

DIALOGUE AMONG CULTURES OR CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS: On the Viewpoints of Samuel P. Huntington

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I.

1. At the Fifth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM 5) held in Hanoi, Vietnam on 8 and 9 October 2004, the heads of State and Government of 13 Asian and 25 European nations signed a declaration on dialogue among cultures and civilizations. It was claimed that “ASEM encompasses cultures and civilizations of both the East and the West” and “cultural diversity is the common heritage of humanity and a source of innovation, inspiration and an important driving force for economic progress and social development of human society. It provides a tremendous opportunity to build a more stable and peaceful world, because it calls not for exclusion, but for inclusion, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation” (1).

There is a very clear message in this declaration: cultural diversity does not lead to clash or confrontation but contributes to bring about harmony, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation. The so-called “clash of civilizations” in the context of recent turbulences of the world politics causes unintentionally (or perhaps intentionally) dangerous speculations. Now it is the right time for humanity to express its own decisive attitude towards the recent emerging mentality nourishing

discrimination, confrontation and clash among cultures and civilizations.

The similar idea but with a sharper form was expressed by Malaysian Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi, on the UN Conference on 27th September, 2004. He claimed that the Iraq War and Middle East tension have caused a “blind hostile” to Islam and asked for “the urgent need to stop sully the Islam world” and “It is the time to uncover the theory supporting the clash of civilizations” (2).

There is obvious reasonableness expressing in the concerns of Malaysia and 38 members of the ASEM 5. The flame of hostility was blown up after two years of the violent War in Iraq with a lot of brutality and inhumanity. What will happen to the future of humanity if the mankind cannot quickly to get rid of the mentality relating war with the differences in culture and civilization?

2. The view against the theory of the clash of civilizations and cultures as well as the way of thinking provoking discrimination leading to war is popular not only outside the USA: some of US political officials

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show their discontent with their government believing that the theory of the clash of civilizations is leading humanity to an uncertain future. After 22 years working for CIA an anonymous US official has written a book titled "Empires arrogance", in which he claims that humanity including all wise intellectuals, religious clergy, political elite and even top officials in the White House... are falling into a trap set by terrorism. War, hatred, discrimination... have been more and more intensified. And that is just what Bin Laden and Al Queda intend to (3). This is not quite exaggerated statement because a year earlier even Elie Wiesel, a famous Romanian American scientist, the holder of 1986 Nobel prize and victim of German Fascism, is in favor of the US decision to declare war in Iraq, saying "I believe this war is necessary" (4).

Unfortunately, that kind of scenario has been actualized despite the fact that the President George Bush has more than one time stated that "there never has been the clash of civilizations" (5,p.63-70) and even in his theory explicated in "The clash of civilizations", Samuel P. Huntington, fairly speaking, does not mean to provoke civilizations or cultures to go to confrontation.

Then the question is who is Samuel P. Huntington and what is the content of his theory that may contribute to the complication of the world politics ?

3. Samuel P. Huntington, Ph.D. Harvard University, 1951 is Albert J. Weatherhead III University Professor. and Chairman of the Harvard Academy of International and Area Studies. At Harvard he has served as director of the Center for International Affairs, chairman of the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies, and chairman of the Department of

Government (6).

4. Among the above-mentions works, "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order" is the most cited book and this very book made Huntington famous as well as contributes to lot of complicated speculations worldwide. The book was published in 1996 but its main idea was first explained in the article "the clash of civilizations" appeared in the journal "Foreign Affairs" in 1993 (7, p.22-28).

The book was translated into Vietnamese and published by The Labor Publishing House in 2003 under the title "Su va cham cua cac nen van minh". Prior to the publishing of the book the mentioned article has been translated in the form of the document of limited circulation. It means that a lot of Vietnamese readers has acquainted with Huntingtons ideas either in the English origin or in Vietnamese translation, therefore could appreciate the real value of the article before the happening of September 11th, 2001, which made Huntingtons idea "phenomenal". In Vietnamese version the term "clash" was deliberately translated as "va cham" (encounter) instead of "dung do" (clash) to avoid a negative impression among the readers. However, that cannot alter the content of the work. What Huntington intends to deliver to the readers is expressed clearly in "white paper and black ink".

