



# Man and Culture\*

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## The Role of Culture in the Post-Modern World

### Its Impact on the Development of Human Potentialities

#### **Abstract**

*An anthropological approach to the place of culture in the process of man's humanization will be discussed: what are the benefits of the modern age development and which problems arise in postindustrial and still technological civilization? What has been changed as far as the fundamental role of culture in the human world is concerned: a) when culture has become an industrial product in term of "mass culture"; and b) under the influence of a postmodern relativism (marginalizing universal values and morality, and instead focusing on "preferences" and narative discourse)? The consequences of these changes are to be analyzed from the point of view of substantial human potentialities as creativity and imagination, frames of references regarding meaning of life, multidimensional nature of human character structure, freedom of personality vs. vulgarized individualism, etc. The concluding question states: whether culture has become submitted to the economism or to politics, instead of being their fundation?*

#### **Key Words**

Culture, humanization, development, human potentialities, post-modern world

#### **Preface**

An anthropological approach to culture and its impact on the process of humanisation will be discussed: what are the benefits of the modern age development and which problems arise in the post-modern but still technological civilisation. What has been changed during the past century as far as the role of culture in the human world is concerned: a/ when culture became an industrial product in terms of "mass culture"; and b/ what are the consequences of a post-modern relativism in regards to the marginalisation of the universal

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values and morality, as well as when having the focus on “preferences” and narrative discourse, and the devastation of the concept of humanity. These changes are to be analyzed from the point of view of substantial human potentialities, such as creativity and imagination, contributions to the quality of life and its meaning, as well as a multidimensional nature of human character structure and freedom of personality vs. the vulgarised industrialised “cultural productions”. The principal question states: whether culture has been submitted to economics or politics, instead of being their foundation?

## 1.

In order to analyse the role of culture under the influence of the new post-modern development of societies and civilisations, I should pay attention of the audience to a long-lasting debate in anthropology about the definition of culture.<sup>1</sup> I am not going to follow in details classifications of the concepts of culture suggested by Kroeber and Kluckhohn,<sup>2</sup> but I want to emphasize the crucial points that characterise culture as a distinctive human space. Perhaps the sentence saying that “culture is to society what personality is to organism” (Katz & Schanck)<sup>3</sup> implies the very essence of the meaning of culture that humanises both man and society, when transforming in a long-run of historical development hominids into *Homo Sapiens*, as well as an individual as a biological organism into a conscious human being. Which suggests that the main distinction of culture from the natural environment is that culture is “man-made part of the environment” (M. Herskovits<sup>4</sup>), in which the new abilities of human beings have been generated: ability to a permanent learning and to transmit by language new experiences within the interpersonal and generational communications; that speaks about another feature of culture, i. e. its cumulative effects in a diachronic perspective.

However, what is to be cleared up is that culture cannot be understood as collection of “facts” or “objects”, but contrary to the positivist way of thinking, it is “a way of analysing facts” (Fortes<sup>5</sup>) by the new ability to use symbols (meaning that culture is a “symbolic universe”). The contents of culture thus are selective and learned, not biologically inherited. In other words, culture, as a foundation of human society, is distinctive of “animal societies” which are based upon species-kind of instincts. Therefore, symbolisation of events is a specific human phenomenon, which makes the basic material of culture.<sup>6</sup> When following this way of thinking, the fundamental traits of culture may be summarised as it follows: culture is *social*, shared by human beings in a given community (as “a grammar of social life”); it is *conceptualisation* and verbalisation of ideas, norms and patterns of behaviour; it is *dynamic* and changeable in the life-span and historical times; thus it is *pluralistic*; it is also *interactive* (which manifests in the diffusion of cultural elements); it is *transmitted through education* (in a permanent process of learning). That is to say: it is “a process of man’s development and organisation of his substantial potentialities” (D. Bidney<sup>7</sup>). As such *culture is a peculiar way of human existence*, fostering the process of becoming human.

