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Global Challenges, Culture and Development

Abstract: This paper examines the comparative suitability of Chinese and Western European philosophies of power vis-à-vis globalization. The Author argues that the patent feebleness of the modern European state represents the demise of the post-Enlightenment model of power, one based on uniform, hierarchically organized standards of formal rationality—and she contrasts this with China’s pursuit of steerability as based upon a stratified system of logics that deliberately hearkens to divergent standards of rationality. The Author proposes that to govern in the era of globalization means not to sniff out irrationalities as within the Enlightenment formula, but to build institutional and mental bridges between a system’s differing rationalities and topographies at both the micro and macro levels. She also offers an analysis of Russia’s ongoing radical pursuit of the Enlightenment paradigm, and notes that the weakly “theoretized,” flexible practice of the English world’s utilitarianism and pragmatism can be treated as a suitable option for a globalized world—an option deprived, however, of the intellectual seductiveness of the Asian philosophy of power. In the later case, the epistemology rather than axiology is a decisive dimension.

Keywords: meta-regulation; ontologization of time; asymmetry of rationalities; structural violence; steerability; network-state

Culture is something I treat here as a society’s capability, as elaborated over the centuries, to manipulate itself. This is served by each culture’s particular norms, values, myths, and—what in my opinion is most of essence—by a given culture’s cognitive directives, along with its structures of reasoning and their standards of rationality.

In generally comparing the civilizational realms of Western Europe and East Asia today, four properties seem of marked significance from the perspective of the wish to confront the developmental dilemmas borne by globalization:

- 1) their divergent ways of apperceiving the phenomenon of time, with its unique ontologization in the cultures of Asia. This aptitude protects against the asymmetry of rationalities mentioned in this article;
- 2) the fact of the two realms’ gravitation either toward the concept of a universal rationality, as in the West (where each subsequent form is treated as something better, more “progressive”), or, as in Asia, toward a relativizing of the meaning (i.e., rationality) of a given form, institution, or undertaking in terms of its specific space-time, and from whose perspective said form or institution is evaluated. What is emphasized here is a rationality that is merely “internal” (i.e., concerns a given place and moment) and waxes or wanes with the flow of time in response to changes upon its scale of action. This is an attitude that helps the countries of

that civilization manipulate the process of selecting institutions and procedures that correspond to their developmental level in the course of their entering into global structures;

- 3) the predominant interest in using knowledge and in instrumental rationality (the West) or, as in Asia, the interest in the sheer generation of knowledge. In that latter case, the “production” of knowledge is treated as a value in and of itself, and—what is more—as an essential element of a subject’s becoming. For in Asia epistemology (as the science of cognition) is selfsame with ontology (the science of being). The consequence of such a mindset is that of the pressure upon projecting and universalizing in time the inculcation of patterns of reasoning based on multi-value logic (e.g., paradox or antinomy) and considered to be the most effective from the perspective of creating new knowledge (Collins 1998). This is accompanied by the formulation of cultural imperatives, ones that are also tied to the production of knowledge, if only to mention the demand for ceaseless perfecting or the concept of the subject as the product of a complex thought-path. At issue here is crossing the thresholds of double negation, the rejection of categories of “difference,” and the hearkening (from a position of defining one’s own identity) to new, still not fully objectified thought categories. The steady discovering of one’s own “suchness” requires both recognition of one’s unique principle (potential) and—what is also unique for each individual—the relation between the two planes of its existence, i.e., “internal time” (that is, the degree of said principle’s development in time and in its accessible space) and “external time” (that is, the “maturity” of the structure of relations within which the individual operates). Here I am thinking of the level of advancement of that structure’s development within its accessible space-time. One portion of the socialization process is to discern the relativity (and uniqueness) of one’s own point of view. This presents the conclusion that in order to solve problems, they must be examined from a variety of perspectives. Thus, “others” (other societies) are necessary first and foremost as elements of the structure for producing knowledge and for exceeding one’s own limitations. This does not concern merely the building of network structures that allow—through interactions—the acquisition of knowledge available only in the framework of a cognitive perspective different than one’s own. Essential to Asian culture is the habit of thought-reconstruction of the whole via a processual approach to problems. This stipulates the treatment of each phenomenon as an instance of “becoming,” not “being.” Making avail of the tools of multi-value logic (antinomy, paradox) compels one to raise the level of generality in the course of resolving a problem, and to pay heed to the role of sequencing, manageability, and the internal rationality (principles, *li*) of a given space-time. Today, when the production of knowledge (and the administration of knowledge) seems the main theater of innovation, the cultural epistemology of Asia provides Asia with a clear advantage;
- 4) the two civilizations’ divergent emphases on structural thinking. In the cultures of Asia such emphasis is much stronger and, moreover, is augmented with a meta-structural approach, which is to say with an analysis of relations between structures and research into the transformation of structures, including the effects of layering

(inducting) one structure (plane) within another and the nature of the presence of the “old” structure in the “new” as arises from the old’s transformation.

