important instruction. If we consult *Divković's* explanation of the semantic base, we find that *integer*, first of all, means *untouched* in the sense of **unhurt, undamaged, intact**, and then also **whole**. Here we find reference to the first meaning of the verb *integrare* – *to renew*¹². *Divković* does not list the nouns (it would surely be *integratio*), but here, as usual we find help in *Šulek*. His translation from German (for

Integration, f.) without doubt again indicates *process* (completing, completion of process), and the verb (*integrieren*) is translated as *to complete, to complete a process*¹³. Anić also draws attention to a duality: the perfective and imperfective – of the verb *to integrate*¹⁴, implying dynamism of historical process.

The levels of meaning provided by these insights lead to fruitful examination of the place and the role of cultural substrata, especially the one whereby the verb *to integrate* indicates that we are dealing with something in need of *renewing, completing*. *Renewal* thus becomes a permanent feature of a (permanent) process. This is the level at which the notions of *integration* and *culture* meet each other.

3.

I believe that we may all agree that concepts of European integration only make sense if they aim at a *cancellation*¹⁵ of past history *as* a history of destruction. I also believe and we can all agree that another Utopian project should not be added to the long list of well-known ones. This means that the new concept that is not just another Utopian one, must be, in reality, founded on what has *already* been proven as real and constructive in that same European history, and as something already confirmed as *possible*. *European culture* is this exactly: a mutual relationship of particular cultures, or *cultural substrata*, which some authors see in any language “the foundation of every culture”¹⁶.

European identity is quite certainly a *whole* made up of separate cultural substrata. Without them, it does not even exist as a reality. However, it is crucial to bear in mind, that this whole has *never* been a mere *sum* of particular substrata in some mechanical series, but a productive *mutual relationship of giving and receiving*.

When Gide refers to the “future of Europe” in 1923 (*L'Avenir de l'Europe*), he speaks about it precisely from experience of its history. He says: “(...) *no country of Europe can strive for true progress of its own culture, if it insulates itself and rejects cooperation with other countries*”.

Therefore, upon completion of this model, he is able to define the European spirit as follows: “*The true spirit of Europe is opposed to the isolationist arrogance of nationalism, but it also opposes the loss of national individuality, which clashes with internationalism.*”¹⁷

Thus, a duality of the spirit of *open subjects is at work*, and this is exactly what we refer to when we say “separate European cultures as parts of a whole”. In any case, isn't *in-*

tegration a renewal, shaping, the *constitution of a whole*? The European whole implies a mutual relationship of all genuine “open subjects”. Otherwise, it would not be a *whole*, but only (some, unrelated) *part* of a (still non-existent) whole, opposing some other *part*, and such a “state” is nothing but the (military, political) history of Europe as we know it.¹⁸ That this whole including *all* existing (legitimate) subjects has *not* been realized so far, should not be taken as an argument against culture as a guardian of the European spirit, but against policies which have not attained a model in which culture has long lived as a dual constant: *and* as a supposition *and* as a creation.

Therefore *A. Thibaudet*, another Frenchman, could write:

*“A true European does not live in one nation, but within an order of nations. (...) Different languages and different cultures are inextricably bound to Europe’s being.”*¹⁹

This was written as early as 1928 and has retained its significance until today on the threshold of the third millennium and of European integration. Moreover, it was written specifically after horrible experiences with the totalitarian systems of the 20th century, which are, let us not forget, of **European** origin. By suspending freedom, the totalitarian systems of the 20th century (Fascism, Nazism, Communism/Bolshevism), also abolished the freedom of *cultural creativity*. They favoured creations which they, often and willingly, manipulated as decor of their own ideology, founded on national or social **collectivism** (or on one and the other simultaneously),²⁰ and not on the respect for **an individual as a person**. The quoted thought that “language is the reducible basis of every culture” received a dreadful confirmation with the burning or banning of “undesirable books” because they are truly “a storage of preserved values”.

The period of European totalitarianisms as historically expended is, we believe, forever behind us, but it should not be ignored that it had characteristics that were capable of independent existence, that is, outside these concepts. We are afraid: what if the *uravnilovka* (*leveling*) and *Gleichschaltung* meaning the *erasure of the individual* outlive the historical framework of the expended ideological concepts, and are revived in planetary envisaged *globalization*? Instead of ideological concepts of the “old” collectivism – the “framework” becomes a more sophisticated development of *technology* without a firm system of values. From planetary heights, globalization projects exhaust themselves in discovery (and artificial creation) of *the same* – with the goal of leveling: the *same* must be contained in

one, so that all that is *different* is discarded as undesirable, unnecessary and removed as harmful. An inundation of *Burger Kings* all over the world is just a symbolic expression of such a push.