But culture is not only a transmitted learned experience as an instruction/direction for life; it is also a *projection* and justification (as making sense) of life direction by indicating what individuals and societies might and ought to do with their lives, as a motivated and goal-directed praxis, that satisfies human needs in a reflexive way. A modern anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, warns us that culture is not everything which has been created during man’s history, but the *meanings* attributed to those creations that may be internalised in personality and social structures.<sup>8</sup> That is to say, that culture represents

the “meaningful schemes” for the selection of human ways of life as equivalence for the instincts. Culture, therefore, should be interpreted in terms of the *transbiological* space in which human lives and developments occur; or to say it in other words, it is a sensible construction of human reality by the reflexive interpretation.

## 2.

Before I pass to another question, i.e. how far the quoted definitions of culture correspond to the understanding of culture in the post-modern world, it is necessary to clear up the existing confusion between two terms: *culture* and *civilisation*, because they do not represent the synonymous concepts. Moreover, their developments may not correspond to one another. What the descriptive definition of culture implies, that it includes everything what humanity has created, belongs to the concept of civilisation which deals with the products and artefacts, or as it is said, with means (e.g. for satisfying human needs), while culture speaks about the ends. According to Alfred Weber’s distinction, civilisation is a sphere of the necessary and useful things (as they are technological and material means of survival), while culture represents the spiritual sphere as a “world of symbols”, as a newly created spiritually transformed material reality.<sup>9</sup> But Kroeber suggests a different concept of civilisation treating it as a given great totality of cultural creations (like Chinese and other great civilisations),<sup>10</sup> in which sense we speak also about the Western civilisation, or “technological/informatic” civilisation. Due to the fact that a necessary distinction is ignored, culture is, in particular in the modern Western societies, identified with the elements of civilisation and reduced to material means as a main aspect of social advancement, while the domain of values and moral principles, as well as variety of artistic creations, have become relative and culture marginalised, when different spiritual contents are subdued to technical and industrial production.

1  
For the definitions of culture see: A. L. Kroeber & Clyde Kluckhohn (eds.), *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, Vintage Books, New York 1963.

2  
They offered the following classification: descriptive definitions (“the things that people have, the things they do and what they think”); historical definitions (“the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determine the texture of our lives”, i. e. the total social heredity or the forms of traditional behaviours); normative definitions (“the mode of life followed by the community”, or “those historically created designs for living”); psychological definitions (“the sum of mass adjustments to the life conditions”), A. L. Kroeber & C. Kluckhohn, *Culture*, pp. 84–106.

3  
In the above mentioned collection *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, p. 117.

4  
*Ibid.*, p. 128.

5  
*Ibid.*, p. 263.

6  
See: Zygmunt Bauman, *Kultura i społeczeństwo*, 1966 (quoted from Serbian translation *Kultura i društvo*, Prosveta, Beograd 1984, p. 63).

7  
*Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, p. 174.

8  
Clifford Geertz, *Interpretations of Culture: Selected Essays*, Basic Books, New York 1973, p. 68.

9  
Alfred Weber, *Prinzipien der Geschichte und Kultursoziologie*, München 1951, pp. 90–91; Herbert Marcuse makes a similar distinction in the book *Kultur und Gesellschaft*, vol. II, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/M. 1966, p. 149.

10  
A. L. Kroeber, *An Anthropologist Looks at History*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1963, pp. 68–69.

In the further consideration of the topic I shall try to indicate in what sense the essential meanings of culture, as the key concept of the human world, are lost, when its multidimensional intervention into the given environment, and the incessant innovations regarding the quality of life, have been interpreted in one-sided and pragmatic terms, whose usefulness is measured by the daily effects to the material standard of living and the modern technological products.