There do exist cultures—notably, Western culture—that serve to confirm certainties, just as there are cultures—notably, Chinese culture—that have generated ways of reasoning that confirm doubtfulness. Constructs so central to the paradigm of Western culture as the syllogism, the principle of an exclusive center, and truth based on evidence serve the former. To speak merely about a “tendency” and not the “truth;” to relativize meaning in terms of space and time; to avail oneself of both antinomy (not—as in the West—contradiction) and a fragile and changeable identity constructed over a lengthy thought-process—this describes a pattern of reasoning that teaches skepticism. For example, antinomy inoculates against extreme judgements. When A is not B, not-A by no means signifies B. When we are rich, we are not poor. But when we are not rich, this does not mean that we are poor: perhaps we are of middling station.¹

Whereas time in Western culture is simply a conventional measure, a background to events, in China time is a conveyor of “becoming” that gradual extracts a thing’s successive aspects. The development of *li*—a thing’s internal potential (principle)—demands time to fully pervade its possible space (Larre 1988). Time is treated as identical with being, as it is necessarily bound up with being.²

Finally, the subject—which in our culture is the point of departure, but which in Asia is the destination point.³ Within Taoism and Zen the individual becomes a subject only after having passed in imagination down a long road involved with “forgetting oneself” as understood through comparison with others by means of objectified intersubjective categories. The starting-point temporality of the subject facilitates the compulsion of a thought-transcendence of the individual point of view, something that is so characteristic for Chinese culture. This is served by the formula of the paradox, which—together with antinomy—entails the basis of tri-value logic. And paradox is a combination of tasks that are seemingly contradictory. This contradictoriness disappears, however, when one comes to perceive the processual character of a described event or happening, something which then transforms ostensible synchrony into diachrony, and also changes the point and level of observation. Paradox compels one to see phenomena as a whole and to appreciate the import of time—for only then can it be addressed.

In Asian culture causality is not thought of in a linear way, as is the case in the Western world. “Change” is a complex process of transforming one structure into another (Wu Jie 1996). “Balance” is spoken of in the plural in Asia, where there are many levels of balance, although only the one that is close to the full utilization of its potential is “harmony.” The phenomenon that I call in this book the “asymmetry of rationalities” would be defined by the Chinese as the “firing” of one structure

¹ For a pioneering work on this topic see: J. Chmielewski, 1964. The theses of that paper were expanded in: C. Harbsmeier, 1998.

² Such an understanding of time was recreated by J. Stambaugh (1990) in his reconstruction of the thought of Dogen, the Japanese Zen master of the 13th century.

³ Cf. the concept of the subject in: N. Kitaro, 1987.

into another, whereby the developmental opportunities for the weaker structure's *li* (principle, logic) are destroyed.⁴ They would also forecast inevitable chaos, disorganization, and non-steerability. The concept of "structural violence" that was introduced into modern sociology by Johan Galtung (1971) is a perhaps unconscious extrapolation of traditional Chinese analyses of the effects of interference with the free development of the "principle" (*li*) that is proper to a structure subjected to the pressure of another structure. Galtung also sees structural violence in the exertion of such influence (pressure) on the shape of a structure and the developmental path of a given system, and that the resultant development is worse (from a goal-oriented perspective) than would be the case with given material resources and without such intervention. Indeed, structural violence represents an extreme form of structural power. The latter realizes the interests of X via modification of the structure of Y, and thereby influences the set of goals that Y realizes. The asymmetry of rationality (i.e., global logic's vector of power over semi-peripheries) is none other than just such a structure. The conception of freedom espoused by Martin Heidegger (who was under the strong influence of the conception of time espoused in Asia) is connected with the development of a given principle in its available space-time (Parkes 1987). This concerns development that is unimpeded and utilizes the full potential of said principle (Heidegger 1927; Stambaugh 1984).

The above highlighted features of culture that have grown from the Buddhist school of "pure consciousness," Taoism, and Zen, namely: the "ontologization of time" (which makes time an indispensable element of becoming); the relativization of the meaning (rationality) of undertakings, procedures, institutions with regard to their moment in time and their location in space; the elimination of thinking hinged upon the category of "difference" as an indispensable moment of a subject's formation—these are features that provide an inestimable store of cultural capital in today's conditions of globalization. The thought-tools here are antinomy and paradox, which belong to the basic elements of multi-value logic. Antinomy not only focuses attention on intermediary stations, but also extracts the gradual permeation of contradictions that proceeds with the flow of time. Paradox, in turn, teaches structural thinking and compels an appreciation of the factor of time and the proper sequence of steps.

These faculties of thinking not only allow the countries of today's East Asia to consciously counteract the asymmetry of rationalities, but they also provide two other outcomes that are of exigency in maintaining steerability within the conditions of globalization. Most important is that they instill structural thinking. In East-Asian culture the image of a situation (system) is conceived from a bird's-eye view, the aim being to incorporate the perspectives of many individuals at once.⁵ The individual is forced (at the level of structures of reasoning) to analyze situations from various points of view. This is fostered by the discursive method of education and the solving of paradoxes as the basic intellectual exercise. Moreover, the traditional Chinese school of the legalists consciously strove to inculcate that country's subjects with the

⁴ Such a grasp closely resembles the modern theory of chaos. See, M. C. Taylor 2001.

⁵ J. Needham (1954) in his analysis of this phenomenon, drew attention to the absence of perspective in Chinese painting, connecting this with the rejection of the singular point of view.

faculty of empathy.⁶ This is why laws were ordered not to be published (though their infringement was penalized), the aim being to compel people to intuitively grasp the intention of the legislature and view given situations from its point of view. A consequence of structural thinking is the faculty for meta-regulation (that is, the regulation of rules). In the conditions of globalization, which has been introducing into the system—as well as into network states and economies—various logics and standards of rationality, this is a capability that enables the maintenance of steerability.

Another advantage that arises from this holistic approach is that of the capability of viewing the process of changes (including the postcommunist world's transformation) as the motion of one structure into another—and not (as in Western culture) as a linear process of advancing from point A to point B.