5. In fact, the article did not attract lot of attention after its publication. Huntington was cognized in his simplifying and easy-to-understand way of addressing sensitive issues of cultures (see:10, 13, 17, 18) (we will discuss his main ideas later in the coming paragraphs). The key message of Huntingtons article aims probably to the positive aspects of the problem: to make people to be aware of cultural specificities

and differences in international relations and do not let these cultural specificities and differences lead to confrontation and war. But Huntington's warning causes a lot of concerns by relating cultural differences with war and the future of humankind.

And the reaction to the article made Huntington to detail his point of view in the book form in 1996, in which he softened the way of addressing his idea but the content of his idea unchanged and even harsher in the chapter when he writes on Islam. Some people are suspicious why Huntington can have much impact on politicians and diplomats, whether he intentionally directs humankind to the course of someone's false prejudice? However, there exists also other view suggesting that Huntington is sincere in his view: the lack of understanding among different civilizations and cultures can serve as a true cause of confrontation and war.

II.

1. Huntington claims at the very beginning of his article "The clash of civilizations" that since the end of the Cold War, the fundamental source of conflict in this world will not be ideological or economic. The most important line dividing humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. "The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future" (7).

According to Huntington, prior to the French Revolution in 1789 conflicts by nature had been among the governing emperors. Then there had been a conflict between nations since 1789 to the end of the World War One. After the Russian Revolution through the Cold War era the conflict of nation had been replaced by the conflict of ideologies. The world conflict between the Western and Non-Western civilizations started when the Cold War had

been ended.

Huntington's division of the world history seems to be too simple. Some scholars criticize this vision as arbitrary because of the omission of all complicity and richness of the world history (10, 17). However, it is ironical that many Huntington's readers accept his classification of the world history.

A civilization, as Huntington claims, "is thus the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species. It is defined both by common objective elements, such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions, and by the subjective self-identification of people..." According to Huntington, for example, Westerners, Chinese or Arabs are not parts of any broader cultural entity. They are themselves civilizations. The next level is that of between human and animal. Huntington defines that there exist seven or eight major civilizations: Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Slavic-Orthodox, Hindu, Latin American and possibly African. The most important conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines separating these civilizations from one another (7).

In our view, this is a new definition of *civilization*: nobody else had viewed civilization the way Huntington does. Of course, Huntington preserves the right to invent his own working definition. However, it is unfortunate that, since the emergence of his article in 1993, when it comes to civilization people have to distinguish Huntington's definition with that of existing in dictionaries. Huntington's definition, in fact, is a definition of culture biggest human cultures.

3. Huntington maps out 6 following reasons why the clash of civilizations is inevitable:

First, the differences among civilizations are not only real but also basic. *Second*, the world is becoming a smaller place to cause intensification of the consciousness of differences as well as commonalities within civilizations. *Third*, the process of economic modernization and social change throughout are people from longstanding local identities and, as the same time, weaken the role of nation state. This kind of gap has been filled by religion. *Fourth*, the civilization self-consciousness of the elite in many non-Western countries has been promoted, despite being educated in Western environments they tend to turn toward their own cultural sources. *Fifth*, cultural differences are less mutable than political and economic ones. Even more than ethnicity, religion discriminates sharply and exclusively among people. *Sixth*, economic regionalism is increasing. With the end of the Cold War, cultural commonalities overcome ideological differences. The mainland China and Taiwan are moving closer together (7).

All Huntington can do in this article is to state imposingly these points without giving any evidence to support them. Then he concludes "The clash of civilizations thus occurs at two levels. At the micro-level, adjacent groups along the fault lines between civilizations struggle, often violently, over the control of territory and each other. At the macro-level, states from different civilizations compete for relative military and economic power, struggle over the control of international institutions and third parties, and competitively promote their particular political and religious values" (7)

In response to the criticism that he failed to

point out the cause of civilization confrontation, Huntington states that he reserves a separate part in his article to discuss why the clash of civilizations is inevitable. However, in that section he just infers imposingly some claims relating to the six above-mentioned reasons. For example, when Huntington claims that "Even more than ethnicity, religion discriminates sharply and exclusively among people", he does not indicate why nations with different identities, due to religious reasons, face lot of difficulties in sharing their interests. The same logic is visibly in all occasions, especially in the domain of economy.

4. Huntington points out the lines between civilizations: 1/ between Western Christianity, on the one hand, and Orthodox Christianity and Islam, on the other hand. 2/ between Western civilizations and Islam. 3/ between Islam and Hindu in the Indian subcontinent. 4/ between the USA and China. 5/ between Japan and the United States. 6/ between the USA and Europe: despite serious economic and cultural disagreements, the differences between American culture and European culture are much less than those between American civilization and Japanese civilization.