### 3.

The main question regarding the interpretation of the concept of culture in the post-modern world may thus read as follows: does culture still provides a “sensible construction of reality as a reflexive world” in post-industrial and consumer society, which have been enforcing primarily economic and utilitarian principles as criteria of social/individual prosperity (in terms of a new quality of life)? And a dominant trend towards unification of “technological civilisation” should be taken into account vs. creative diversities of cultures, that imply plurality of possibilities and the choice of alternatives, which the imposed “standardisation” denies. Another question, derived from the former, asks for a serious reconsideration of the problem: whether freedom of choice, as a substantial characteristic of culture, has been threatened in the post-industrial/cybernetic civilisation, which justifies the plain victory of “technological civilisation” over the multidimensional content of culture, that is supposed to search for new ideas and visions which may contribute to the “better future” of humanity. According to the generally accepted anthropological understanding of culture as a “specific way of life”, that is, as a “second human nature”, this may be more precisely expressed in terms of an “incessant process of defining human lives, of calming the struggle of existence, of stabilising the productive organisation of society, in order to foster man’s intellectual capacities, to reduce and sublimate aggression, violence and poverty” (H. Marcuse<sup>11</sup>). And David Bidney makes an emphasis on the ability of culture to dignify potentialities of human nature,<sup>12</sup> which becomes problematic in the post-modern world producing cultural crisis. Let us analyze manifestations of modern cultural crisis as a product of the almost complete marginalisation of the authentic concept of culture:

- people are today value-disoriented and the least motivated by moral principles in their behaviour and actions, reducing the concept of “life” to the material means for the consumption of commodities;
- peoples’ community feelings and solidarity towards their fellow-men are abandoned for the sake of a “possessive individualism” and selfishness;
- *having* (in terms of accumulation of money, profits and commodities) is becoming more important than *being* (as becoming a free personality with developed human powers);
- individual and social (human) interactions and communications are abandoned for the sake of the capacity to manipulate with modern technical means, that almost completely occupy peoples’ interest;
- technocratic principles are thus imposed as undisputable imperatives;
- “economic rationality” becomes the only one, absolute kind of rationality, very often contrary to “social rationality” that relies on the principle of social justice (as Karl Polanyi and Pierre Bourdieu have written);
- imitation, reproduction and conformism replace individual and group creativity, and an “average person” becomes the yardstick of “normality”;

- eurocentrism as well as ethnocentrism prevail over the productive (creative) cultural diversity;
- critical/reflexive thinking has got a negative connotation in front of the expansion of populism whose main slogan is “good is what is effective and accepted by the masses”, regardless the values and morality;
- the great ideas of Enlightenment are denied, together with the humanistic approach to the problems of the modern world, and exchanged for “discourse” and narratives, which are accepted as the only legitimate points of views (despising “great philosophy” of the past);
- cultural achievements are mostly treated as commodities, which should be submitted to the market principles, depending on the possession of money, regardless of their comprehension and devotion;
- much greater offer of information does not primarily function so as to provide a more rational perception of reality, but produce an illusion that we are all the time “in” whatever is happening in the world, without being capable of understanding what is really going on, nor feeling empathy with the everyday tragedies that take place all over the world;
- and, last but not least, despite the potentially greater and more advanced means on peoples’ disposal, people feel more helpless in finding solutions for the greater problems in a growing global chaos, in which they cannot see how they themselves can contribute to prevent the possible apocalypse.

That is the reason why one may conclude that the cultural challenge of the 20th century, despite its enormous technological advancement, has not been properly met as far as the substantial spheres of human existence are concerned, because the reduced concept of culture failed in terms of the growth of human capacities; this can be demonstrated with the counter-effective results: peoples’ inability to understand a more complicated post-modern world, in particular under the impact of the process of globalisation; they lose hopes regarding a possible struggle against dehumanisation of both individuals and societies, due to the growing repression even in the most developed democratic societies (when global terrorism is used as a pretext); the education which is still traditional both in its methods and kind of knowledge it transmits, preserves the authoritarian type of socialisation and prepers individuals primarily to adjust themselves to the given conditions and the existing structure of power, while various kinds of revolts are still treated as subversive acts that are rigorously punished (the appearance of new “concentration camps” for the so-called terrorists are legalized by the USA); instead of creating a better mental understanding amongst different peoples, xenophobia has been revived, and hundreds of the so-called small wars are spreading all over the modern world. Thereby, when living in a confused reality which people neither understand nor can act upon, they create a *virtual reality* as an illusory escape, while the circle is thus closed, and they cannot find the way out of the crisis. And so, instead of being engaged in the productive/creative activities in order to strengthen their powers, individuals deal with “simulacrum”, that cannot get them anywhere but to nihilism.

