A FEW REFLECTIONS ON THE HUMANISM OF THE "CIVILIZED" MAN OF OUR TIMES

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Abstract

The present paper proposes a few reflections that each of us can weigh for himself, trying to give to himself sincere answers able to open one man to another and subsequently to the truth.

Key Words: *humanism, civilization, "civilized" man*

Living in the 21st century, one would expect that man should be completely content with himself and also with what is going on around him, yet the progress and the civilization he has acquired seem to satisfy him only in part; on the contrary man feels stifled and apparently he feels like running away. After trying so hard to get "some extra good", why doesn't anything seem to content nowadays' man? Why does he tend to have more and more, yet he feels increasingly poor? He struggles, running towards a certain purpose, yet he cannot find his peace. Don't we all have our place on earth, ontologically granted, that no one can take away

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from us? Then why is the civilized man of our times unable to find his peace and always discontent?

We will try to answer this question, making a short semantic presentation of the term *civilization*, after which our approach will turn to a certain aspect of nowadays' "civilized" man.

The word "civilization" seems to have been born in France, towards the middle of the 18th century (more exactly 1756), forged by the Marquis of Mirabeau, yet "*civiliser*" existed already since the end of the 16th century, with two different meanings. One had to do with the juridical jargon (*to take a trial from the criminal domain into the civil one*), and another meant the *action of civilizing*, namely to make barbarians or boors *more urban*, more refined. In time, this last meaning has come to be synonymous with a certain superior, occidental lifestyle, and the civilized man has come to be considered only *that person who lives according to this lifestyle*. (1)

Taking into account the complexity of the human being, it can be seen in parallel either from a spiritual, godly perspective, or in relation to its social and material nature, from a strictly biological and human perspective. The spiritual man is distinct from the biological man just as the wheat which is to be separated from the chaff, yet how could this distinction be possible nowadays when the "civilized" world in which we live has given birth to a multitude of chaff and the good wheat can hardly show its face? Or how can good be separated from bad? In one of his books, Dan Puric stated: "The country has turned into a field, in which a strange plant has grown: the wheat-chaff" (2), a plant that has become "the poisoned bread we are eating today". (3) This wheat-chaff is doing its best to confuse us by making us lose our consciousness, forget our true values, borrow kitsch, give up our true faith, our culture, our tradition. Today, almost everything is limited to the society's series of material acquisitions, to the progress of its techniques and of its institutions.

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The consequences of the "modern civilization" have turned man into an artificial being, driven only by exaggerated ambitions of power, of enrichment, of competition. "This man mistook complexity for complication. This is the true name of his inner state. That is why he is so miserable, that is why he is so hard to understand and to satisfy. This man we are talking about is forever discontent, always revolted against life and the given circumstances." (4)

The more things man wants, the less master of himself he will become and the less freedom he will enjoy. Going this way, namely nowhere, the "civilized" man of the present lives according to the maxim: *carpe diem*, cultivating all the senses of the body: food, drinks, strong sensations, haughty ambitions, etc. How can he still think about the person next to him, who is suffering in silence, how can his stony heart melt looking at the tears of the one exploited mercilessly, how can he fight for justice when he is the master of injustice and of lying? He who, in order to meet his ends, uses all kind of stratagems, masking his slyness. In front of the people he is full of humanity, yet behind your back he does not know what to do to abase you more. If you tell him nice and flattering words he will like you, yet if you show him his true face he will despise you.

Because civilization is closely connected to politeness and decency, the modern man of our times has to demonstrate, by means of his deeds and of his words, that he is a kind man, that he has the sense of justice and of beauty, that he is tactful and decent. But, in reality, things are nor really so. Modernism has created a *superman* (a sequel of Nietzsche's *Übermensch*), able of economic performances, yet whose senses are partially or totally atrophied. The respect for man is removed to such an extent that, in certain situations, the law favors certain persons, while it disadvantages others.

The "civilized" man considers the etiquette, the mannerisms important, humiliating the simplicity of the spiritual being, considering the latter to be backward, with a primitive behavior, unable to face the requirements of today's

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society. The "civilized man" thinks he is a master of everything, having an unlimited sense of measure, which makes him arrogant. His individualism and selfishness throw him into a darkness of which he finds it hard to get out. He is "purely humanist, that is religiously indifferent", "practicing the forms of jungle life, pushing cruelty to the gratuitous form of the tiger's bestiality". (5)

These acts turn man into an animal fighting for survival, fighting to adapt to the new conditions imposed by society. And in order to identify with more subtlety the "fauna" of the contemporary Romania, meditate a little on the humorous description of Andrei Pleşu: "...We have plenty of reptiles: from the dirty, cunning and servile snakes in the counties to the stiff reptiles smelling like prehistory: gross green lizards, clumsy iguanas, chameleons. It is a crisis of noble and performant animals. We do not have enough stags, vultures, true lions, with legitimate authority, elegant leopards, and panthers of noble descent. Not even conciliating pigeons and vigorous and honest bears. In exchange, it is full of hypocrite dogs and cheap cats, cunning foxes, hungry wolves, shameless swine, monumental asses and inspired pigs..." (6)

The "civilized" man is not a bad man, but his freedom is turned towards doing bad things, it is "the freedom of a Godless man". The progress he supports serves only his own interests. This man can only be a lonely, sad man, unable to enjoy the communion with the other and the abnegation for the sake of the other. His acts lack the power of love, the warmth of goodness, the triumph of the truth and of beauty. He thinks himself intelligent, full of information, yet he lacks knowledge, which situates him outside vivacity, in the semi-darkness of obscurity and indifferentism, as spiritually "to know is to be alive in a metaphysical, not biological sense" (7).

Man's greatest quality is to know himself, to know and accept his incompleteness and to do his best to fill the missing gaps. There is a paradox: "man is great only when he admits he is little, when he admits his weaknesses" (8) or as

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Pascal stated: "La grandeur de l'homme est grande en ce qu'il se connaît misérable" (9).

However, who has this courage? Who wants to penetrate in the depth of his being and discover there the grain of maturity and the love for the truth? It is only the man who, by manifesting his humanity, wants to bring a bit of *civilization* in this savage and seemingly unrecognizable world.

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