Huntington comes to conclusion "Islam has bloody borders... In the coming years, the local conflicts most likely to escalate into major wars will be those, as in Bosnia and the Caucasus, along the fault lines between civilizations. The next world war, if there is one, will be a war between civilizations" (7).

That was what Huntington wrote in 1993. He himself admitted, three years latter, that among his claims the above-mentioned conclusion is a target of biggest criticism he received. However, he not only maintains that "Islam has bloody borders"

but also adds “.. the same situation is within the territory of Islam world” (9, tr.377). When he wrote this sentence, Huntington could not imagine yet such a dramatic situation he himself and the world encountered in the beginning of the 21st century: the attack on the Manhattan twin-tower and then new wars. Of course, there has not come yet other World War but the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were initiated by the American as “holy wars” (*). Apparently, until this moment (2005), the so-called American value has been buried in Iraq.

5. The progressive parts of the mankind are striving to prevent a new world war, which would happen the way Huntington imagines. Their foremost concern is to bring peace and stability back to Iraq. Probably, Huntington shares this concern because in one of his articles he criticizes directly the attitude of the US governing body. Then what is wrong with Huntington idea?

Many scholars from Russia, China, Taiwan, Europe and the West have indicated the irrational points and negative stand in Huntington's understanding. However, some people in America and even in other countries not only ignore that criticism but also take the September 11th event as a prove of Huntingtons “prediction” (14, 10, 17, 18, 20). In a international conference “globalization and the dialogue among cultures” held in Moscow June 2002, Williams L. McBryde, an American professor from the University of Perdy and member of the governing board of the Federation of International Philosophical Societies (FISP) criticized the way Huntington perceives the world as “vulgar and less sensitive”. McBryde says that “it is regretful that Huntington, a

thinker in a bad sense of the word, as people say, is able to exert such a big impact on the way of thinking of the diplomats and people participating in global interactions. His work is a typical example of the attraction of the mediocre way of thinking, which seems to be bright at the surface” (13, p.82). In Vietnam, apart from popular views appeared in mass media, almost nothing relating to Huntington ideas has been officially heard from scholars or socio-political commentators. Why? Probably, in our view, the Vietnamese scholars do not like or have no habit to discuss in a negative manner with foreign scholars, despite the fact that, in Huntington case, his positive and negative points are clearly exposed to many people.

III.

As an author of the book that reader is holding in his hand, within the context of the discussion on culture and civilization, we feel that we cannot ignore the Huntingtons issue. What we would like to do in the following part is to express our view, which is limited by our specialized research area the philosophy of values. All that do not belong to that domain will be given to authorized experts in other disciplines.

1. What is the most discussable in Huntington's works, in our view, is his world outlook. It is difficult to accept his following points:

While looking at the living and diverse picture of cultures in the present world, Huntington pays too much attention to differences and contradictions, exaggerates their negative roles and significances. He ignores or intends to omit other values of culture and civilization.

Nobody can deny the existence of differences, particularities and contradictions in various types of world cultures. That is the way culture has been

* This term was used by the US President in 2002 and he has been heavily criticized thereafter.

in the past and today. The differences and particularities are the differences in values therefore, in many cases, we cannot point out clearly which cultural features are better or more mature. The value systems of Christianity, Slavic-Orthodox, or Protestant... in general, are equal with value systems of Confucianism, Islam or Buddhism... What is sacred in a cultural community may not be so valued in other cultural community but it must be treated in same status and level with what is sacred in that culture. That has been normal attitude to cultural values since the ancient time (and indeed, it is an attraction in tourist industry). It means that cultural differences absolutely do not lead to discrimination, confrontation or contradiction. Culture has its own logic, which is more fundamental, universal and necessary (even the most sinful militant plots have relied to its humanistic face to disguise their true intentions). The logic of culture is expressed in *Pluralism, Dialogue, Acculturation* and *Tolerance*. This is the very key way to develop cultures and civilizations of humanity. There is no need to put again this point here because the great thinkers of the past like Herder, Rousseau, Kant and Max... as well of scholars of the XX and XXI like J. Nehru, Teilhard de Chardin, J. Sartre, J. Habermas... have expressed it very beautifully and convincingly. Having relied on the logic of compromise, acceptance, harmony and mutual learning, human cultures have over come all the brutalities of wars and hatreds to maintain its uninterrupted current from Ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome through Renaissance, Enlightenment and Modernism. Such is a logic of culture not because human nature is good or humane (there exist some theories denying the humane nature of human

nature). In a word, Chinese cake, Vietnamese rice noodle, and German hamburger... are not the source of confrontation; and it is difficult to say which food is better. Confrontations among people do not arise in the foods they consume. *Culture is not a driving force of discrimination. It is a driving force of friendship and tolerance.*

