

ACADEMIA ROMÂNĂ
Institutul de Studii Sud-Est Europene



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VIRGIL CÂNDEA

la 75 de ani

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EDITURA ACADEMIEI ROMÂNE



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Coordonator **PAUL H. STAHL**

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ROZA
VÂNTURILOR

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EAST-WEST IN THINKING

ALEXANDER FOL

(Sofia)

1. "East-West" are multivariuous euro-centric notions without real sense for the rest of the world. In China-Japan, for instance, France could be defined as "eastern coast-line of the Atlantic". As far as I know, this was the concept of the school-handbooks there in imperial times.

2. It will be superficial to try to find the origin of East-West opposition in Herodotus' description of Greeks and Barbarians during the Persian wars in the first half of 5th c. BC. This is so, not only because his term *barbaros*, used firstly in the Homeric etymological meaning of *people who speak in an incomprehensible way*, was related to the population of the four parts of the world around Greece, but because it was conceived in comparison with the victory of the free minority and the fall of the central-ruled majority. The last ideological point of view could represent a very tricky exercise for human rights' politicians in the second half of the 20th century.

3. Being born in Sofia, Bulgaria, I am interested in the reexamination of the consequences of the Church's Council in 343 AD. The Council had been summoned in Serdica (mod. Sofia), one of the unhappy choices of Constantine the Great to build his new capital city before his final decision on Byzantium (Constantinople, Istanbul). In Serdica, indeed, after a long discussion, the bishops of the Western lands of the Empire grouped up themselves under the supremacy of the Roman Pope. This start obtained its finish in 1054, when the schism between the Roman and the Byzantine Churches had been officially declared.

4. It could be accepted that East-West controversy goes back to different theological, dogmatical and liturgical interpretations of the Holy Christian Heritage, but this is not the case. The main reason results from the possibilities of two manners of Thinking on the tripartite interactions' model *Man-Polis/Ethnos-Cosmos*. Most of the modern authors call up these two types of Thinking: Aristotelian (for the West) and Platonic (for the East).

5. It is possible, of course, to demonstrate this statement with Greek, Latin and Arab written sources for the literary traditions of Plato and Aristotle in the Late Antiquity (for the two parts of the Roman Empire) and even in the Byzantine and Italian Renaissance. It is admissible to go further into the matter and to find explicit proofs of the Aristotelian *epistémê* ("to be over the things", *i.e.* to have knowledge for them) in the Cartesian and in the Kantian methods of Thinking, or to explain the roots of the Marxist ideology with Plato's "totalitarism", as K. Popper made this.

It will be really more convenient for my purpose to remain into this dual framework, but to move the discussion forwards.

6. My first step will be to introduce the ancient Greek and Byzantine term *paidéia*. Having its approximate translation in the Latin *cultura*, which is a Cicero's word in *cultura animi philosophia autem est* and which receives in the 18th century Herder's semantic in his famous opposition *Kultura-Natura*, *paideia* means much more than *teaching and education*, as it was interpreted in the classical work of Werner Jaeger. *Paideia* is adequate to *attitude* (and not to *behaviour!*), because of the content of relations/interactions to/with the Other/Others. *Paideia* depends not on ethnic origin or birth-places, but on the accepted principles of *diánoia* (pondering on), as Isocrates suggests in the 4th c. BC.

7. The next step must be the use of the text-contextual Whole. It is already known what *text* is not only from textology, but from many disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, art history and from methodologies such as structuralism and functionalism. For example, one protohistorical burial should be considered as *text* and its very discovery comes out only after its reading by the archaeologist. This would be a very fine example, if reality were not so depressing: all that remains after the excavation-destroying of the site and after the *reading at place* is another new text, written and published by the archaeologist himself. The original disappeared. But the original cannot disappear, if situated in the context. The contextual Thinking is decisive for the *paideia*-attitude of Man. Unfortunately, the contextual Thinking, as Edgar Morin says, is not appropriate for computer's civilization, because of the thinking in fragments.

8. The *paideia*-contextual Thinking contains multicoloured aspects, visions and spiritual levels. This guide of human attitude prefers ethic categories. But *ethics* cannot be generally defined. The unique possibility lies in Aristotle's metaphysical correlation Good-Evil, where both components are to be recognized only in their antithetical position. Thus, the ethics of *paideia* can be compared with the boat of the Intellect in the sea of contradictions, *i.e.* in the sea of contexts.

9. But the real problem consists perhaps in the question why we are crossing the sea. The probable answer could be that the destiny of the Human Being is to be in competition with the dangers of his own ethics. As said in ancient Greek terms, everybody has one's own *agón*, States and Peoples too.

Now I can make the third step and put in my summary the essential meaning of the agonistic context in History, which is formed by Time, not by different moral values, as politicians mean in order to justify themselves.

10. The *Agón* takes place in different kinds of Time. Time is linear (endless-Newtonian or Christian-apocalyptic) only in a textual Thinking system. On the contrary, Time is always structured in *paideia*-contextual Thinking, *i.e.* in the *Agón*. It will be useful to remember here some kinds of structured Time such as cyclic, mythological and doctrinal. If History could be conceived as *Agón* in a given Time against the dangers of the intellectual moral judgments, it would not

have an *end* – as unhappily was said today repeating Hegel, – it has always its Otherwise in Other Time.

11. East-West in Europe has been formulated and is still considered as negative-positive (low-high) balance between civilizations and cultures. European East-West in ideology and policy is roughly identified with authoritarian regimes and dictatorships in the Ural-direction and with liberty and democracy in the Atlantic-direction.

In the History-Agón there is nothing more wrong! That is why it will be useful to envisage the contrasts East-West in Thinking as interactions of different traditions in differently structured kinds of Time.

Can we find the methodology of East-West Thinking on paideia-interactions?