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Identity and Alterity in the Primitive Era of Globalization

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Abstract: The globalization process, in its incipient stage, can be analysed from a dual perspective. On the one hand, as ongoing reality. In this respect, any researcher's efforts should be directed to discovering the nature of this phenomenon, its causes and the context in which it evolves. One the other hand, whoever inquiries this reality, must ask themselves why has humanity become so late aware of it. In investigating the phenomenon of globalization, the relationship between identity and alterity is a key to fathoming its essence. Uprootedness, dislocation and uniformity erode, at the state, ethnic and individual level, the old boundary between identity and alterity, blow up differences, so that they become an indicator, a barometer of the globalization process. In the present study, we will approach the primitive phase of globalization, highlighting the pre-existing relations and oppositions between identity and alterity, as well as their mutations that have arisen and are ongoing on a world scale.

Keywords: *Identity; alterity; violence; terrorism; war; nation; globalization.*

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1. Introduction

That globalization is an irreversible phenomenon is a truism nowadays. In the literature, the definitions of the phenomenon are inexhaustible, and so are its approaches from economic, political, social, cultural, historical or religious perspectives. It is not within the scope of this study to catalogue these approaches, but rather to outline the realities opposable to this phenomenon.

Firstly, one can identify an opposition between autarchy and globalization. A historical outlook on mankind proves the persistence of the autarchic framework of living in communities, from the primitive and ancient eras to the medieval and modern ones. The autarchic character was granted high value, outlining and underlining the group identity in opposition with other social groups. Wars were waged in the name of this value, as is the case of the wars for independence in modern age. Globalization, in this context, is precisely the complete extinction of the autarchic forms of living – it represents the victory of total interdependence and social cooperation. The value of globalization does not reside in the nature of the phenomenon. Actually, the discussion is not of value, but rather of observing that we are faced with various aspects of life, with their inherent risks and benefits. This is the reason why this process is not a conscious, politically oriented one. Neither does it belong to a certain ideology – a conspiracy one, as speculated – at the basis of its irreversible course.

Secondly, starting from the observation that globalization is a novel form of human community, one needs to remark that it radically opposes all the other forms of social communities known to mankind, which ever existed and/or still exist in history. The historical evolution, from the gentilic and tribal societies to peoples and nations, as well as the transition towards a global society, may be regarded as a continuous and natural process of advancement from the inferior to the superior. The transitions from one form of community to the next may be rather considered continuity and Hegelian progressive advancement than a radical break. However, the present analysis tackles the globalization phenomenon with a view to pinpointing the radical breaks that accompany it.

2. Theoretical Background

The attempt to identify the beginning of globalization and the factors which determine this social phenomenon is the object of many a theoretical investigations, although researchers are yet to be able to find a common ground. This is neither necessary, nor possible because of the

complexity of the research subject, on the one hand, and because of the uncertainty of a reality which is still at its embryonic stage. Nonetheless, if one places globalization in opposition with autarchy, one can identify a few significant temporal hallmarks. A possible beginning can be considered the great geographic discoveries and the foundation of the colonial empires. Another hallmark is the imperialism following the development of industrial capitalism. However, these remarkable phenomena only changed the fate of the earth at a superficial, sporadic and regional level in the sense of an interdependent evolution. Besides, autarchies manifested through resistance, which is proven by the nationalist movements of the nineteenth century and by the emergence of independent states, in the context of the fall of the colonial domination, and also, rather paradoxically, by the continuous emergence of national states after the end of the Cold War.

To the extent to which one considers the globalization phenomenon a new form of human community, one can also identify the beginnings of this process in its force of natural annihilation of any possible resistance to its evolution.

3. Argument of the paper

We must construe the globalization phenomenon as a form of overcoming the older human communities and of the factors that favoured their emergence. In this case, we should consider the *differences* between the globalization that is currently foreshadowed (there are only predictions and almost utopian images of the final form of the newer type of community) and the forms of the other communities. On the other hand, starting from the premise that any community was constituted around fundamental *identities* and *differences*, the analysis should be targeted at the transformations they entail. Can we, somehow, note extinguishment beyond these transformations?

4. Arguments to support the thesis

The classical identities known to history, from the primitive tribes to the peoples thoroughly catalogued by Herodotus (Herodot, 1961-1964) or those formed after the fall of the Roman Empire, up to the recent nations, are fluid entities, appearing with the passing of time and disappearing, should they not metamorphose. They all have a general feature: they relate to each other in the spirit of mutual adversity. We are not trying to pass a generalisation with this remark. The Other is an adversary, but it can also be an ally, we can cooperate or have mutually advantageous exchanges with it.

Nonetheless, cooperation and social solidarity are more powerful and dominant within a group than in intergroup relations. The Other, as an adversary, is the external agent which determines the emergence of human communities, as forms of defence and transference of values and goods.