There where no distinctions are made between the developed diversity of historical and topically open subjects (like it is in the European case) it is easier to use the *desert* as the most ideal starting point of every “pure” globalization. In the European case, such a procedure would open a road toward the creation of a common *Euro-desert*. Such a perspective is not mere speculation: on a planetary level, WTO's grain prices provokes fewer disputes than the protection of some “products of culture” from more powerful and far stronger *commercialization* (read: disappearance) of the same segment under global conditions. It is not that there is *no* consciousness in Europe of the pernicious leveling under the pressure of economic powers of the most powerful world powers. However, there is not *enough* consciousness of one's own position from which a defense from danger is at all possible. Not yet constituted Europe (as a whole *sui generis*), is still **incomplete** (Šulek), and in a weaker position in relation to the global demands which do not suit its *nature*.

If the abandonment of politics is like destruction of historical necessity, it can be justifiably asked: Does a new policy, which could successfully oppose unnatural demands exist at all? Considering the problem, pragmatically, the question is: Do the economic and political *elite* of European states, the promoters of the 21st century integration, think, that politics, rationally defined as a *skill of the possible*, does *not* have any chance unless it takes into consideration the realities of space and time? Within such politics, the chances of true and successful European integration are small, insofar as it is not known who are all the “open subjects” of integration, that is, what is the nature – and true potential – of each subject. Unless this is taken into consideration, subjects of European integration processes will be determined *arbitrarily* from the viewpoint of the needs of *globalization* and not for the purposes of an *internal renewal of Europe*. This is best revealed by the relationship between the current-day EU country members and those who are not (yet).

4.

Now we are in a position to place Croatia and its surroundings within this general framework. Both the geopolitical position of Croatia as well as its margin and

frontier positions have been amply discussed at this Symposium, so there is no need for repetition.²¹ Still, one should bear in mind that, from a culturological point of view, things appear somewhat different. The *frontier* is not only an area of *clash*, but also of *meeting*. In the foreword of his book, *Croatia in the Heart of Europe - Mediterranean and Central European Cultural Landscapes of Croatia*,²² Radoslav Katičić, a member of the Croatian Academy, has singled out the key determinant of “Croatia's cultural image”:

*“The Croatian entity emerges amidst the tension prevailing at the meeting place of the European Transalpine and Mediterranean realms. Even the tourist trends today vividly illustrate the fact that the Mediterranean is nowhere so Central European and Central Europe so Mediterranean as in Croatia. Likewise, nowhere is the authentically Latin Europe so closely linked to the literacy of the Slavonic Middle Ages that the entire prominent literature is bilingual, that there is a bishop reading the mass 'in Latin or Croatian as he likes', to quote the 14th century glagolitic priest Juraj Slavonac (Georges d'Esclavonie), a teacher at Sorbonne.”*²³

In the title of the text already quoted, *A. Stamać* defines Croatian culture as “a meeting place of four superstrata”,²⁴ which have co-constituted its historic and current content: Mediterranean, Central European, Pannonian – and least significantly – Western Balkan (resulting from the dynamics brought about by the politics of the Ottoman Empire since the middle of the 15th century, particularly in regard to great demographic changes). Any visitor to one of the larger Croatian cities – Dubrovnik, Zadar, Split, Zagreb, Varaždin, Osijek, or Vukovar (before the devastations during the war aggression of 1991) – could testify to that historic character of Croatian cultural identity. That character of Croatian culture can be defined only as an “open subject” of a kind that was earlier postulated as the subject of European integration. The standpoint expounded here, substantiated by the arguments of two outstanding Croatian theoreticians of language and culture is our self-understanding of our own position. However, by a combination of circumstances, this position has not gained acceptance in a wider circle. In dialogue with “others”, Croatia has not demanded nothing more than respect, after checking the relevancy of the presented arguments, for the *reasons* of this kind of self-understanding. In such a dialogue, if conducted in the right fashion, this position will undergo corrections, which can only strengthen it. Moreover, our collocutors will have fewer problems understanding why we are so surprised when the Brussels bureaucracy places Croatia within the

invented framework of the “Western Balkans”. Consequently, in our opinion, all the other identified components of its being are being ignored or suppressed, even though they are dominant.