The results of the above described reductionism of the content of culture consist in inability of culture to fulfil its basic functions in teaching people about:

11  
Herbert Marcuse, “Bemerkungen zu einer Neubestimmung der Kultur”, in *Kultur und Gesellschaft*, p. 148.

12  
David Bidney, “The Concept of Cultural Crisis”, *American Anthropologist*, vol. 48 (1946), p. 535.

what a “better society” means and how to realise it; what is “normal” and what should be treated as “deviant” and immoral (in human relations and communications); which systems of values should be supported in order to improve human development (as against a total relativism); which cultural (symbolic) forms are to be given priority in a modern (democratic) society; how to comprehend the concept of personal and groups’ liberty and make use of them (in particular in political terms), i.e. is it allowed to imperil freedom of others.<sup>13</sup> In other words, one should ask whether the post-modern culture teach us how to comprehend the global world of our epoch, and accordingly, how to make our living well so as to reconcile much greater social potentialities with multidimensional needs of modern man and become capable of making sense of our lives at the dawn of the new millennium?

Many other essential questions one should answer in order to deal with counter effects of post-modern conception of culture that has ceased to be reflexively selective and critical, due to which it is becoming unable to help people in regenerating their personal powers and activating their energies in order to reaffirm the fundamental role of culture as a human world. Some of the necessary reassessment concerns the following questions: does the post-modern culture provide channels for a better intergenerational communications through a continual development of a “communal ethos”; and does it supply both individuals and social strata, as well as different societies, with the necessary means for the solutions of the acute contemporary problems? The answers lie in the very fact that the gap is growing between those who still cannot solve the problem of mere survival and the others who are becoming enormously rich, because the postindustrial/postmodern societies do not care for that when they have rejected the “welfare state”.

That is to say, the main shortcoming of the post-modern culture (primarily in the Western world) is that it does not open new perspectives of the future development, which would take into account the great achievements of the past century as the necessary preconditions of the more advanced “better world”; the consequence of which is peoples’ escape from the existing realities into a virtual one. Therefore, instead of taking the serious efforts in order to change the former, people deal with the *simulacrums*, and fall even more deeply into the feeling of helplessness.

#### 4.

Let us consider another question: why the post-modern culture has been so marginalized in the world which seems to be the most advanced when compared with the previous epochs? The answer lies in the nature of a dominant politics which favours “economic rationality” and its technocratically oriented concepts of social development. The representative of which is the *neoliberal doctrine* as a model that tends to dominate in construction and direction of an also prevailing neoimperial politics within the existing concept of globalisation. For such a statement the following arguments may be suggested: a/ the prevalence of technocratically articulated principles in terms of efficiency of the production of “commodities” (the term applied to all the products of human creativity) whose weight is measured by the quantity of money necessary to buy them; b/ and the latter is a logical consequence of the two main characteristics of postindustrial/postmodern societies being interpreted in terms of “self-regulating market” which determines the values of the products/creations, and also who can get them, as well as an irrational obsession with the

incessant accumulation of the “commodities”; c/ the post-modern concept of happiness, which is defined in terms of one’s prestige within the “consumer society” (as Zygmunt Bauman writes: “happiness means to follow race after consumption”); and d/ the other side of the coin is revitalisation of an imperial politics of the “great powers” (and particular the super-power), which are levelling down standards of societies’ developments (in terms of *Gleichschaltung* of principles), regardless the differences of various civilisations, when trying to impose a single model that is usually named as “eurocentrism”, or “Westernisation” (but perhaps a more adequate term would be “Americanisation”). Thus two post-modern ideologies (consumerism and neoliberalism) coincide and produce dubious effects on the global level, when disregarding cultural and civilisational diversities and generating the following phenomena: different kinds of *fundamentalism* (religious, ethnocentric and nationalistic one etc.) as a revolt against the imposed unification; and the other event which expands the clash of civilisations that annihilates the best qualities of historical legacy of different cultural creations, which could come into being only through intercultural/intercivilisational communication.