Asia's unique cultural resources help us perceive that balance can adopt various configurations (for instance, various institutional forms) that—to a greater or lesser degree—are conducive to the utilization of resources and to development. This approach also facilitates perception of the positive sides of the lack of balance (Wu Jie 1996). For imbalance forces self-organization (that is, innovative, nonlinear interactions) and the push to overcome inertia in order to better take advantage of available energy. This is but one step from effective strategies vis-à-vis globalization, ones that (as in the case of China's entrance into the WTO) are based upon deliberately upsetting the system's balance (recognized as balance on too low a level). This was carried out through having violated the hitherto binding principle of regulation (i.e., the segmentation of markets conjoined with an administrative definition of the relations between segments), precisely in the hope of triggering creative self-organization (Wu Jie 1996). Such a strategy, hinged upon solving deliberately created tensions (e.g., the violation of balance) by opening hitherto isolated markets (in order to compel their self-organization and “produce” new knowledge), fundamentally differs from the strategy of institutionalization applied in Central Europe. For here institutionalization was mainly hinged upon mechanical, formal integration with a market having a different developmental level, and at the cost of real integration and the region's own set of objectives. This “creationism” was accompanied by an ahistoricism that refused to heed the meaning of sequences in time. In China the upsetting of balance occurred before the former system of relations exhausted its potential and reserves. This was to enable the country to trigger a self-organization that would seek a new level of balance. It was also—in the event of failure in that search—to enable a return to the former level.

Sensitivity to the problematics of time (as something characteristic of the cultural context here described), more than being conducive to concentrating on an appropriate sequence of steps, suggesting *wu wei* (non-action) before a given structure exhausts the potential associated with its specific principle (Ames 1994), also calls attention to differing species of time, ones that require a divergent experiential mode (Larre 1988). Certain of Chinese culture's classic paradoxes are to assist in making us aware of the plurality of “times.” This distinction exists at the linguistic

⁶ This is the position of the Legalists as pronounced by its leading representative, Han Fei Tzu 1964.

level, where we find *li-shy* (historical time, that is, the development of the principle *li* in the time *shy*). Furthermore there is artificial time, the time of ritual (also defined as the “imperial calendar,” as the emperor was the guardian of ritual). In other words, this entails “the time that allows one to act in accord with the apparent movement of the sun—*shy-li*—for time, rhythm, and sequence impose the ritual principle. This is associated with the classic conception of the ritual-state treated as a catalyst in the thought-process of eliminating difference. Today, in the era of globalization, when structural violence (i.e., the asymmetry of rationalities) violates the free development of a given principle and mixes differing historical times, the distinction between species of time allows us to apprehend this process on the linguistic level. Moreover, the appearance of artificial links (ones that do not result from the nature of a process)—e.g., reference points, or ersatz catalysts of order in spheres that are not connected with the development of a given system (for instance, in the fluctuations of the largest stock markets)—introduces the rhythm (time) of another system and another principle that artificially draws a given process to the phase of the cycle proper to that other space-time. Chinese thinking and language allow us to grasp and express this process whereby the parameters within which a system functions become artificial. A “foreign” principle violates “natural space-time.” Only in Asian civilization can one formulate and solve the paradox, “time destroys time and accelerates it.” That saying refers to the above-mentioned classical concept of the subject in which ritual (with its artificial time) accelerates the elimination of thinking via the use of the category of difference and compels the forgetting of oneself as earlier conceived in a relational context. The time of ritual therefore eliminates (destroys) the time before negation, that is, from before the rejection of the concept of difference, and accelerates the time of nearing to the knowledge of one’s own principle.

This dialectic of “naturalness” and “artificiality” as described on the level of experiencing time enables a more subtle perception than does Western culture of the overlapping of differing times (and, in relation to this, the differing rationalities of specific aspects of the global process). It also facilitates steerability.

I am convinced that Chinese intellectual tradition represents a sound starting point for investigations into the character of power in the 21st century. For it extracts aspects of the phenomenon of power that are not present in European thinking. In the manifold intellectual history of China attention was drawn to many conditions for steerability and wielding power that were overlooked in our tradition and which—in my view—have now become very timely. If we permit ourselves to simplify matters in the extreme, whether because of the lack of space or, as in all likelihood, lack of competence (inasmuch as the problem requires years of study), then what is most at issue is the art of meta-regulation, i.e., the regulation of rules. In other words, I refer to the art of building institutional and mental bridges between segments of the state, economy, law, and culture as well, bridges that span to divergent logics and differing standards of rationality. Today this is an aptitude that is essential for effective functioning. For the crises in the modern world result not so much from one variable having exceeded critical mass, but from the defective relations between sets

of variables. Those relations are observed to strengthen and functionalize pathologies, rather than to reduce or compensate for them.

The feebleness of the modern state, something observed by all, represents none other than the demise of the hitherto reigning model of power, one based on uniform, hierarchically organized standards of formal rationality, and having a clear center in its tripartite construction. What until recently entailed the measure of the modern state under the rule of law has been swept aside by globalization and now exists but as a façade.

The network state, the diffusion of power, politics as a ritual for the coalescence of the political class (though not as an arena for the control of the basic variables of the system's dynamics), the spilling over of decision-making networks outside the nominal borders of the state, and the entangling of diverse logics and cultural standards—these are but some of the determinants of today's situation regarding steerability. And this all compels the need to become cognizant of the tendencies and logics of that mosaic and to design bridges that will limit the transfer of negative trends.

The second aspect of the art of control in Chinese tradition hearkens to the metaphor of the wheel, which emphasizes that the effectiveness of authority is determined by the relation between regulated and non-regulated realms. The state is strong (or weak) in regard to a defined proportion between engagement and withdrawal, and not owing to the merits of individual instruments—just as a wheel's durability is determined by the relation between the size of the spokes and the amount of empty space between them. What is therefore important is not only what is, but also what is not. Thus, an inordinate withdrawal of the state—as, for instance, in Poland, where its functions have been handed over to the market—can lead to problems with the system's steerability.