It is worthwhile to clearly state the following: our efforts to secure an appropriate place to the cultural substratum as a constituent factor in European integration is not based on historicism or a look into the past, but on insights into the living present, which, while historically founded, are oriented to the future. In other words: for the realization of European integration, centuries-old cultural presence is unimportant if viewed as a mere decor of contemporary inefficiency and inability (or, even worse, of possible arrogance as a result of the value of /just/ one's own tradition). It is, however, essential inasmuch as that same spirit remains alive – as *potential* for tomorrow, and not as dead archival data. Unfortunately, the general conditions in Croatia in the past century blocked, to a large extent, its independence and potentials, as well as its *own responsibility* in creating these potentials and in co-activity in a civilization circle to which it belongs. In striving for and in stimulating such responsibility we can find help in cultural history, inasmuch as we can recognize the *models* in which the cultural substratum is indeed identified as legitimate potential in co-building of Western European spiritual, and thus also of social space.

This Symposium took place in Dubrovnik enabling our guests, in particular those from abroad, to experience a personal meeting with the *City*,²⁵ and the centuries-old atmosphere which has created both the Dubrovnik *walls* and all that they protected: human individuals-creators (of spiritual and material values). Hence, I will use a *model* from another Croatian city, which recently marked 1,700 years of its existence. Namely, Split, the second largest city of contemporary Croatia, that sprung up in the middle of the Palace of Diocletian.

Our example takes us back half a millennium, to the writer *Marko Marulić* (1450–1524). The population of Split, today Dalmatia's metropolis, was 6,000 in Marulić's time. Although this author is rightly considered the “father of Croatian artistic literature” thanks to his epic poem *Judita*, written in the Croatian language, his numerous Latin works are no less important for Croatian culture; in the Europe of the 16th and the 17th centuries they were given an extraordinary, exceptional reception. Marulić is the *most published* Croatian author of all time *in the world*, that is, documented by two recent publications: seventeen studies by the outstanding French scholar and Renaissance specialist (Rab-

elais, Erasmus of Rotterdam), *Charles Béné*,²⁶ and the large monograph by the most outstanding among Croatian Marulić students, *Mirko Tomasović*, member of the Croatian Academy.²⁷ His book, *De institutione bene vivendi per exempla sanctorum* won him world-wide fame, which between 1498 and 1987 was published in **sixty-five editions, thirty-one** of which were in **original Latin** (Venice, Mantua, Solingen, Basel, Cologne, Antwerp, Paris). It was also translated and published in Italian, German, Portuguese, Czech, French, Japanese, and Croatian.²⁸ His work, *Evangelistarium* was published in Cologne in 1529 – in as many as four editions. The following is worth emphasizing: since he upheld the moral values of a true Christian life throughout the difficult crisis of European societies, Marulić's works – after his death – were popular in both the Catholic and the Protestant circles of a divided Christian Europe. As a *European humanist* (not only in terms of the *significance* of his work, but its *reception*), the Croatian writer Marulić is a fine example of the thesis *unity in diversity*: in a (permanent) effort to build a common European *home*, which also means within Thibaudet's *order of nations*.

There is no reason for absence of such figures – even though in a more humble and less spectacular way – among our contemporaries, who might co-work within a broad spectrum of European culture: especially inspired *individuals*, which, as we know, are born where “the Holy Spirit wishes to blow”. Moreover, an inspired *individual* is not cramped by the logic of small and large numbers (size of population).

¹ Vladimir Anić, *Rječnik hrvatskoga jezika*, Zagreb: Novi Liber, 1991.

² Gerhard Wahrig, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Munich: Mosaik Verlag, 1989.

³ Anić, *ibid.*, p. 297.

⁴ Wahrig, *ibid.*, p. 800: “1. Gesamtheit der geistigen u. künstler. Ausdrucksformen eines Volkes (Kunst, Wissenschaft usw.)” Anić attributes culture (as an activity) to *society*, whereas Wahrig attributes it to *nation*.

⁵ Wahrig: “[< lat. *cultura* 'Landbau, Pflege (des Körpers u. Geistes)'; zu lat. *colere* '(be)bauen, (be)wohnen, pflegen'; (verwand mit *Kolonie*)]”.

