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INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION AND ITS ROLE IN THE SOCIETY OF THE FUTURE

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Abstract

The role of culture would be that of clearing up the gloomy atmosphere of disbelief amongst peoples, the invitation to friendship, peace-making and cooperation through plenary communication of the values which bestow dignity and sense to the human existence. Or, one of the functions of culture is that of providing the human development with fresh perspectives. Some of the forms of cultural globalisation have effects on the cultural identity of a society: westernisation, cultural hybridisation, contextualisation of global culture, the disparity, the coexistence of different cultures and the inequality in the cultural and consumption series. Culture expands beyond the national frontiers and, in this respect it gives birth to the spreading of a joint culture or a similar culture in different parts of the world, though with consequences or varieties which differ from one country to another. In the context of creating a joint European space, the resolution of the inter-ethnic conflicts and intercultural education represents some desiderata which constitute a starting point in the direction of real integration and harmonious cohabitation. Reciprocal acquaintance of the ethnic groups in the process of their interaction facilitates communication

1. Introduction

The field of culture, its structures and functions, which define the status and personality of both individuals and peoples, focus the attention and concerns of all the states and ideologies, not only in terms of defining the concept of culture itself, but most of all,in terms of the content and orientation of cultural activities, the social human, instructive, educational and transforming goals of culture, as a fundamental elementwhich depict the sense and evolution of human mankind.

The phenomenon of culture should not be limited to the spiritual, subjective facts, ignoring the objective aspect and its formative virtues which engage man's *existential status* as a whole. The phenomenon should not be restricted to a priviledged elite of society underestimating or ignoring the social national roots, as well as the universal calling of culture.

"Even the *monoethnic and monocultural countries* – often relentless- have adopted norms regarding the cultural autonomy of minorities. In many societies there already exists a legal pluralism regarding the person, the property regime, the successorship... "(Yacoub, 2002) designed to ensure protection for the disadvntaged groups.The principle of equity before the lawis included in any modern constitution, targeting the civil rights, job ensurance through equal chances to the school system,education and professional qualification.

There is an increasing debate on the individual, groupand consequently, the minority's right to differentiation, particularly in the context of becoming worldwide(normative culture) and that of globalization (economical, financial commercial culture).

New concepts and hypothesis have been issued:

• "Special status" of the minority member in relation to the majority orto the individual who was part of the majority;

• Special treatment (in the sense of protection...) providedfor the minority in relation to the majority;

• Normative derogations in favour ofthe disadvantaged groups;

• Positive discrimination, which sums up the previous elements and which is already in place, here in Romania, legitimated by law (education, professionalization...) or illegitimate (in the legal system, in relation to criminals, etc.)" (Miftode, 2008, p. 8)

• The European Union system has impacted on the nations which adhered to an extent greater than their possibilities to change the system. The reasoning of the European system was one according towhich the nations had to adopt the *community acquis*. There were situations where a state managed to impose the Union a norm, an institution or a concept if there weren't in the European legislation or they were better, more coherent and more democratic in the legal system of the state they belonged to.

The political consequences of globalization and modernization under the impact of the European Union are ambiguous because it gives rise to Euro-skepticism and openness. EU integration has assumed a change of attitude, a process that was delayed by the lack of direct experience with social reality of the Community.

After the fall of communism in Romania there has been an explosion, which sometimes may not be controllable, one of differences, or of different and contradictory speeches. Minorities manifest themselves demanding their rights. Research on interculturalism is becoming increasingly common.

2. Interculturality in Romania

2.1. Historical Causes

In the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic territory we can speak of ethnic, linguistic and cultural multiplicity, due to interactions over time, relocations of populations or dependencies that led to a

different cultural adoption, other than the local culture. The basic foundation for vital intercultural dialogue is, however, the Latin linguistic and cultural substratum, given the extent of its diffusion at European level.

2.2. Geographical Causes

Cultural interactions throughout Romania can be characterized as follows: to the north there are communities that have the culture of the neighboring peoples, the Ukrainians, the Czechs and the Poles. In the eastern part there are communities of Tatars, Turks, Greeks and Albanians. In the eastern part there are many places that have a Hungarian population. The presence of ethnic groups can be explained through geographical proximity, long-distance movements of population in certain historical periods due to economic, historical, religious, military events, etc. Currently, there are considerable cross-border movements of the population in the east of Moldova and in the west with the people of Hungary.

2.3. Cultural-spiritual Causes

The culture of the majority of the population in Romania, as well as that of a numerous minority joining in the European space, are of Judeo-Christian nature, The grammatical structure of the language and most of the vocabulary words are Latin, but there are words in Romanian vocabulary and words assimilated from the linguistic minorities in the course of time.