However, Huntington has other idea. He interprets cultural differences as a source of confrontation and war in the following way: in the past the key question was "which side or nation do you belong to?" but nowadays the question is "what are you?" or "are you Islam, Catholic or Buddhist?". People can choose sides. The national identity can also be changed because people can have two or three citizenships. But people cannot change what they are and this is the source of tragedy. Perhaps it better to quote directly from Huntingtons work. He wrote his 1993s article "In the former Soviet Union, communists can become democrats, the rich can become poor and the poor rich, but Russians cannot become Estonians and Azeris cannot become Armenians. In class and ideological conflicts, the key question was "Which side are you on?" and people could and did choose sides and change sides. In conflicts between civilizations, the question is "What are you?" That is a given that cannot be changed. And as we know, from Bosnia to the Caucasus to the Sudan, the wrong answer to that question can mean a bullet in the head. Even more than ethnicity, religion discriminates sharply and exclusively among people. A person can be half-French and half-Arab and simultaneously even a citizen of two countries. It is more difficult to be half-Catholic and half-Muslim" (7). For your convenience to compare Huntington's ideas, we will have one more quotation, in which Huntington expresses the same idea

three years later “Peoples and nations are attempting to answer the most basic question humans can face: Who are we? And they are answering that question in the traditional way human beings have answered it, by reference to the things that mean most to them. People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations, and, at the broadest level, civilizations. People use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity. We know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know whom we are against (8).

We will not discuss more what Huntington wrote because what is right or wrong has been revealed clearly in paper. Actually, Huntington's style of writing makes people feel that what he writes seems right and is closer to what is true, but is not quite right. However, the problem is how to reveal Huntington's world outlook hidden behind his words. His world of view is so unemotional that all kinds of conclusion or orientation drawn from it can contain implicit threats. Inferences from what he writes, which is even completely right, lead to something unsafe. It is clear that the starting premises of all of his inferences are problematic from the very beginning: this world is differentiated by cultures, and “the great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural”; and differences among cultures are basic, absolute and uncompromising.

We are not in favor of the habit of avoiding to face the truth. The fact that particularities, differences have led people to confrontation and discrimination in culture and civilization has really existed as a familiar threat since the early time in the history of mankind. This fact is not a

kind of sole truth as Huntington imagines, but only one of thousands existing truths in cultural life. The fundamental features of culture have been *dialogue*, *harmony*, *solidarity* and *friendship* built up on the values of The True-The Good-The Beautiful, but *discrimination*, *confrontation* and *hatred*. And those are not bragging words or products of imagination. As we all know that since the ancient time, the Truth has been always a driving force for all kinds of dialogue and interaction; it has been so obvious that it has been mentioned repeatedly and convincingly almost in all the textbooks on culture.

Huntington believes that “Communists can become democrats, the rich can become poor and the poor rich, but Russians cannot become Estonians and Azeris cannot become Armenians”. And “*We know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know whom we are against*”. With those bold and italic words, we want to say that Huntington's analysis is very malicious. It irritates man's psychology of envy with provoking words. If everyone participating in modern dialogue keep thinking the way Huntington does: always tend to discriminate who they are whether Islamic, Catholic or Confucian..., against whom they are...then the envy will on the rise and, as a result, confrontation and hatred will prevail.

It is so dangerous when such kind of thinking is dominant among top governing politicians and leading commentators of international affairs.

4. Huntington relates, based on the above-mentioned premises, cultural differences and particularities to wars. In his view, the conflict of ideology had lasted from the Russian Revolution in 1917 to the end of the Cold War. During that time all the wars had been the wars among ideologies. And from now on, Huntington writes in his book “In this new world the most

pervasive, important, and dangerous conflicts will not be between social classes, rich and poor, or other economically defined groups, but between peoples belonging to different cultural entities... In this new world, local politics is the politics of ethnicity; global politics is the politics of civilizations. The rivalry of the superpowers is replaced by the clash of civilizations” (8).