The third aspect is that of Chinese *wu wei*, the art of non-action. The aptitude of refraining from an introduction of additional convulsions into the system is treated as a virtue. At issue here is to avoid changes at variance with the system's tendencies, changes that are excessively “caustic,” or ones that are introduced without allowing time for the surfacing of the effects of previous actions. The art of maintaining authority despite non-action is one of the fundamental imperatives that Taoism formed vis-à-vis those governing.

The fourth aspect is the capability of steadily utilizing the chaos that appears in the system's surroundings as a counterpoint (that accelerates self-organization) and as a source of new energy. Similarly as with Chinese culture's characteristic capability of functioning in a situation that for us is one of contradictions, so too is the utilization of chaos based on the thought imperative to eliminate difference (via double negation), antinomy, and paradox as methods for encountering the world.

The fifth aspect of steerability, and one that will certainly come to the fore in the 21st century, is the new art of ritual. The Taoist view—that a person's identity equals that particle that cannot be objectified, grasped in concepts, relativized, and which we share with others and with the Absolute—leads to a very particular conception of individualism, whereby one is an *individuum* only insofar as one travels his or her own thought-path to the ascertainment that “each is all.” The treatment of epistemology

as ontology, that is, the science of cognition as the science of being, brings about an awareness of the infinity of thought combinations. This diversity is reduced—for the purposes of control—by ritual. For ritual casts a less complicated net of differences, and in this way somewhat contains starting-point diversity. Bearing in mind if only the role of today's media, ritual as the art of harmonizing the globalized world will be one of the most important techniques of power in the future. Thus, there are grounds to believe that the state exists primarily in the imagination. The diversity of individual thought-paths encumbers the elaboration of a system of collectively experienced symbols. Therefore, in the Asian philosophy of power it is not “content” but emotionally-laden “form” (that is, ritual that reduces the preceding diversity by casting new axes of division) that fulfills the function of an instrument for harmonization and stabilization. In this approach, one that locates the state in the imagination and not in the arm of law or in institutions, it is recognized that the state dies when the collective or its portion imagines for itself an alternative way of meeting its needs—for instance, via the formula of autonomy, regionalization, or full individualization. From this perspective an overly great withdrawal of the state (as in Poland) can lead not only to destatification, but also to a corrosion of society (for people begin to perceive the role of the citizenry as irrelevant to their lives).

The sixth imperative for steerability in Chinese thought is the precept for those in power to avoid taking actions that are primarily intended to demonstrate their status. It is also inadvisable to apply overly formalized principles for the wielding of power. In this context the metaphor of water is often cited—for water acts most powerfully and is simply uncontainable when it is found at the lowest point and when it conforms to the shape of its basin (Lao-tsu 1997).

Each of these imperatives for effective steerability is based upon philosophical and anthropological foundations. Each demands a perspective on the processes which one wishes to control and regulate that differs from that in Western European culture. At the same time, this also signals a cautionary tale for those who delight in technical possibilities and are unmindful of the fact that the world has changed. Indeed, it has changed in such a paradoxical manner that our European paradigm of power is now moribund and we must turn to Asia's older paradigm. Otherwise we shall remain at a loss vis-à-vis the challenges of the modern world. To date China has based its state on the philosophy of three pillars—on segments of the economy having divergent rules, ones that are relatively isolated (in terms of the flow of production factors and actors), and yet ones that are oriented in their logic toward stability and mutual accommodation of tensions. This dual manner of existing (i.e., isolation in the material sphere and mutual balancing of the divergent logics of particular segments) is well-composed within China's cultural tradition and is close to the above signaled Taoist concept of control. In China the multiplicity of statuses of the selfsame thing and the naturalness of the opposition between its differing aspects is not, as it is here, experienced as contradiction.

These principles for wielding power were attended by concentration on maintaining the capability to block external shocks (and to compensate for them), as well as on control over the realm of information. Presently, however, with regard to its entering

into a new stage of reforms (ones that are much more advanced than Russia's), China is forced to search for radically new mechanisms. The key institutional imperative here is that of solving the problem of dual-power. This concerns the party-state nexus—the plait made up of the institution gradually being submitted to global mechanisms and the rigors of the rule of law (i.e., the state), and of the institution significantly less formalized and oriented toward steerability in extraordinary situations, ones of crisis (namely, the party). Currently the Chinese Communist Party is treated as an axis of functional authoritarianism that helps resist the decentralization forced by globalization, something which penetrates the state more pervasively than the party. This duality is interlarded with two other dualities:

- the twin-track character of steerability based on territorial representations on the one hand, and on corporational nexuses of delegated powers on the other;
- the conscious, internally contradictory duality of rules for the system's functioning that stems from conclusions drawn during the Asian crisis of 1997–1998. For it then turned out that the very solutions that are irrational from the perspective of allocation and economic effectiveness (i.a., the segmentation of the shares markets, the strict control of the domestic currency's exchangeability), in a crisis situation suddenly acquire rationality and facilitate stabilization as well as isolation from global shocks.

It may therefore be stated that the Chinese efforts to maintain steerability in conditions of greater openness and globalization depend mainly on the search for ways to institutionalize the duality of steering instruments and to coordinate and selectively mobilize them in case of need. This requires conjoining the capability of self-steering (which posits the divergence of rationality at differing levels and in individual segments) with a strong, though weakly formalized decision-making and analytical center enjoying large competencies vis-à-vis strategic realms.⁷ These new dualities (that is, the three pairs of instruments, each having complex, internal twin-tracking logics) are interlarded into the above-mentioned duality in the manner of existence (i.e., isolation, together with the top-down regulated compensation for tensions) that is characteristic for the three pillars—which are themselves being steadily corroded by globalization.

