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Reservations towards Steering Europe

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Reservations towards Steering Europe

Abstract:

The paper poses the question of possible consequences of steering Europe and altering its cultural identity. The author examines significant international documents and European institutions in view of the values they inherently entail. In his analysis of the possible course of events, on the one hand, he raises the issue of the emergence of new values and a new philosophy. On the other, he points out that the process of current cultural changes and the dominance of civilization over culture may lead to unpredictable and potentially dangerous results.

Key words: European Constitution, values, identity, philosophy, steering

Steering poses potential threats as well as creates opportunities for European identity and culture. In his work *Quale costituzione per quale Europa?*¹ [What constitution for what Europe?], Danilo Castellano focuses on this issue and begins by stating that the future Europe will be steered mainly by its constitution and institutions.

The European Constitution is a constant and well-defined element. Hence the question: “What will Europe be like?” depends in a great deal on the content of Europe’s constitution and its vision of the future. This in turn makes the question: “What constitution for what Europe?” extremely important. Castellano notes that the constitution only accentuates civilization; a vision of European identity rooted in civilization rather than culture; and that it disregards many values of the old European culture. If culture is discussed there at all, it is easy to see that the new vision omits many traditional European values. The French version of the constitution,

¹ *Quale costituzione per quale Europa?*, D. Castellano (ed.), Napoli 2004, p. 131.

where it mentions culture at all, only mentions material culture and civilization. The emphasis is put on money, banks, trade. The political integration, ranking almost as high as monetary issues, deals with the problems of citizenship, legislation, and social benefits. The social integration has been programmed according to pre-agreed upon instructions of the European Social Charter, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and the European Cultural Convention. The new European man and the new European identity, as programmed by the constitution, may turn out to be not only different, but also worse than the old ones that had grown in the member states. Will Europe be a continent of hope or one of devastation? Many pessimists state that this new “global constitution” may turn out to be worse than its precursors. Previous constitutions (in particular countries) presented their countries’ old identity in an idealized manner, but would like to see a part of their own heritage incorporated into the new identity currently being put forward. Will the future generations be pleased or disappointed, will they take note of the favorable difference between what was and what is to come, between aspiration and effect? In the Polish history we have an interesting example: there was a time when the whole nation was enthralled by the Prussian Homage, and only a dwarf wondered whether this great celebration was strategically advantageous for Poland. When reading the European constitution, it is plain to see that the new vision eliminates many traditional values. Many political scientist compare the preamble of the modern constitution with the preambles of the previous European constitutions, focusing on the categories in use there: *civitas*, *socialitas*, sovereignty, independence; they also compare the concepts of human rights, natural law, European conscience. Most are shocked to see that the new tree being planted has been deprived of roots. A question arises: who has drawn up such a constitution and whose position it takes?

European society will be steered. Sadly, the commanding center is placed in the core of the declining Western culture in the midst of a cultural crisis. It augurs a disarray in values and the transfer of evil from the center to the whole of Europe, even reaching places where Europe used to

be healthy. We are threatened by a flow of values of the declining Western civilization, and the anticipated progress may turn out to be a programmed mess.² The phrase “controversial novelties” often appears in the context of a critical approach towards European constitution. The new, half-baked vision of Europe may unfavorably program next generations.

Reservations towards steering are expressed in fundamentalist tendencies which attempt to defend cultural values and identity. At times, they also rebel against civilization shaped in this manner. Market fundamentalism is considered the biggest threat to open society. The return of revolution of liberation is feared. “Revolutions and rebellions broke out to counter the pathologies of the 19th and 20th centuries. Will a rebellion against post-humanism and post-naturalism begin? It is very hard to form a prognosis. The post-industrial era has its own logic and its own narrative, or rather a ‘multi-narrative.’ Probably for this reason there was no great rebellion against civilization after the counter-culture of the 1960s: the civilization is industrial no longer. The civilization emerging in its place requires new forms of creativity, innovation and adaptation. This situation activates the ‘challenge–response’ psychological syndrome, and the culture being born is a novelty, perhaps even opium of sorts – ‘digital opium’”³

Hopes in programming Europe

Europe’s hope⁴ lies in its constitution, institutions, mentality and new philosophy.

The hope placed in the constitution is substantiated in many of the document’s points, mainly in its care towards identity, value system, political and social integration. The very fact of discussing them guarantees the creation and cultivation of shared values. The gradual emergence

² Ch. Jonscher, *op. cit.*, p. 305; J. Gwynn, *Europa przygotowuje się do ery informacyjnej*, [in:] „Dialog Europejski – magazyn na rzecz integracji europejskiej”, marzec/kwiecień 1997.