Apparently, this observation does not stand valid at the level of gentilic communities. The gentilic community is built-up based on bloodline, on kinship. But this internal forms of identification at a biological level is actually related to the Other, to his being excluded from various forms of inheritance. In one of the primitive formulae – in which the only proof of bloodline was accounted for through the maternal line – the males were excluded from community, from the rights of inheritance, so that the goods remain in the same community. The avoidance of incest, proof of genetic knowledge in these primitive communities, which determined complex systems of assessing heritage and constituting biological identities, is yet another means of projecting and excluding alterity, even though the Other might have been your 'Neighbour'. The property relations, health and genetic vigour were the factors that determined the incipient forms of social differentiation. We consider naïve the interpretation which claims that the difference between matriarchy and patriarchy, between the types of families which calculated their bloodline either on the maternal or the paternal line, can be explained by the fluctuating economic roles on the labour market. These roles are subordinated to bloodline and property, and can only explain the variety of gentilic identities mapped by ethnologists and anthropologists. The recovery of this interpretation in contemporary ideologies, as the feminist movement, or in practices of indiscernible fight against gender discrimination, does nothing but compromise our image of the past, a phenomenon that we must become aware of through epistemological neutrality, and which must be seen as a mythological identification of the present with a utopian past or an attempt of reinstating functional and natural justice in *illo tempore*.

In the long history of the bloodline-based communities, one encounters the expansion of the social framework with the emergence of new factors, such as language or territoriality, whose sublayer is labour diversification and demographic growth. The doubt expressed above does not entail disregard for the economic factor, all the more as the analysts of the globalization phenomenon place it in a significant position. Labour economy determines property. Labour is an act of cooperation, not only on the horizontal plane of present solidarity, but also vertically, as cooperation between generations. The transformations in the labour process – through the Neolithic Revolution – whose novelty does not only entail the change in

the relationship of man with nature (from hunter and gatherer to grower and manufacturer), but also his skilful specialisation (in which one should identify the seeds of scientific advancement) and the beginnings of social division of labour, which shall further differentiate the evolved societies in social classes, are reasons for territorial expansion, linguistic identities subject to demographic pressure or spiritually endowed, with appropriate leaders. The tribes and unions of tribes – up to the emergence of the states – remain communities constituted around kinship. They are transitional yet powerful forms in the formation of peoples as new identities in which kinship relations are blurred, being symbolically or realistically projected and received in the more representative ones: aristocracy and the ruling elites. The new symbolism of identity preserved, in its thinnest layer, the bloodline, but massively increased the importance of territory, the ability to possess and expand it, which was further associated with pragmatic skills and strategies of tolerance, to which language and religion become the defining factors. It is from this outlook that we can understand the power of some peoples of forming more or less durable kingdoms and empires.

If states failed in their undertaking of building up communities which pushed the natural boundaries of identity building around reasonably assumed factors, then we need to note an inventive model of autarchy in the emergence of nations. Their success in the act of sharing and governing the territories of the earth, of promoting cultural and linguistic unity, signals a novel form of rationality in the constitution of human identity. National awareness is the present-day form of living, from where we transit towards the globalization age. Not only is the multiplication of the nations of the earth paradoxical, but also the provincial reclaiming of a geographic separatism justified by arguments of historical tradition. Maybe we are in a situation in which the need for identity claims its imperative rights, and it is not far-fetched to assume that such an evolution of human society to appear in front of an ethical 'court'.

5. Dismantling the arguments against

Ethically speaking, Marxist ideology relied on this factor in its analysis of the building and evolution of human communities. Social division of labour gave birth to an element of social split, and also to a sprout of inequity and alienation of the human nature. At the community level, identities are built, polarising society – the social classes – the internal adversity of whom manifests as a sublayer subsuming the entire legislation of human becoming. The Other is an owner, an enemy, an exploiter or a social parasite, all, negative

ethical qualities which justify the right of the oppressed to eliminate an inhuman enemy from the social structure. From the analysis of the role of labour division, with consequences going up to the Marxist prediction of total social homogenisation through the communist revolution, one should remark that Marx mentions the unavoidability of the globalization phenomenon. In this theorist there is a first ideologist who, as early as the 19th century, could prove the emergence of a global identity with economic arguments. His basis is "the universal development of the productive forces" which determines universal connections between people and the generalised, mass phenomenon of "the absence of property". The nations become interdependent on the basis of the overthrows which occur in the case of others, and local individuals are replaced with "*historical, universal*, empirically universal individuals". What happened in history during the following century puts in balance this calculation and this prediction. Marx himself was aware of the danger of such an event when he wrote in *German Ideology* that, without the global premise, "1) communism could only exist as a local phenomenon; 2) the forces which constitute the basis of human relations could not develop into universal, unsupportable forces; they would remain local "happenings" surrounded by superstitions; and 3) any expansion of human relations would suppress local communism" (Marx & Engels, 1962, p. 35). We construe from these comments that a global identity built up on ethics and social justice by a dictatorship of a state who took its political action too seriously is doomed to failure. Moral order cannot evolve from violence and terrorism, its failure being all the more inhuman as, applied at world level, generates a fit number of victims. The identity emanating from the slogan "Proletarians of all countries, unite!" was the unfortunate social experiment of a primitive moment of the globalization age.

6. Conclusions

Alterity makes possible the existence and definition of identity. The global village we are heading to makes us expand the cooperation with the Other and not eliminate him, as in the ideology of class conflict, but eliminate violence, war, terrorism – and these ways of relating and projecting ourselves in the others characterise the initial stage of globalization. Our optimism for the future may be read from the point of view of a lesson and a cooperation pattern provided by the human communities of the past. It is, of course, internal cooperation, based on the factors that received consensus at the level of the formation of community identities.

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