This is accompanied by democratization, forced as it is by both the international and domestic situation. Here, too, altogether startling ideas have emerged. For both the new functions of the party segment of the nexus described (the concentration of power in the age of globalization, crisis regulation) and the fears of the state's collapse subsequent to the eventual liquidation (limitation) of the non-formalized (and not fully recognized) role of the party (as the ligature holding together the corporational ties at various levels) encourage seemingly audacious experiments. In all likelihood the idea of “modernizing” the Communist Party and (as happened in the USSR and Central Europe) leveling its status to that of equality with other parties will lose out. What will win will be the idea to incorporate the party into the state as a second

⁷ See the analysis of “three strategies” (applied depending on the level and extent of power, i.e., from empire to state to province) in the military canon from the Song Dynasty (Gawlikowski 2002).

segment, one oriented toward crisis regulation and less penetrated by globalization—which is to forecast the Communist Party’s transformation into the “party of power” and in fact the state’s second segment. The election competition of several groupings (hitherto having a façade character) would be connected with the adoption by the winning group of term-of-office control over the “party of power” (that is, the former Communist Party, currently treated as a crisis appendix of the state). The “party of power” would become imbued with a somewhat altered content after each election, of course having first selected programs understood to be competitive. Such cyclical changes (reminiscent of the formula of Mexico’s *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, with strictly observed terms of office and the cooptation of elites) would have a corrective function. Culturally, such a vision well corresponds to China’s deeply rooted paradigm of thinking about control in the context of a cyclically changing logic of processes. The progressive professionalization (e.g., examinations) and stabilization (e.g., the civil service) of the hitherto dominant party *nomenklatura* (people in their 30s and 40s) would make said competition largely irrelevant from the perspective of the present “personnel.” At the same time it would work to strengthen the—again dual—representative system, with the parliament on the one hand (and whose executive committee recently received authorization to harmonize the law), and the consultative congress on the other, with its being oriented on defining relations within the framework of the above overlapping dualities. Thus, as we see, in the case of China the maintenance of steerability is based upon a stratified system of dual logics that deliberately hearken to divergent standards of rationality. The condition for the success of this experimentation in democratizing China’s complex construction (initially in but several metropolises) is the effective deideologization of the Communist party, though without its ritualization. For the function of ligature and crisis regulation is a real function, not a ritual one. The Party as an empty form expediently inflated with content in response to the outcome of democratic competition (and the specific stage of that cycle) is a necessary condition for the experiment’s success. And let me repeat that it depends on the dissolution of the party-state nexus not via liquidation of the party, but rather through its transformation into an annex to the state, as something less formalized and more loosely modeled by global processes. In my view this explains the ongoing repressions against the Falun Gong and the Catholic Church. For at issue is preventing said empty form from being filled up with neotraditional contents—it is to remain empty! Parenthetically, here as well we may call to mind the Taoist category of “nothingness” as an entity having a defined ontological status (an undifferentiated whole tantamount to the beginning of all being), and not as a situation of “absence.”

The plurality of principles of regulation that characterizes the feeble postcommunist states (combining, as they do, territorial representations organized in a hierarchical way and exhibiting a matrix of autonomous nexuses of “delegated powers”—both domestic and foreign—along with a segment of the state functioning in accordance with market logic) demands of them a new approach to the phenomenon of power.

Our culturally based apperception of power exclusively in its hierarchical dimension encumbers us in discerning the yet existent possibilities of structural power, meta-regulation (the regulations of rules), the coordination—as in China—of diverse

rationalities, and the bridge-building to be done between divergent logics, scales of endeavor, and time horizons. Power over people (hearkening to one or another set of arguments for its legitimacy) has currently transformed into power as the control of boundary conditions for steerability and change. The proportions between the presence and the withdrawal of the state (re: the Chinese metaphor of the wheel) are oftentimes more decisive than proactive undertakings.

The present commingling of market institutions and power institutions somewhat resembles feudalism, wherein the social structure was at one and the same time the structure of rule, “politics” was confined to dynastic problems, and the strength of the state was contingent upon the art of coordinating various logics in the dense plexus of principles of regulation. Also similar is the lack of self-referentiality articulated in categories of the nation-state.

Building democracy in an era of postpolitics is a frustrating task. Yet the frustrations would be less pronounced if the new discourse on power were not confined to sniffing out irrationalities in the formula of Enlightenment rationality and to searching for sources of rule outside the nominal structures of power. Rather, what should be done is to thought-map the present plurality of rationalities and then learn to coordinate it on behalf of steerability. For power has undergone fundamental change: no longer is there but a single rationality and its unintended results (Adorno, Horkheimer 1947). To govern in the era of globalization means to build institutional and mental bridges between the system’s differing rationalities and topographies at both the micro and macro levels—the former being oriented on effective allocation and the latter serving stabilization whether in crisis or normal circumstances. The duality of the structures of rule—as when the contradictions between levels, cross-sections, and various aspects entail not only a feature, but the outright essence of the structure of power—demands an imagination other than hierarchical. Such the case, the hope for generating legitimizing formulae recognized by a majority is ever more bleak. Indeed, what was until only recently a category describing the sphere of democratic politics (participation, the rule of law, legality, autonomy, etc.) today looms as an unattainable ideal, a vanishing horizon nonetheless pursued. Sadly, in the age of “depoliticized democracy”—alas, even irrelevant democracy, as the fate of societies is decided by an anonymous structural violence to a greater degree than is the realm of politics—that horizon is seemingly ever more often left forgotten. Notwithstanding that, the game of pretending we remain in hot pursuit of that horizon is still the main directive, i.e., the one that bequeaths meaning to public activity.