A quick reflection would reveal that it is difficult to accept Huntington's idea that all the wars happening in the 20th century were the wars among ideologies. The World War Two was a vital confrontation between Fascism, on the one hand, and the Soviet Union and allies, on the other hand. It was the war for peace and social progress (we cannot characterize the war more exactly without using those terms). The Vietnam War - both periods from 1946 to 1954 and from 1954 to 1975- has been, first and foremost, a war for national liberation by its true nature. It was the very reason why people around the world had faith in Vietnam and stood on its side. (Of course, the ideological character of the Vietnam War was more obvious than that of other wars in the 20th century but it was far from being an ideological confrontation (12) (*). The Cambodian War during the period of 1975 - 1979 was a genocide committed by Polpots an extreme political power under the cloak of communism. The war in Afghanistan (1974-1990) was a fight for power with the interference of foreign elements (recently the US reveals that their interference in the war was not less nor indirect than that the USSR). The 1974s

war in Malvinas (Falkland) was a battle for territory between England and Argentina... Despite the fact that the element of ideology influenced, manipulated or attempted to engage in order to claim its role in the wars, all of them were not ideological confrontations between communism and capitalism.

And in this present “new modern world” (Huntington's term), since the 90s of the last century when the specter of the Cold War faded away, have all the wars in former Yugoslavia, Nagorny-Karabak (between Azerbaijan and Armenia), North Kavkas, Chechnya, Kashmir (between India and Pakistan), or Iraq (both in 1991 and 2003) etc... been “the wars among civilizations”, the wars “among nations belonging to different cultural entities” as Huntington writes? It is so difficult not only for politicians but also for ordinary people to realize what people have fought for there in those wars. Ethnic purge and discrimination against Islam have been really committed but not due to cultural reason.

In addition, the use of cause-effect analysis to find the true cause of a war is much more different from a simple perception of it. As usual, there exist many reasons behind any war: direct or indirect reasons as well as something like reasons but not quite reasons (conditions, causes...). In his speech on terrorism in an Asian-Pacific Conference (Kuala Lumpur, January 13, 2003), the former Premier of Malaysia claims frankly that religion is surely not the motive behind terrorism; territorial expansion may be its cause. The current situation in the world is not too bad but the world mismanages it (11). Scholars of military history are always cautious in their works. However, Huntington's case would be an exception in this discipline, should he

* Both Robert McNamara, the former US Secretary of Defense during the Vietnam War and Colin Powell, the former US Secretary of State – soldier participating the Vietnam War, acknowledge that the Americans underestimated the national elements in the Vietnam War

be qualified as an authorized scholar of it?.

In deed, W. McBryde is right in his statement that wise and altruistic thinkers, in the era of globalization, have not raise their voice due to their modesty. Person like Habermas (*), whose voice can influence the world, is idealistic to such an extent that he proposes a kind of ethics, which is impossible to be realized as well as transcends far beyond the real world to an abstract one" (15). Therefore, "vulgar" theories are given opportunities to come into existence.

IV.

1. Finally, what we would like to discuss is Huntington's world outlook. In his book published in 1996, Huntington discloses unintentionally the value determining the whole his way of thinking. Huntington prefers to use that value in German language *Weltanschauung*, which means world view on civilization, cosmos and human relations. According to Huntington, the central theme of his 1996 book is that culture and cultural identities, which at the broadest level are civilization identities, are shaping the patterns of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict in the post-Cold War world. "There can be no true friends without true enemies. Unless we hate what we are not, we cannot love what we are. These are the old truths we are painfully rediscovering after a century and more of sentimental cant". The unfortunate truth in these old truths cannot be ignored by statesmen and scholars. For peoples seeking identity and reinventing ethnicity, enemies are essential, and the potentially most dangerous enmities occur across the

fault lines between the world's major civilizations (8).

We feel worried about the fact that Huntington quotes enthusiastically Michel Dibdin and considers Dibdins idea as a guiding world outlook for his whole theory of world politics. "There can be no true friends without true enemies. Unless we hate what we are not, we cannot love what we are..." It is difficult to believe that it is the way humankind behaves. Concrete Individual human beings may behave like that; even it is possible some politicians may do so due to their extreme way of thinking. But how can nations and whole humankind be so unwise?. It is incredible if the clash of civilizations starts from that point. (who can affirm that the terrorists attacking the USA on September 11, 2001 have not yet read Huntington's work?)