³ K. Krzysztofek, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁴ *Enjeux et rouages de l’Europe actuelle. Culture et citoyenneté européennes*, ed. 2, Bruxelles 2004, Foucher, p. 272.

of a European value system as well as its inherent place in the constitution promises a Europe of shared values and rekindles optimism. In the light of the constitution and its axiological decisions, the European value system comprises: civilizational values (economy, trade, agriculture, industry, banking, money, scientific research, energy, transport, fishery, regional policy, technological development); cultural values (the issues of youth, education, political stability, security); international values (peace, security, fighting terrorism, ecology, international cooperation); and social values (asylum, immigration, unemployment, demography, employment, social service, humanitarian aid, equality of men and women, discrimination, social stability).

The hope placed in European institutions is rooted in the reality that said institutions “live” and hire specialists who take care of the proper development of particular sectors. The institutions are also able not only to respond defensively, but also to initiate action. Another reason for optimism is the fact that these public organs are subject to strict directives (rules), regulatory and control systems. It gains particular importance when the Union itself, its laws and institutions are viewed and felt differently by Europeans and by non-Europeans.⁵ To guard the institution known as the Union of Europe several bodies have been appointed and steps taken: The Council of Europe (founded in Paris on December 10th, 1979), its secretariat, the Council of Ministers and advising committees, European Parliament (founded in London on May 5th, 1945), European Commissions that comprise the executive, legislative, legal, banking, advisory systems; and Treaties: Treaty of Rome (March 25th, 1957), Maastricht Treaty (February 7th, 1992), Treaty of Amsterdam (October 2nd, 1997), Treaty of Nice (Fe-

⁵ The author discussed this issue in papers presented at three conferences: *Il diritto europeo visto dagli non-europei (L'Europa e la codificazione. A 200 anni dal Codice di Napoleone*, Bolzano, October 8th–11th, 2004), *Persona, famiglia, nazione e umanità della Nuova Europa (Quale governo per l'Europa*, Bolzano, September 5th–7th, 2000) and *L'etica della globalizzazione (Europa e la globalizzazione*, Bolzano, October 10th–13th, 2002).

bruary 26th, 2001). The most esteemed sets of European values have been incorporated into Declarations: the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (passed in Cologne, June 3rd–4th, 1999) discusses dignity (chapter I), freedom (chapter II), equality (chapter III), solidarity (chapter IV), citizenship (chapter V) and justice (chapter VI); the European Convention on Human Rights (Rome, November 4th, 1950) ensures the right to life, to liberty and security, to a fair trial; it guarantees the respect of private and family life, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and association, the right to marriage, and the right to an effective remedy. It prohibits discrimination, torture, slavery, forced labor, unlawful punishment.

Later additions concern the protection of property, the right to instruction, the right to free elections, freedom of movement, the right to compensation in cases of miscarriages of justice, and equality between spouses. It further prohibits imprisonment for debts, the expulsion of nationals, the collective expulsion of foreigners, death penalty, and retrial of anyone who has already been finally acquitted or convicted of a particular offence. The Citizen Rights Charter (February 7th, 1992, article 8 in the Maastricht Treaty) ensures the right to free movement, settlement and employment across the EU; a right to vote and stand in elections to the European Parliament or in local elections in any EU member state; the right to consular protection from other EU state's embassies; the right to petition the European Parliament and the right to apply to the European Ombudsman. The European Social Charter (Turin, 1961, extended in 1996) guarantees and defines social and economic rights, such as: housing, health, education, labor rights, employment, social service, free movement and non-discrimination. The Convention for Institutional Reform (December 14th–15th, 2001) supplements the axiological content of the Declarations that reaches far into European future. It heralds the integration as a continued and constant process. It presents the directives for cultivating the identity of individuals and nations and preserves political realism. As many as 70 areas in which accord has been reached are listed there. Also

instructions regarding auxiliaries, freedom, justice, cooperation, democracy, security, health, culture, education and ecology have been specified. In this way, a process of constant institutional reform that guarantees the cultivation of European values has been established.