However, being that politics still conditions both economic projects and their scopes, as well as the meaning of culture, and the dominant (neoliberal) politics rules over the entire lives of peoples and societies, so as that culture is pushed aside into an inferior position and becomes the servant of a politics of extreme economism, instead of being the very foundation of the totality of human ways of life. To quote Jürgen Habermas’ saying regarding the fact that economic laws have penetrated all the pores of cultural subjects and themes, due to which culture can no longer fulfil its fundamental function of *emancipation*; and the author explains that without the adequate information the public opinion becomes unable to revolt against the populist tendencies and demands of the existing political programmes, relying upon the market principles and mechanisms.<sup>14</sup> A significant field of research should be dedicated to the countries in transition, wherein all the mentioned manifestations of the impoverishment and marginalisation of post-modern culture are even more emphasised, thus calling for the appropriate solutions.

## 5.

How the concept of culture is interpreted in everyday life, taking as a reference the practices of societies in transition, and more particularly in present-day Serbia?

The evidence shows that in everyday life of post-modern men/women culture is something of a secondary importance, as hungering on the market place, and being treated as if one can make life without it (when keeping in mind the usual answer such as: I have neither time for cultural events nor money to buy “cultural commodities”). And it is understandable that those who struggle for mere survival cannot think about “culture” because they cannot “buy” it (their budget is short for books, thickets for theatres or concerts, and often even for the satisfaction of elementary needs). While the better-off citizens use culture

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Kant’s “Categoric Imperative” seems to be abandoned, as well as a crucial liberal idea of John Stuart Mill, who wrote about the liberty that jeopardizes freedom of other as being selfish and excentric.

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Jürgen Habermas, in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, June 16th, 2007.

primarily as a means of entertainment and relaxation from a hard business, whose function is very well met by “mass culture” based on an easily transmitted the latest fashions and mass expressions/communications.

Culture is no longer understood for the majority of the population as a field of an utmost importance in the process of civilisation of human beings, but in a very narrow sense on the pragmatic and utilitarian level, having thus a strong impact upon the *quality of life* whose notion is liberated from the ideas and “visions” for the future, because the motivation does not rely on individual and social liberation.

Popular culture is used as a means of having fun in free-time, or as an illusory participation in “reality show” that last for one day alone without leaving any deeper trace in one’s life. Preferences are in use instead of principles and value-laden choices when is to be decided what to “pick up” from culture. However, what underlie preferences and styles are stereotypes, which are not submitted to the reflexive selection; and what goes with it, there is an inclination toward simplification of the given events. As a matter of fact, the most part of popular culture today is expressed as “happenings” in which improvisation is what mostly matters and not a creative imagination. On the other side, a reproductive culture prevails, whose right expression is a “new composed culture” (turbo-folk culture). It is a bad imitation of the original Folk-cultures, which are adjusted to the mass happenings, that open the space of the escape from a difficult reality; thereby, the “soap-opera” series are the most popular invention of the post-modern mass culture, because they awake nostalgia of a “better times of the past” and help people forgetting the “dark reality”.

According to the analyses of the neo-populist trend of culture in today’s Serbia,<sup>15</sup> one may conclude that the proper meaning of culture is comprehended by a very small proportion of the population, if keeping in mind its substantial role, in terms of education which teach people how to create a decent life circumstances and humanise their potentials (needs, aspirations, values/morality), and qualitatively improve their tastes. But the most spread cultural forms stimulate irrational impulses and a very low taste, as well as a populist rhetoric which impoverish language and communication. One may notice as well, that the popular culture in post-modern epoch retreats to *neo-traditionalism*, not only as regarding “neo-folks” but also as turning back to religious, mythological, magic and astrological way of thinking, through which a growing number of individuals look at the given reality.