Even if the Romanian language and culture are of Latin origin, there are heterogeneous elements of foreign cultures that are accepted and assimilated. This impurity should be seen as a potential treasure which helps us understand others more easily and to engage in a quite different cultural dialogue. Some intellectuals (Miftode, 2008) claim that the original mixture between East and West is an advantage for us because we are able to absorb contrasting cultural elements. This mixture is the foundation of success in the additional cultural enrichment.

2.4. Social, Economic and Political Causes

They existed especially after the fall of communism. Switching from a forcefully homogenized society to a liberal democratic one has led to a multitude of behavioral styles, mentalities, differences artificial hidden in the old regime. Socio-economic diversity is very difficult to manage or to accept by the majority of the population. In the minds of Romanians after 1989 still persisted myths of economic equality, the Marxist-Leninist ideology, the distribution according to the needs and not by merit etc. The emergence of economic gaps and differences in status between Romanians are increasingly apparent. In the future, these gaps and differences are deepening, which leads to the need for previous preparation in order to accept and manage the differences between people.

Romanian experience in industrialization, social mobility and particularly emigration provides a fertile ground for analysis, especially in the resilience of spiritual symbols which bound cultural values before the intrusion and the aggressive pressure of some systems with foreign cultural norms and values.

Values, primarily, have the task of internal organization of culture, harmonization of relations between different cultural levels of people's behavior and action. Worldview is the way to see and build

the world as a whole. It is the image of the general order of the world, "uncovering the truth" of the world. As such, it facilitates the adaptation of human action to cosmic order. It is the theoretical framework to explain every phenomenon in the world. The view of the world does not consists of things and facts, but of the principles, of their organization and explanation, this way creating the possibility of organizing culture and individual action. In other words, any human cultural community, must have a mechanism to explain the phenomena; but it is the worldview itself that contains the premises or principles according to which every man can understand everything or phenomenon.

The sum of the values of a particular culture allows for grouping value orientations, which help to assess the actions and training of cultural activities through the institutions and statutes, offers the possibility to establish a general order of rules which claim that the people belonging to the same culture and community aspire to the same values, which facilitates living in common and maintains their cultural community.

Cultural norms are supra-individual and sub-grouping and, as such, like any cultural element, can be spread in time and space. The cultural rules are transmitted or learned through culturalization. By learning the rules of their own culture, people come to consider them as normal, and the foreign ones as abnormal, unnatural. Each community has its rules, as well as institutions and regulations for transmitting and learning the rules and institutions and regulations for maintaining cultural rules. Violation of the rules in a community questions the existence of the community or the life within it.

In Romania there are concerns in the vast field called culture, which include: arts, dance, music, theatre, books and cultural heritage. Areas of complementarity, closely related to the field of cultureare: education, developed through programs such as ERASMUS, COMETT, DELTA and EUROPACHET, LINGUA, SOCRATES and LEONARDO, and audio vision industry that concerns both the film industry and the media through programs such as MEDIA I and II.

3. The Need of Intercultural Education Developments in Social Transformations

European space must be understood as place of fruitful confrontation between several different cultural codes. This confrontation is potentially disfunctional at times if it is not well managed. Therefore, people should stick to this reality and the institutions must be prepared to receive people carrying certain private code values. Marginalized subcultures are claimed and impose themselves differently than in the past due to the overall European rebuilding of national entities, in the European context, in contrast with centralist nationalist ideologies.

Universalist or cultural level ideologies deem distinct cultural entities will disappear, which will trigger the emergence of a unique worldwide culture. These ideologies are ethnocentric, attractive and very simplistic and do not take into account cultural dynamics and the contradictions that arise in cultural developments. Relativistic ideologies that promote cultural pluralism explain the idea that each culture develops separate world views, value systems and beliefs. According to this explanation there is no real communication between cultures.

Modern society demands new kinds of organizations, associations and connections regarding production activities. A production structure has become a cross-communitary, transnational and trans-cultural way of making the exchanges. Reorganization of labor and its integration into the global

economy lead to new relational skills between people. Economies become competitive to the extent that their authors relate to others. Sometimes jobs become opportunities for intercultural and intercommunity learning.