2. Sir Bertrand Russell (*), a great man and tireless fighter for freedom of humanity, has the following idea about fanaticism (which he is quite familiar with through his experience against unjust militant initiators in all big wars of the last century): "A person is fanatic when he consider something as extremely important, much more important than anything else. Every honest man disparages the cruelty to dog but you are fanatic if you think the cruelty to dog is the most cruel attitude in the world... for example, anti-Zionism: this case is very terrible, so terrible that people cannot stand the thought of it. Unfortunately, I know that what I am going to say should not be spoken out, or at least it is not the thing nobody wants to hear:

* J. Habermas (1919-), a famous German philosopher, the author of many works on philosophy, psychology, sociology.

* Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), the holder of *Ordre de Merite*, he criticized strongly the US Government when the Americans dropped two atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. He was also against the Vietnam War: together with J.P. Sartre Russell established an international tribunal to judge the US war crimes in Vietnam.

anti-Zionism and Christianity have occurred at the same time. Anti-Zionism has been created by the power in Rome since the day when that power has transferred to Christianity. It has been said that the Jew killed the Christ, and that has been the reason for hatred. Indeed, the reason was surely economical. But people have produced that kind of reason" (16, p.149-150). With that quotation from B. Russell we here would like to recall to the idea considering the lines among cultures as sources of confrontation and war. In Russells way of expression, perhaps all honest men on the Earth disagree with the discriminating attitude toward cultural differences, though people may dislike some particularities of other cultures, dislike something unfamiliar and be fond of something familiar to them (Michel Dibdin). However, only Michel Dibdin and Samuel Huntington or fists of all, two of them see cultural differences as sources of all clashes, basic reasons of wars. It is not a kind of reference but, as we just mentioned early, it is what Huntington himself has acknowledged.

3. It is easy to find out that there are not so many people like Huntington in the world. The majority of culturologists claims to the contrary: thanks to dialogue but confrontation human society achieves its progress. Even in the case when confrontation occurs all the best people can get are the outcomes of dialogue, learning and tolerance.

Blaga Dimitrova, a former vice-president of Bulgaria and a writer who had been to Vietnam during the most arduous days of the war (she also the author of a famous book "The last judgment day" which has been translated into more than 20 foreign languages), has revealed a very interesting metaphor on cultural dialogue in Vietnam

and Bulgaria. She found that in the past, Ottoman Empire invaded Bulgaria and French colonists brought soldiers and lethal weapons to Vietnam. There were so many and tragic events to be remembered and so much hatred. But human conscious does not go this way. There still exist historical lesions. But the mentality of the after-war generation has gotten rid of hatred naturally. The Bulgarian and the Vietnamese behave toward the Turkish and French like the representative of cultures in dialogue and interaction. In Vietnam coffee-addicts prefer drink coffee the way the French do and Bulgarian coffee-addicts like to drink coffee in the cloth-packaged bag of Turkish style. Blaga points out that the style of coffee drinking is at least something positive that Turkish invaders and French colonists contributed to those two nations" (19, p.248).

Of course, probably Blaga Dimitrova exaggerates that point. But through the eyes of a writer, that kind of exaggeration is not a pure fiction. What she experienced belongs to the spirit of the dialogue among cultures.

People, since the past centuries, have believed that social life has its own rules therefore regardless of fanatic theories and inhuman acts, society has kept moving ahead, toward more rational, progressive and humane directions though humanity has faced amoral-like or cruel-like situations in this way. Social progress is a journey full of twists and turns. It is not always even or smooth. We have to accept that, in the modern world, what is rational may also suffer from a loss, the values of The Truth-The Good-The beautiful can also be treated unequally. In the complicated struggle between the Good and the Evil, the Human and the Inhuman,

hatred and tolerance, fanatic violence and altruism... society, in its objective tendency, keeps following the logic of dialogue among cultures but not misleads by the malicious traps of discriminations among civilizations. At the moment, human society may suffers from backward steps, even today the representative forces of social progress may be misunderstood or failed. Fortunately, social progress is a reality and the more human beings move toward future the more they will feel that they have to overcome the past regardless of its attraction.

The dialogue among cultures is the best method humanity can choose. It is an objective law of sustainable development.

Dialogue among cultures is a safe determining value for social progress.

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