The presently observed post-political strategies for state consolidation being applied in Russia and China are an expression of the significantly deeper civilizational differences between the two countries.

In a radical way Russia is upholding the conception of control that was articulated in the Enlightenment and until recently remained the basis of the modern state. In that conception “to control” means: 1) to replace causes (mechanisms) that are organic and “natural” with causes that are “artificial” (i.e., norms, institutions) in having been derived from stated goals; 2) to carry out the realization of said “artificiality.” The imposition of the military form (without militaristic contents) as a network of

relations strengthening *verticale wlastii* (the hierarchy of power) is a good example of substituting “natural” with “artificial.” This is a strategy that in the short-term may enhance discipline, but which does not portend a lasting increase in the capability to steer a modernizing economy and administration in the age of globalization. What is more, in precipitating the demise of uniform formal rationality and uniformly logical normativity, globalization also entails the terminus of the philosophy of power that is contingent on the substitution of naturalness with artificiality and then executing said artificiality.

Asian culture (with the exception of Confucianism, which also applied the principle of replacing organicity with ritual and used control as a way to compel the compatibility of behaviors with roles defined in keeping with ritual) has grown out of a fundamentally divergent philosophy of power. “To control” in Taoism and Zen means to go with the circumstances and maximally take advantage of them. In other words, to control the world is to know how to tap its natural flow. The basis of effective power was not—as in Western culture—to impose upon the world one’s own teleological vision along with the mechanisms derived from that vision, but to encounter, apprehend, and reap from the logic of the natural, spontaneous course of events. Among the principles of that logic we need particularly note: the causative role of time in forcing cyclicalness and the inevitable return of each tendency following arrival at the limits of its *li*; the distinction between the dynamic of form and the dynamic of essence; interpenetration (today we might say the “entropic character”) of structures as an expression of eliminating difference. This perspective is attended by a tri-value logic (not a dual-value one, as in Europe) and the premise of the plurality of identities for the same object (depending on relations and the phase of the cycle—that is, location in space and time), with contradiction as a natural feature of a thing, an expression of its complex structure—which, in turn, emerges from interpenetration and the plurality of its aspects. “Becoming,” not “being” is the basis of this cognitive perspective.

As I have shown, China’s strategy vis-à-vis globalization is hinged upon building complex and stratified sets of steering instruments that deliberately hearken to divergent—even clashing—logics and standards of rationality. This is to enable adaptation to a logic of socio-economic processes that is steadily changing over time—whether in the wake of change to the plane of reference, or to the scale and extent of activities. The selective hearkening to specific aspects (instruments) of a given plexus, the expansion of meta-regulation, and the application of the principle of *wu wei* (non-interference with the spontaneous flow of events by the imposition of artificiality) have as their aim the greatest possible approach (in the course of problematizing a situation and/or endeavor) to a process’s natural structure and dynamic. Moreover, if in Western culture the goal of activity is to diminish the entropic character of structures (even at the price of expending large portions of energy) via specialization and the expressed, unequivocal identities of institutions, then in Asian culture and practice the situation is quite the contrary. The entropic character of structures, in increasing the elasticity and adaptiveness of a material, is treated as an expression of the natural elimination of difference. For that matter, this is well attested to in the tendency elicited by globalization to permeate institutions and in the exchanging

of functions (i.e., where the state functions via market instruments, and the market shapes and replaces politics). However, this steady simplification and pervasion of structures is attended by an increasing complexity of processes that no longer lend themselves to being supplanted by artificiality in compliance with a formula based on a single rationality and a single logic. In this situation the wielding of stratified sets of steering instruments postulated upon the plurality of logics (even ones that are internally contradictory from our perspective) and their expedient selection allows us to better approach the essence of processes than do activities pursued via rigid structures having an unequivocal identity as laid down by the “modern” state and the rule of law.

* * *

To summarize, it would seem that the reality of the globalizing world and the practices of control applied by global actors is ever more closely approaching—albeit largely unconsciously so—the premises of East Asian culture. This is accompanied by an accelerated corrosion of the premises on which the modern state rested in its quest of full, unequivocal normativity and uniform procedural rationality. Against this background, the weakly “theoretized,” flexible practice of the English world’s utilitarianism and pragmatism (with such “shock absorbers” as judge-made law) can be treated as a suitable bridge—one deprived, however, of the intellectually seductive philosophical backdrop of the Asian philosophy of power.

The situation of Europe is unique in this context. In the past, European culture on several occasions carried out a radical reinterpretation of its very self. Each of those reinterpretations reduced the tensions created by the preceding interpretation, at the same time as it created new ones. Such manipulation of self took place at the level of highly abstract, comprehensive constructions. Europe’s intellectualism distinguished said reinterpretations from the discreet cultural manipulation in Asia, which occurred at the level of modifying the structures of reasoning (and the principles of producing knowledge), the conception of the “subject,” and the ever newly operationalized (for tailored to the changing realities of social life) ontologization of time.

In Europe two thresholds of such reinterpretations of self are essential for an understanding of the unique identity of this region of the world. And now, as it seems, we are closing in on the third threshold.

The fledgling construction of Europe (existing as a self-conscious whole prior to the emergence of nation-states) was that of a plait woven from three traditions. Europe then was typified by internal tension as the standards of rationality of those traditions could not be reduced to a common basis, nor could they be embraced in a single, transparent and unequivocal hierarchy.

The first tradition is that of Greek logic, with its formal conception of “truth” and “falseness” and reasoning based on the category of difference. That tradition was seminal to the later formal rationality.