European countries have almost all had moments of intolerance in early modernity. Alain Touraine considered that "the problem of multiculturalism arises acutely today because the politically Republican model, in the West, is in decline or decay. The substantial universalism of the law and the law system was replaced by the instrumental rationalism of economy, production, and most of all, of consumption: hence, the need for communication" (Touraine, 1996, p. 294). Economic life has been internationalized, leading to an overflow of sovereignty of national states, a phenomenon called globalization. The development of technology, markets and of the new type of consumption has destroyed political mediation capability between the natural order and cultural diversity. Streamlining and globalization of production, of international trade, as well as the cultural diversity have led to the emergence of a new kind of contemporary civilization. "Each of us instantly belongs to the instrumentalized world of economic exchanges and to several groups of cultural origin and leads an increasingly double life, public and private, economic and cultural ...

Most of us constantly combine in different, fragile or changing ways, the participation in industrialized production and consumption with an increased concern relative to our identity, privacy and origins. Individual personality, as well as society, is strewn... " (Cucos, 2000, p. 159).

Intercultural education has in view not only diversity, but also the promotion of the dialogue between cultures, which, beyond their differences, contribute to the enrichment of human experience. Multiculturalism and universalism are united by the common desire to place culture over the power of state or social group interests.

Cross cultural European pluralism is the product of a long and continuous history, which is based on the acceptability of others, tolerance, plural coexistence, as well as on the chance of assertion of their own positions. "There is a European identity and it consists of a common history and experience, decanted over thousands of years: the Roman Empire, Christianity, the Enlightenment, industrialization." (Wyntle, 1996, p. 114). Interculturality is explained by certain "fundamental elements of culture: religious movements, which have always been transnational, the scientific thinking that circulated free since the dawn of the modern era, models and artistic movements, ideologies, manufacturing techniques. " (Văideanu, 1993)

Today's situation in the European Union perfectly illustrates the shared sovereignty. Achieving national sovereignty of Member States is at best attainable through collaboration that ensured a high degree of interdependence. The Union was created through a series of treaties, improved and modified repeatedly, joined by nearly all Western European countries. The Union has established its own institutional policies and commitments. Shared sovereignty is the key to the future of European structure, it does not imply total loss of internal sovereignty attributes, but seeks to develop external interdependent capacities of national sovereignty. Once entered into the Union, Romania had to learn European consensus on issues of national and European level. Romanian governments had to learn to work with European institutions, to regain macroeconomics efficiency and better control trans-border phenomena. Being aware of the discussions within the European Union is a condition for removal from isolation of Romanian internal debate, from the state of national fortress designed to defend the cultural frontier. The

awareness of the history of postwar Western history and the concrete experience of transition in neighboring countries is also very important.

A liability in this regard within intercultural education, aside from the civil society, belongsto the media, too. This may present objectivelythe advantages and disadvantages of the European Union. Civil society must contribute to the creation of European civic spirit, actively and responsibly so that Romanians are integrated into a civilization of labor conscientiousness, respect for property and labor of others, self- respect and respect for national dignity.

Dialectic of intercultural life in developed countries is currently based on two contradictory social phenomena. On the one hand, the social division of labor still leads to new living environments, new groups, new challenges and social reactions that diversify cultural experiences, and on the other hand the education systems, entertainment and media strongly centralized secretes an increasingly homogenous industry of cultural goods (Otovescu, 2010).

Both critics and apologists of mass culture, both its detractors and its supporters argue the one-sidedness of the approach. Be it good or bad, mass culture is a real phenomenon of the contemporary world, which either evens out at a pace imposed by homogenization on mass society, or it is a continuous source of alienation of man in the new living conditions. It is, however, a functional subsystem of mass society, as it develops new mechanisms to fulfill some functions that the old institutions of societies prior to mass society cannot fulfill anymore. The fundamental flaw lies both in an attempt to legitimize mass culture as well as in making its leveling and unifying character absolute. Another problem of critics of mass culture is established between the developments of technique, particularly that of the means of mass communication and the approval of cultural values that occurs within mass culture propagation. Such an approach underestimates the culture of images, particularly these days. Disseminating cultural values was and still is a dimension intrinsic to the cultural phenomenon everywhere. Naturally, diffusion of values, the influences amongst cultures in our time have reached planetary dimensions, atan impressive speed transmission, at a rate unsuspected by the ancient artists. This dissemination of cultural values nearly simultaneous with the means of mass communication has had an undeniable contribution; the responsibility for the harmful effects of mass culture means, at least, underestimating the relation between the results of technical scientific discoveries and their manipulation.

4. The Message of Romanian Culture under Spiritual Consideration of the Contemporary World

Analysis of the key features which may define a message of Romanian culture within the spiritual political configuration of the contemporary world is a major concern because Romanian culture occupies a special position in the European continent. It has a past valuable enough to entitle it to its self-confidence.