So, what one may say about the characteristic “spirit of our time” when the prevailing state of pre-modern concept of culture is taking place in the post-modern era? With the pauperisation of culture in the 20th century, the substantial traits of culture, like: creativity, imagination, liberty of opinions and actions for the sake of man’s humanisation, are losing their attributes which the authentic concept of culture assumes. Therefore, our epoch has been marked by the absence of new-great ideas (R. Dahrendorf); furthermore, the post-modern relativism that ignores the difference between “better” and “worse” choices, deprive people from orientations and alternatives; thus a decreasing level of the popular culture has sharpened the gap between “high culture” and its mass industrial production; and also produces a low level of political culture and devastation of language, not only in everyday use, but in literature too. The “virtual reality” has come to replace the real one as a method of escape from the heavy burden of freedom and responsibility.

The social description of the prevailing post-modern spirit may state as the following: the *habitus* of majority of citizens deteriorates, unabling them to

understand and take an active part in their realities, so as to make their contributions to the improvement of the multiplicity of human potentialities, which the epoch offers. That is the reason why, people abstain from discovering new perspectives, which they have been deprived of when being manipulated by neo-traditional ideologies (such as: nationalism, neoracism, and various kinds of fundamentalism), that orient them towards the past history, almost completely disregarding the visions of the future.<sup>16</sup>

## 6.

On the other side, it is important to analyse what trace of post-modern culture can be followed in terms of the significant discoveries of the past centuries; i.e. what one can learn how the potential contributions of the recent historical development may be used for the advancement of the new quality of life. In order to avoid a post-modern trend towards the instrumentalisation of both politics and linguistics, one should keep in mind Peter Berger's statement that "humanity" belongs to socio-cultural category, because culture is a transformed nature done by human beings, and when having changed the genetic and mental structure, generating new capacities, human beings created new organizations and entered into a human environment (which is called culture).<sup>17</sup> Thus human beings have become capable of creating plural versions of their life styles, being no longer tied to a sole form of existence belonging to their biological species. Within this context one can judge about the effects of the advancement of post-modern culture, when analysing whether plurality of cultural creations and values are incorporated into different civilisations, that are respected and comprehended as *conditio sine qua non* of a continuous development of human potentialities all over the world. Due to the possibility of human beings to create differentiated forms of culture as their specific ambience within human existence, a great deal of new capacities have been opened, as much as an intercultural communications have been practiced. And one cannot deny the fact of interconnections of cultures which has been taking place in our epoch, even though cultural exchange has appeared primarily in forms of diffusion of cultural elements in the domain of technical productions or material goods, as well as concerning new styles of music, etc. However, the most important "element" of culture, *value systems*, which give sense to the entire cultural creations, have been least exchangeable between cultures/civilisations. Therefore, one may say that the very substance of cultural differentiation remains closed within the particular societies/civilisations, without enabling a profound intercultural communication.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, one may come to the conclusion that the great potentialities for both the advancement of post-modern culture and a

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See: Milena Dragičević-Šešić, *Neofolk kultura. Publika i njene zvezde* (Neo-folk Culture: Public and Its Stars), Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića, Sremski Karlovci 1994.

16

Unlike the totalitarian practice in "real socialism", which declared a "glory future" as a mask to hide the awkward reality, the predominant trend of postmodern popular politics is a manipulation with historical mythologies that serve the same function, i. e. to turn people's thoughts from the unpleasant reality.

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Peter Berger & Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Doubleday, New York 1967, p. 49.

18

I make difference between the term "interculturality", which implies penetration of cultural contents of different cultures, while the term "multiculturalism" suggests the parallel coexistence of different cultures, either in a local level, or the global one, without the mutual influence to one another.

productive exchange of the creations of different cultures, which post-modern world has offered, have not been utilised so far to its full extent.