The second is the Judeo-Christian tradition, which hearkens to norms recognized as absolute and to unequivocal criteria of “good” and “evil.” This tradition led to

the coalescence of substantial rationality. The tensions between these two traditions (and presently, their two types of rationality) are unavoidable and to this day they impact modern states. The most interesting discussions concerning the creation of law indicate that periodic corrections which bring the legal system's formal rationality near to the substantial rationality reigning within society, are possible only when the tensions associated with the gap between said standards force the legal system into self-reflection by way of mentally reconstructing its own logic and examining itself as if from outside (Tuebner 2002).

The third tradition is that of Europe's formative experience in the fall of Rome at the hands of the barbarians. That experience bequeathed the conviction that beauty and strength are two differing orders (Ortega y Gasset 1930) and that the defeated party could create works well beyond the prowess of the victors. The experience of the plurality of cultural forms that accompanied the collapse of the Roman Empire accelerated the specific de-naturalizing of form and, in consequence, the early—for already in the period of Romanesque art—stylized formal experiments.

Each culture in its own way tries to solve the problem of the relation between form and content (Panofsky 1951). For instance, ancient Egyptian culture in its art obsessively emphasized motion that could be expressed on a plane (i.e., figures with turned heads). Orthodox culture, in turn, sought a form for its icons that was closest to Platonic ideas. The unique character of Western European culture was connected, and earlier so than in other cultures, with attempts at typologizing both the main object and its background. The combination of both taxonomies, enriched by—again, typologized—symbolic interpretations, created a communicational space that later, in conjunction with the newly rediscovered Roman law, was utilized in the course of Europe's unique process of rationalization.

These tensions, unavoidable as they were in the context of the co-appearance in Europe of three traditions (ones that were strengthened by multi-ethnicity and migration that took advantage of the open character of early medieval Europe), for centuries were expressed either in violent efforts to compress them into a single thought and institutional system (religious wars included) or in the efforts to perfect the methods of discourse. Said discourse attempted to determine and eliminate differences, or at least make them irrelevant. Divergence was either concealed under the blanket of *communis opinio* or it was ascribed to various fields of thought (cf. the 13th-century separation of theology and philosophy, fields that were guided by divergent standards of reasoning). That separation was designed to facilitate the absorption of the newly rediscovered Aristotelian science and preserve religious dogma. Among those attempts we also need include: dialectics, which in the early Middle Ages was treated as the art of debate; sophistry, which formed false propositions, though in a way that allowed such falsehood to be disclosed (and the respect of one's adversaries to be maintained); and, finally, eristics, which taught rhetorical artifice that aided in giving the impression that one is right, regardless of the real weight of the arguments presented.⁸

⁸ This is a set of distinctions introduced by Arthur Schopenhauer in *Die eristische Dialektik*.

That latter slowly shifted attention from the problem of “truth” to the “search for truth” as a unique social process. Hence the focus given to “saving face” in the course of a dispute as an autonomous value. Later attempts to maintain order (or the appearance of order), despite the unavoidable tension between Europe’s divergent traditions (Świeżawski 1979), were tied to the eclecticism then deliberately being introduced.

For example, eclecticism à la Francis Bacon emphasized the imperative of openness in searching, and the eclecticism of Steinbach drew attention to the creative virtue of selecting elements of tradition (as subjectively carried out by the researcher) and the creation of a new synthesis. Earlier, there had appeared attempts (characteristic of Augustinianism) to erase the difference between reasoned knowledge and faith through a philosophical deepening of the very phenomenon of faith (Świeżawski, op cit.)(including the problem of illumination). A link was sought that would reduce the tension stemming from the collision of arguments that hearkened to divergent value systems and divergent ways of cognition. Augustinian skepticism vis-à-vis the “obviousness” of sensory forms of cognition paradoxically bore two contradictory outcomes (Gilson 1955). Indeed, it contributed both to a strengthening of fideism and to the incremental perfecting of the intellectual tools for thinking, this being an instrumentarium critical for the subsequent development of European science and learning. One example is that of the neo-Platonist impulses which encouraged the development of mathematical enquiry.

It was not until the 16th and 17th centuries that doctrinal Augustinianism, which placed stress on *communis opinio*, acquired the character of a dam that sealed off the earlier discursive methods of determining irreconcilable traditions. This dogmatizing turnaround occurred already after Europe had crossed its first threshold involving a radical reinterpretation of itself. In other words, this dogmatization (which, among other matters, brought the work of the Inquisition to a pitch) was carried out after the 15th century’s renaissance humanism had relegated medieval disputes to the realm of hermeneutics. The tensions accompanying the insolvable collision of various standards of rationality and methods of cognition were in this way radically reduced. Each thought-path or variety of faith began to be treated as a separate, symbolic whole, one rational (true) only internally, that is, in reference to its own premises. At the same time efforts were dropped to create a single, coherent thought-order. This give rise to modern tolerance (Feher 1991), with its telltale features of self-irony and skepticism.

The final major push that represents an attempt to integrate these irreconcilable worldviews was the proposal advanced by Nicholas of Cusa (1440). Although his was a stunning attempt, in its time it remained misunderstood and failed to gain appreciation. I call his proposal “stunning” as it anticipated the direction of our search today, including the turnaround toward a logic that we would now call “multi-value” and the questioning of Western culture’s bedrock concept of “difference.” In his proposal Cusanus used the category of the Absolute (which reconciles the contradictions that vanish within its embrace) in a way that recalls the Asian use of the category of “nothingness”—as an undifferentiated whole and the beginning of all entities.