⁶ *Latinsko-hrvatski rječnik za škole*, second edition, prepared by Mirko Divković, Director of the Royal Upper Town Gymnasium of Zagreb; in Zagreb with the support of and published by the Royal Croatian-Slavonian-Dalmatian Land Government, 1900.

⁷ *Deutsch-Kroatisches Wörterbuch* von Bogoslav Šulek. *Ndmačko-hrvatski rđčnik*, Agram (Zagreb), 1860, Verlag der Franz Suppan'schen Buchhandlung.

⁸ Divković, *ibid.*, p. 264. *Cultus* to the Romans also means **respect** (for Gods), and the concept of *cult* in contemporary languages is also based on this meaning.

FOOTNOTES

- ⁹ Anić, op.cit., p. 206.
- ¹⁰ Wahrig, *ibid.*, p. 694: "Integration - *Herstellung eines Ganzen, Zusammenschlub, Vereinigung*; integrieren - *zu einem Ganzen bilden*; europäische Integration: *Zusammenarbeit europ. Staaten durch Bildung übernationaler Organe.*" Anić does not mention those syntagms: it seems that the theme was not yet "topical" at this time.
- ¹¹ *Wiederherstellen, ergänzen.*
- ¹² Divković, *ibid.*, pp. 543, 544.
- ¹³ Šulek, *ibid.*, p. 720.
- ¹⁴ "To complete or carry out an integration, to link or combine (in its entirety), to bring together or unite (what was separated or divided)", *ibid.*, p. 206.
- ¹⁵ In the sense of the term *aufheben*.
- ¹⁶ "Cultural achievements may be also read from non-linguistic signs (...). However, language almost exclusively language that is written in documents and can be reproduced and preserved permanently, is the foundation of every culture. Foundation, meaning: a safe repository of preserved values. Thus, the language and its realizations - communicational, functional, conceptual, and esthetic - parts constitute the basic foundation of every culture" (Ante Stamač, "Hrvatska kultura kao susretište četiriju superstrata", *Smotra/Rundschau - The Journal of Croatian-German Society*, II, 3-4, p. 21 Zagreb, December 1996 (A German translation of the entire text can be found on pp. 24-28).
- ¹⁷ André Gide, "The Future of Europe", in: *Discourse on Europe. Cultural-Philosophical Essays by French Writers*. Prepared and translated by Ivo Hergešić, Zagreb: Matica hrvatska - Educational and Political Library, series B, 12, 1944, pp. 29-30. The source is, as specified by the editor in "Notes" on p. 167, a response to a survey by the journal *Revue de Genève* in 1923; the text was reprinted in the edition, *Works* (vol. Incidences, *Oeuvres d'André Gide* vol. 11, Paris 1936).
- ¹⁸ For example, the following historic contraversies as fights for priority: Aachen - Constantinople; the One-Hundred Years War between England and France; the Habsburg-French/Prussian-French wars; the First and the Second World Wars.
- ¹⁹ A. Thibaudet, "For a definition of Europe", in: *Discourse on Europe*, p. 125. Source: "Pour une définition de l'Europe", 1928. In: *Antologie des essayistes français contemporaines*, Paris, 1929 (Notes, p. 167).
- ²⁰ The official name of the party that is colloquially called Nazi was NSDAP - Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National-Socialist German Workers' Party).
- ²¹ Compare, for example, "Croatia Between the Balkans and Europe" by M. Klemenčić, read at this Symposium.
- ²² *Croatian Pan-European Union*, Zagreb, 1996, pp. 7-8. The book was printed in Croatian, English, French, and German.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
- ²⁴ "Every culture is a historical 'co-play' between the home substratum and historically active superstrata, each in its own way", Stamač, *ibid.* p. 21.
- ²⁵ As a *notion* of city, Dubrovnik is called *City* here.
- ²⁶ Charles Béné, *Études maruliennes. Le rayonnement européen de l'oeuvre de Marc Marule de Split*, Zagreb-Split, 1998 (251 pgs).
- ²⁷ Mirko Tomasović, *Marko Marulić Marul*, Zagreb-Split, 1999 (326 pgs with comprehensive summaries in Italian, French, German, and English).
- ²⁸ Compare Tomasović, *ibid.*, pp. 62, 127.