Romanian culture in the contemporary stage is a positive factor in the planetary spiritual and artistic evolution, providing it with a universal destiny. In the creative process of culture two factors play a major role: society and the individual. The culture is not the same everywhere but, since it depends on the state of society and the cultural values developed by individuals, it is understood that it varies in different forms in society.

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At a time when the Romanian presence to the great moral political debate involved in the genesis of a new world has become objective, we ask ourselves which are the fundamental characteristics that might define a message of the Romanian culture.

One of the features is "the willingness towards the universal" (Zamfirescu, 2002, p. 21), the ability to infer universal structures in the previous historical universal reality as an inner need for self-definition andself-assertion. Today, Romanian culture enjoys the greatest inner freedom fromthe old structures, being appropriately equippedto adhere and to massively contribute to the developmnent of new structures.

Romanian culture occupies a special position within the European continent, as it has a past valuable enough to entitle it to its self-confidence and to ensure it a benevolent audience on behalf of the past.

A second key feature of Romanian culture and of our spiritual structure in itself is realism that is willingness to perceive exactly the plain reality beyond the abstract schemes; to keep contact with it constantly, to see and discover the deep structures of reality behind the phenomena.

In secular traditions of Romanian culture there existed synchronicities and affinities which urges us to meditate on its own genius, trends, aspirations, tense and sometimes dramatic searches of the contemporary world.

The great European cultures have asserted themselves on the universal stage, have experienced a worldwide influence at a certain time due to the synchronicities, the match between the distinctiveness of its historical condition and the universal imperatives of a certain era. It is not the geography, the demographics, the weapons share that have been determined for the universal destiny of some cultures created by certain peoples, but their ability to formulate and meet the needs of a particular historical development, which involved other peoples and other cultures .

Creative gesture is, therefore, through all his social conditionings, a social act. Society may stimulate or inhibit progress, from the acceptance and dissemination of a finding, to the creation of an entire environment that magnetizes creative energies producing genuine explosions and overflow of geniuses, or from the lack of interest and bantering of the creator, to his ascending on the stake or scaffold. Hence, there is also the possibility that the study of individual and historical conditions in which stimulation or inhibition of various natures of the creative act may constitute an autonomous science.

The prestige of a culture never comes from outside. It is the radiation of a climate from inside out, of pride, dignity and self-security emitted at a certain time by the creators of a people. The prestige of a culture is not derived from translations, either good or bad, but from a need felt at some point, by other cultures to enrich themselves, to feed themselves spiritually from the treasure and experience of that culture.

From the perspective of the new European realities (meaning both the present resulting mainly in the collapse of the communist dictatorship in Europe and, especially, the future) factors that may facilitate the cultural integration of Romania in this new European reality are essentially internal: firstly, a real European integration policy, pursued consistently, tenaciously and constantly under the pressure of external factors, predominantly economic. Secondly, it would require a radical change in the public spirit, leaving isolationist, specific, traditionalist and ethicist mentality, etc. cultivated in our country, Romania, for decades, by the nationalist right-wing party, between the two world wars. Thirdly, an active policy of

cultural contacts, as a necessary consequence of the change in the mood described above: active participation in various organizations and international cultural literary associations, in congresses, international symposia (scholarships and travel awards), the organization of such events in our country (a long-term investment, but highly profitable culturally) financing co-publishing and translations into foreign languages (an extremely important objective of any active cultural policy).

Private literary, publishing and individual initiative of writers, men of culture etc. plays a big role. They just cannot wait for the hypothetical support of official agencies (which more often than not does not come), but must try to integrate themselves.

Intercultural education requires communication and free cultural movement, continuous stimulation and intensification of the exchange of values everywhere.

European culture requires and fosters cooperation and mutual influence. It promotes a permeable, receptive, responsive, sensitive literature open to creative assimilation and differentiation. Cultivating friendly relations, mutual correction and tolerance are becoming necessities and first degree moral and literary imperatives.

5. Conclusion

One must agree neither with the negativist tendency regarding the fate of culture in the contemporary world nor with the elitist conception of depriving cultural values of the inevitable communication and reception. Interculturally released from the tyranny of an official culture, peoples of the south Eastern Europe develop their national cultures from dialectical combination between the most valuable traditional elements and the intransigent assimilation of authentic values of the universal culture (Badescu, 1984).