It is true that much greater opportunities for innovations is what marks our epoch, because it has never happened in the past history that such grandiose products have come into being in a relatively short time; still they mostly belong to the domain of technology and technical means of communication,<sup>19</sup> that of course should not be underestimated. At the same time, one may be disappointed when the other fields of culture are taken into account, like the articulation of new (political) ideas, because political theories of the past have been renewed instead; the same may be noticed when speaking about the various forms of arts, the most visible in architecture and belletristics, wherein it is hardly possible to see the great figures like those creators from the past centuries, because the modern forms are imitations which are diffused all over the world (in architecture the skyscrapers, in *bell art* manipulation with mere forms regardless the content, etc.).

The most disturbing is what happened with the substantial values and beliefs in the post-modern world. The legacy of modern development in terms of the establishing secular principles as the foundation of the modern states, has been devastated and the plurality of opinions as the alternative view-points, have been reduced; instead, humanity is turned against philosophy and scientific theories for the sake of religious beliefs and mysticism which have become popular even in the most developed societies, that seems paradoxical in the 21st century, when one should expect the greater support to the rational way of thinking. On the other side, economic values became universally accepted as the most significant criteria of human development, which is the main reason why culture lost its important role in the conceptualisation of the future development of humanity.

The fact that such a mainstream orientation exists, not only in the USA, but being spread over Europe as well (with the recent victories of the conservative political parties in European countries) lead to the confusion when one speaks about the “modern European standards”. Therefore, it is reasonable to discuss such a topic, considering first of all, the question whether the declared democratic values/standards correspond to the norms which are favoured in politics of European and World community. When one follows the results of post-modern politics/conceptions about the “better world”, it is possible to conclude that they are not in correspondence with the principles of democracy: e.g. declared freedom and right of choice is practically denied when the imposed standards of the great forces are treated as “universal ones” (that slogan “take it or leave it” symbolises); human rights and liberties are relativistically interpreted when incorporated within neoliberal conception of democracy, producing a “possessive individualism” as against solidarity, excluding social justice as the important principle of democracy, which could have guaranteed that “all citizens are equal before the law”. Even on the level of personal virtues, post-modernity has failed to provide grounds for the real democracy, because: honesty, personal integrity, honorable activities, responsibility, etc., that should be the content of personality structure, do not count any longer, because an possessive race in a permanent competition in the market place demands quite the different value system and “morality” (disregard of a faire play and decent relationships with fellow-men, deception as an accepted norm of behaviour, as well as inconsistency of character for the pragmatic reason) so as to accumulate as quickly as possible the better position in economic or political field. The underlying values like: efficiency by all means, competition which may be based even on the immoral grounds,

prestige on the hierarchical ladder, money preference, are what matters in interpersonal behaviour.

Another problem which should be reassessed concerns the controversial concept of *globalisation* which favours a single model of “wild capitalism” as the only appropriate pattern for all societies, regardless the differences of social, political and cultural traditions, which imply distinctive needs and interests, while the former are being opposed to a proclaimed plurality of alternatives. However, the choice of the alternative ways of lives and behaviour would be made possible on the conditions that “Western-centrism” become transcended in order to open the door to inter-civilisational communication and give opportunities to all cultures to make impacts to one another and learn the lesson of tolerance in regards to diversities, by which plurality of cultural creations will be affirmed as real grounds of democracy. Such a message should be built-in the proper conception of post-modernity, as against both an inadequate model of globalisation and the nation-states’ isolation (the latter being based upon the nationalist concept of sovereignty).

The final message may read: it is not the politics and their representatives alone, but citizens as well who have to do a great effort to make use of the potentialities that post-modern world has offered, however being ignored and misused by the mainstream ideologies which have usurped the right to proclaim their own values as the “universal” patterns. It is necessary to revitalise the original concept of culture as a foundation of human existence, as opposed to the practice of its submission either to politics or economism. Which is the only possibility for escape from the threatening apocalypse that may be produced by the contamination of both the environment and culture, and result in the termination of humanity.