The third source of optimism stems from those layers of European mentality that social psychologists cite when they want to prove that “Europe is a continent of hope,” or the positive tendencies towards building, repairing, creating, absorbing and synthesis. Among them are: the tendency to build perspectives; acknowledging and respecting the development processes of a person, family, nation and humanity; the tendency to include ethics in the course of globalization. Europe forms a society that is open toward people and their values, as well as new values; open to immigration and social integration. Krzysztofek states: “We are facing a brand new situation today: with the progress of genetics, natural science enters human spirituality and mystical areas: life, heredity, intellect; it is necessary to find a common language with traditional humanities and undertake a cooperation in order to ‘regenerate the Renaissance.’⁶ The great art of compromise between technocracy and humanities plays an important part. Among the notable intellectuals of this century that is coming to an end, very few are brave enough to say that in order to saturate man with culture anew, refurbish him spiritually... we must break with illusions. It took significant intellectual courage to say it at a time when one-third of the globe was slowly liberating itself from authoritarianisms... From the intellectual circles most often comes a call for restoration of the standing of higher culture and for an active education and cultural policy which would counterbalance the excess and extravagance of science and technology, with their tendency toward economism, growth, etc. That is the message of manifestos, reports and programs drafted under the auspices of international organizations in recent years... For if we do not find a way out, we should look around for a ‘spare civilization’ in the form of some

⁶ K. Krzysztofek, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

uncontaminated tribe's culture... Well, but where to find such a tribe?"⁷ A compromise between the future and the past has always been the driving force for novelty as rebirth.⁸ The consent to the existence of opposition is yet another favorable quality emphasized by social psychology. European mentality sees numerous benefits in it. Internal opposition offers alternative suggestions, takes note of mistakes and shortcomings of the official proceedings.

The fourth favorable circumstance for hope is a new philosophy. We should consider the emergence of a new philosophy (one that would be able to address the intellectual issues of all times), new ethics (a call for ethics resounds) and a new religion. In his *Upadek człowieka* [The fall of man] K. Lorenz attempts to define a few postulates of technocratic religion. According to him, the notion that everything that is certain and realizable, must be realized,⁹ is the most important of them. Another postulate is to create a new knowledge (it seems gratifying to base human growth on knowledge rather than ignorance) and a new pedagogy in which everything is verifiable and subject to further improvement. Good pedagogy promises geniuses who are able to solve all problems.¹⁰ It is said that they are to spring up as mushrooms from the circles of computer-educated youths and that they will be a great hope for information society. They will become this great hope because we will find ourselves in brand new situations in which our existing experience will prove uninformative. All this promises a new society and a new sociology. The social metamorphosis is underway, and it is progressing faster than in other epochs of human growth because the flow of information is nearly unlimited and human

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 66. Also: Z. Bauman, *Europa niedokończona*, transl. T. Kunz, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2005, pp. 187–212.

⁸ N. Postman, *W stronę XVIII stulecia. Jak przeszłość może doskonalić naszą przyszłość*, Warszawa, 2001, p. 49 [original edition: *Building a Bridge to the 18th Century: How the Past Can Improve Our Future*, 1999]; L. W. Zacher (ed.), *Spółczesność w perspektywie człowieka, techniki, gospodarki*, Warszawa 1999, p. 265.

⁹ H. Jonas, *Zasada odpowiedzialności. Etyka dla cywilizacji technologicznej*, Kraków 1996, p. 409.

¹⁰ T. Serra, *L'uomo programmato*, *op. cit.*, p. 105, 106.

communication is taking place on an unprecedented scale. There are prognoses for a new civilization, a new society and possible ways of social development. Krzysztofek proposes a few scenarios: a society of weakening democracy; a disciplined society; a society of democratic continuity; and a transformative society. The latter would be a society of permanent changes in which people would be constantly being prepared to face them. Society will be un-massed, individualized, with a dominant role played by information and a basically unlimited access to technology. These prognoses include a situation in which the simultaneous increase of information and freedom will cause higher forms of humanity to emerge. There are a number of possible scenarios: they allow us to foresee the positive sides in order to develop them and the negative sides in order to prevent them. We should consider that leaders will hear the call of the new era.¹¹ There are several figures who have noticed and accepted those challenges, who have controlled their pace, corrected and planned them. This is not the first era in the history of mankind, but the fact that it is steered as no other allows for a lot of hope.

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¹¹ Z. Brzeziński, *Kłopoty dobrego hegemonu*, Gazeta Wyborcza, 4-5.VII.1998; K. Doktorowicz (ed.), *Spółeczeństwo informacyjne. Wyzwania dla gospodarki, polityki i kultury*, Katowice 2002, p. 159 ; B. Chyrowicz (ed.), *Spółeczeństwo informacyjne. Szansa czy zaproszenie*, Lublin 2003, p. 196.

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