Cultural creation is a work of fraternity. To the extent that the value remains immanent to consciences, they remain foreign to one another, even if they contribute to the same value, even if each value develops in them according to the same arrangements. Through the cultural action people establish a connection simultaneously essential and permanent. Truth is never a truth, if it is only a truth for me; the beauty is never beauty if it is only beautiful for me. Value is not only intended for the individual, it belongs to the community. Hence, people's desire to get their peers to participate in their axiological universe (Smith, 1990).

No society lives in anarchy, without an incipient culture, be it rudimentary. There is no society without an outlook on life, or without a view of the universe. If we consider stability and interculturalism, it all demonstrates the dynamism of culture: the only fully static cultures are the dead cultures. But changes occur so slowly that we do not perceive unless we oppose the present to the past. While cultural changes are observed everywhere, they appear as a condition, though not absolute in and through itself. Culture is simultaneously stable and continuously changing. Cultural change cannot be perceived but as part of the problem of cultural stability; stability cannot be understood unless we measure the change in relation to conservatism.

While culture, as an attribute of man, is limited to human, culture as a whole exceeds the dimension of the individual. The argument in favor of the objective reality of culture is that it escapes human control and operates within its own laws. The fact that there is a cultural continuum, despite the constant change

of people whose behavior characterizes the culture, constitutes an argument in favour of the objective existence of culture. We must consider culture as existing in itself, dominating the lives of people who are merely passive instruments of power.

Regarded as a whole, culture can be looked upon as the gradual release of human self. Language, art and religions represent different stages of this process. In each of them man discovers and demonstrates a new power - the power to build his own world. But do not confuse the ideal with its concrete manifestations at every moment of evolution of man's self-consciousness. They should not ignore tensions and frictions, strong oppositions and deep conflicts between the dark unconscious forces and the multiple creative forces of man. They cannot be reduced to a common denominator. They tend towards opposite directions and are subject to different principles. But this multiplicity and disparity denotes neither disagreement nor disharmony. All these functions are complementary. Each of them reveals a new horizon and unveils a new aspect of the human phenomenon. The dissonance is also harmony: the opposites do not exclude one another: they are independent. What unites the various cultural forces is not an identity in nature, but the identity of its fundamental objective: the moral perfection of the species. If there is a dynamic equilibrium of human culture, that is the result of a conflict between opposing forces.

Culture has helped entire generations to find their significance, identity or their own vision, giving communities a sense of belonging and mutual respect. For the European Union to develop a favorable viable cultural policy it requires both a thorough knowledge of the past as well as cultivation of respect for diversity.

In every society, culture corresponds both to a particular way of living, thinking, acting, an original form of civilization in a given society, in a group or an individual and to a dialectical movement between the material transformations suffered and voluntary changes. In this movement, the group or the individual come with their active and constructive part in daily practice, the transformation of society and its civilization. Without intercultural education, civilization, fixed in non-renewable rigid structures, is doomed to extinction.

In reality, national cultures have a natural opening to the universal, to dialogue and exchange of values with other cultures and spiritual spaces. Modern and contemporary epoch has intensified communication of values and cultural exchange with the extraordinary expansion of the media system so that cultural interferences, the connections and the exchange of values have become prevailing realities today. On a cultural level, the contemporary world reproduces the structural relation between unity and diversity, as cultures interfere and communicate with each other. Human diversity is based on the endless circuit of social interactions with their objective and subjective, differentiated and solidary registers. Different cultures are facing each other today, in a mutual dependence, engaged in a common context extending on a planetary scale.

Intercultural education is an appeal to all people to overcome the constraints of space and time in search for unity of the spirit and also an appeal to overcome individual differences, as well as an appeal to the universal and essential.

Although ethnic and cultural stereotypes, religion, the level of economic development and great linguistic diversity are factors that hinder interculturalism, the development of a cultural policy would not have been possible without a foundation common to all European countries.

Progress cannot rise from the sterile opposition between superior culture isolated in a centuries-old tradition of a caste and transformed into a reference system as well as the boycott of the new cultural forms spread worldwide due to technical progress: radio, television, cinema, video, internet etc. Moreover, it cannot arise either from mutual denial of the two types of cultures: traditional and modern, distinguished by the depth of vision, through the sensitive structures and the variety of compositional registers and the new different perception of socio-historical realities.

The solution would be to apply a double integrating current: on the one hand, the democratization of traditional forms and, on the other hand, the acknowledgement of the of natural rights to existence of new cultural forms arising from the high pressure left by the participation of the masses in history.

It is necessary that the inevitable transfer of sovereignty to European institutions for certain resolutions should be considered realistically and pragmatically, not to allow for insinuation of reserves and fears in relation to a possible dissolution of national identity as a result of Romania's EU integration.

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