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**Zagorka Golubović**

## **Kultura u postmodernom dobu**

### **Njezina uloga u razvoju ljudskih mogućnosti**

#### **Sažetak**

*Predmet rasprave bit će antropološki pristup mjestu kulture u procesu humanizacije čovjeka: koje su dobrobiti razvoja modernoga doba i koji se problemi javljaju u postindustrijskoj i još uvijek tehnološkoj civilizaciji? Što se promijenilo s obzirom na fundamentalnu ulogu kulture u ljudskom svijetu: a) kad je kultura postala industrijski proizvod u smislu »masovne kulture«, i b) pod utjecajem postmodernog relativizma (koji marginalizira univerzalne vrijednosti i moralnost, umjesto da se fokusira na »preferencije« i narativni diskurs)? Posljedice tih promjena analizirat će se s gledišta supstancijalnih ljudskih mogućnosti kao što su kreativnost i imaginacija, osnove referenci koje se tiču smisla života, multidimenzionalna priroda strukture ljudskoga karaktera, sloboda ličnosti naspram vulgariziranog individualizma, itd. Postavlja se zaključno pitanje: je li kultura postala potčinjena ekonomizmu ili politici, umjesto da bude njihova osnova?*

#### **Ključne riječi**

Kultura, humanizacija, razvoj, ljudski potencijali, post-moderni svijet

**Zagorka Golubović**

## **Kultur im postmodernen Zeitalter**

### **Ihre Rolle bei der Entwicklung der menschlichen Potenziale**

#### **Zusammenfassung**

*Der Artikel erörtert den anthropologischen Ansatz bei der Erforschung der Rolle, die die Kultur im Humanisierungsprozess des Menschen spielt: Was sind die Vorteile des modernen Zeitalters, und welche Probleme melden sich in der postindustriellen und immer noch technologischen Zivilisation? Was hat sich im Hinblick auf die fundamentale Rolle der Kultur in der Welt des Menschen verändert, als: a) die Kultur zu einem Industrieerzeugnis im Sinne von „Massenkultur“ wurde; und b) sie unter den Einfluss des postmodernen Relativismus fiel (der universale Werte und Moralität marginalisiert, statt sich auf „Präferenzen“ und einen narrativen Diskurs zu fokussieren)? Die Verfasserin analysiert die Folgen dieses Wandel unter dem Gesichtspunkt substanzieller menschlicher Potenziale wie Kreativität und Imagination, den Lebenssinn betreffende Referenzgrundlagen, multidimensionale Struktur des menschlichen Charakters, Freiheit der Persönlichkeit im Gegensatz zum vulgarisierten Individualismus usw. Die abschließende Fragestellung lautet: Ist die Kultur hinter den Ökonomismus oder die Politik zurückgetreten, statt deren Grundlage zu sein?*

#### **Schlüsselbegriffe**

Kultur, Humanisierung, Entwicklung, menschliche Potenziale, postmoderne Welt

**Zagorka Golubović**

## **La culture dans le monde postmoderne**

### **Son rôle dans le développement du potentiel humain**

#### **Résumé**

*La discussion portera sur l'approche anthropologique de la place que la culture occupe dans le processus d'humanisation de l'homme : quels sont les bienfaits du développement du monde moderne et quels problèmes apparaissent au sein de la civilisation postmoderne, toujours technologique ? Qu'a-t-il changé à l'égard du rôle fondamental de la culture dans le monde humain : a) lorsque la culture est devenue un produit industriel en termes de « culture de masse » ; b) sous l'influence du relativisme postmoderne – qui marginalise les valeurs universelles et la moralité au lieu de se concentrer sur les « préférences » et le discours narratif ? Les conséquences de ces changements seront analysées du point de vue du potentiel essentiel de l'homme dont font partie la créativité et l'imagination, les références concernant le sens de la vie, le caractère multidimensionnel de la structure de la nature humaine, la liberté de la personnalité par opposition à l'individualisme banalisé etc. En conclusion, la question suivante est posée : la culture est-elle désormais soumise à l'économisme et à la politique au lieu d'être leur fondement ?*

#### **Mots-clés**

Culture, humanisation, développement, potentiel humain, monde post-moderne