However, European thought proceeded in a different direction than Cusanus proposed. For the first in this series of Europe's reinterpretation of its very self relegated contradictory traditions, thought-systems, and values to the sphere of hermeneutics (and thus to culture), refusing to impart them with absolute value. Such an interpretation of the realm of values was supplemented by a wide-ranging search for the universal rationality in other areas. Thus, the treatment of contradictory traditions and values as a cultural ornament that does not pretend to the status of "truth" was compensated by the over two-centuries long quest of another plane or realm as a new and alternative source of certainty. On the one hand, the concept of "natural law" was articulated (and which later, in the times of anti-absolutist movements, provided the ground for human rights); on the other, a vision coalesced of "progress" and universal rationalization. The stress on instrumental rationality was redoubled, and the hope of creating a uniform, rational order was shifted to the sphere of the emerging "modern" state. Once again the Aristotelian understanding of dialectics was hearkened to as an instrument for attaining universal Truth, this extending all the way to the construct of "dialectical rationality," wherein the "properly chosen concept" had the power of molding reality in accord with the premises as accepted.⁹

Thus was the Enlightenment breakthrough enacted, the second such for European identity, with the radical reinterpretation of its very self being carried out by intellectual Europe, that of the universities and monastic orders. That breakthrough was based on the uplifting of the idea of Reason and the premise of universal standards of rationality developing over time. The previous breakthrough (again, the relegation of irreconcilable values and thought-systems to the realm of culture) had contributed to the rise of the anti-fundamentalism characteristic for Europe. The subsequent breakthrough (the Enlightenment's absolutization of Reason) weakened that first step in the direction of doubting, for it gave a new impulse that strengthened faith in certainty. However, that faith contributed to the next crisis. As researchers into the "dialectics of the Enlightenment" have demonstrated, the dual meaning ascribed to rationality in the Enlightenment's vision (i.e., an objectified standard of thinking and mankind's mission in the world) revealed the self-destructive tendencies that went hand in hand with the idea of Reason (Adorno, Horkheimer 1947). Later experiences (the world at war and the aberration of communism's constructivism) deepened doubts about the process of rationality. The present stage of globalization—with irrationality as a necessary, functional ligature (for instance, in the quest for arbitrary catalysts of order) and with the radical relativizing of rationality as an element in time and having scale (*vide* the phenomenon of the asymmetry of rationalities)—further intensified those doubts.

A radical, though superficial breakthrough was connected with the announcement of the era of postmodernism, i.e., the deconstruction of the subject and of the concept of "truth," along with the focus on the day in, day out production of the social world.

Thus was it declared that the Western paradigm had exhausted itself.

⁹ I discuss this matter in chapter two of my book *Wladza globalizacji* (2004), in my analysis of the ideological and cultural roots of communism.

Yet only now, and ever so discreetly, has the outline of a new paradigm begun to appear. What is taking place is underway on various levels: it is neither a coordinated process, nor does it aspire to the status of an all-embracing system. Three such levels strike as particularly promising and—albeit in a way not expressed *explicite*—seem to be drawing European culture closer to that of Asia.

This is first and foremost a problem of the subject. Psychologists long ago called attention to the stages of the intellectual and emotional maturing of the human individual, although only in recent times have there appeared theses that are startlingly similar to the conception of the subject in Asia. Let it be recalled that there in Asia one is an individual insofar as the thought-path journeyed in the course of the double negation of “forgetting oneself” (as apprehended by means of objectified categories) is individual. In Europe we now speak about “subjectiveness,” about attending to the capability of making a choice, and about the need to lay aside instrumental rationality, as only a “disinterestedness” of cognition can reduce the tendencies propelling us toward the trap of non-creative “intersubjectiveness” and objectified (i.e., routine) forms of thinking.¹⁰ What is striking here is the similarity to the Asian precept of the non-manipulation of nature if we wish nature to reveal herself to us.

The second level pertains to the realm of cognition, with a softening of the standards binding here. What is important is “the effort to arrive at the truth”—not the truth itself. Here the precept in disputes is to seek out why our adversary holds his or her judgement to be true. This concerns apprehending a phenomenon’s internal rationalities as they flow from divergent ontological premises and epistemological directives (Barnes, Bloor 1982). This turnaround almost surrealistically resembles the early medieval attempts to maintain discourse even when there is no hope for agreement. What is being discovered (Feyerabend 1979) is *irrationality* as a phenomenon distinct from *non-rationality*—as is also the failure of reason. The quest for the logic of irrationality resembles the thinking on the role of error within Buddhist logic.

Niklas Luhmann’s (2002) recent discovering of thought patterns that foster the effective production of knowledge—paradox, for example—draw from Asia’s cultural resources, although not expressly. The case was quite the same with that author’s earlier works on the topic of self-referentiality (Luhmann 1990), works that also drew upon the epistemological premises formulated on the ground of a non-European culture.

Finally, the current turnaround toward the particular detail as the bearer of cognition having been placed aside, and thereby free from both the emptiness of grand ideas and from the dead metaphors of common sense (Nabokov 1989) poses an element of liberating oneself from objectified categories. As we know, just such a postulate is at the basis of Asia’s cultural epistemology. Modern European physics already long ago availed itself of the conception of space-time so significant in Asia with the ontologization of time in the theory of relativity. That knowledge however has not become an element of a culturally consolidated paradigm in Europe. Nonetheless, perhaps today the universally felt experiencing of the asymmetry of rationalities as

¹⁰ See: G. Vattimo (1986 and 1990).

the vector of global logic (one that flattens out differing historical times and leads to the costly—for the “younger” structure—introduction of an institutionally more mature structure into a structure yet unarticulated) will prompt European culture to focus attention on the phenomenon of time. And this will help Europe carry out the next creative reinterpretation of its own intellectual identity!

Translated from the Polish by Philip Earl Steele

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