

## CHAPTER I

# DIMINISHING TRADITION, CONTINUING TRANSITION: THE STATE OF SERBIA

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As an area of significant territorial, religious, ethnic, national and ideological diversity, the Balkans are a region of many small cultures, but also a meeting point of civilizations. The Ottoman Turks, who ruled it for 500 years,<sup>1</sup> called it ‘Rumelia’ – a name recalling the early history of the area as a territory of the Roman Empire. For Europeans, it was ‘European Turkey’ until the mid-nineteenth century, when the term ‘Balkan’ began to circulate.

Balkan cultures north of Greece have long been excluded from being considered as having a European identity (either Roman Catholic, Protestant, or Modern European). This attitude towards the Balkans still holds. According to the Collins English Dictionary (1994), ‘to balkanize’ means to divide (a territory) into small warring states. In her book *Imagining the Balkans*,<sup>2</sup> Maria Todorova notes that the term Balkanism reflects the Western reduction of the idea of the Balkans to stereotypes oscillating between opposites in relation to an alternation of political interests and power. Describing the Balkans as an integral part of “the first Europe,” Traian Stoianovich, the author of *Balkan Worlds, The First and The Last Europe*,<sup>3</sup> emphasizes the risk of its current isolation from European identity. This exclusion – the author argues – is a sign that the European structure is based on money and power rather than on culture, which could lead to the cultural collapse of Europe as such.

The structure of traditional Balkan cultures was connected with the wholeness of the cosmos, organized with subsequent strata of biology, technology, society, economy and culture. In general, a look into history reveals that, before the economic structure is stabilized, human culture, as the most delicate of all relational systems, is not feasible. This pattern is the very story of the Balkans. The lack of economic stability (and, being in the

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<sup>1</sup> From mid-fifteenth to the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Balkans lay within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. During that long period the Balkans was cut off from the rest of Europe, and thus the history of its peoples unfolded very differently from that of other European countries.

<sup>2</sup> Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Traian Stoianovich, *Balkan Worlds, The First and The Last Europe* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994).

middle, Serbia is at the centre of the Balkans) has been crucial to the decline of individual potential in the region. This is manifest especially in the lack of a philosophical heritage in Serbia. One should simply remember philosophers' observations about the necessity of leisure time for philosophy. While building the system of knowledge (and until the eighteenth century all sciences were incorporated in philosophy) was a trend among scholars in wealthy Western Europe, Serbia had half a millennium of slavery, followed by a series of devastating wars waged for the independence of the nation. That is why the most characteristic intellectual creation in Serbia during that period was 'folk heroic epic poetry.'

One kind of poetical philosophy, 'folk wisdom inventions' (= '*narodne umotvorine*'), was influential during the Middle Ages. Much later, after a collection of these texts was published in the nineteenth century, this *oeuvre* of traditional Serbian 'national literature' became an inspiration to European intellectuals, such as Goethe. Writers in nineteenth-century Serbia provide evidence that a humanistic culture had developed. However, their works hardly conform to the spirit of rational discourse.<sup>4</sup> It is possible, indeed, to reconstruct, from their texts, the rational concepts that they had presupposed.<sup>5</sup> Yet, if we take the main philosophical tradition (such as the philosophies of Aristotle, Plato, and early modern thinkers: Descartes, Spinoza, and Locke) as a paradigm<sup>6</sup>, the Serbian cultural heritage is deficient in philosophy. If there are some philosophers, they are not particularly original.<sup>7</sup> Even if we consider another kind of poetical philosophy – one which has not prevailed in the West – Serbian history is still very limited in its number of philosophers.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Thus, for example, P.P. Niegosh offers authentic wisdom of life exclusively through his metaphorical poems 'Forest Garland' ('Gorski vjenac'), and 'Light of the Microcosm' ('Luca Mikrokozma').

<sup>5</sup> When, for example, we read Vojislav Ilic's poem 'Istina' ('The Truth': "... go your own way / but know yourself / to know the truth..."), an epistemological and methodological approach is presumed, even if colored with psychological impressions of the world. Suffering is the predominant atmosphere in the opus of recent Serbian poetry which is undeniably reflective.

<sup>6</sup> According to the account given by Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Philosophy and its History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992)

<sup>7</sup> Typical is the Neo-Kantian Branislav Petronijevic

<sup>8</sup> If we take one such example from the work of the Serbian bishop Nikolai, it should be stressed that this work is devoted mainly to the quest for the Serbian Orthodox faith and identity, rather than to searching for fundamental ontological and epistemological insights aimed at discovering reality. This work also defies customary categorizations, since at the empirical level it is highly critical and strict in the sense of ethical requirements. On the other hand, as it starts a discussion of the absolute (such as in "The Science of Law – Nomology"), it glorifies the almightiness of God who is in command of everything including natural laws. Like other mystical and philosophical

The Balkans were obviously predisposed to a different type of mental creation – very distant from strictly rational and systematic discourse. This is perhaps a minor disgrace for those Balkan cultures that have experienced a rather tumultuous history, especially from a contemporary perspective. After Kant, the bifurcation of philosophy into two different kinds led to a denial of any possibility of their mutual communication.<sup>9</sup> This has led to the notorious situation of contemporary philosophy, since the schools of thought have gone so far apart as to become anti-philosophical and dogmatic, undermining the possibility of intercommunication. Thus, philosophy has run the risk of becoming ideology, resolving differences with various kinds of political ‘arguments.’ Hence, in our age, concrete conscious thinking (as presented in anthropology or ecology) has become more suited to the difficult questions faced by humankind and, thus, more ‘philosophical’ than academic philosophy itself. These thinkers have brought an awareness of the values in the different cultural responses to environmental challenges.<sup>10</sup> The recognition of different cultural traditions grows with the idea of the freedom to choose values and a corresponding way of life, either individually or collectively. The purpose here is to accomplish a departure from the dominant model of totalizing globalization, which is generally presented as the only option allowed to people.

The pressure of economic globalization is so great that nowadays the Balkans are capable neither of coping with urgent ecological needs nor of achieving balance between freedom and social justice. Serbia’s actual poverty and powerlessness, intensified by continuous ‘transitions’ (e.g. the post-communist change, and the recent conflicts and wars), inhibit an active response to what is nowadays really important – a transition to the new age of cyber technology. Without this transition, other transitions (such as the ones of ‘democracy’ and ‘market economy’) are likely to be futile, at least from the internal perspective. As merely a periphery of dominant geopolitical powers, the Balkans suffer from the ongoing turbulence of their conflicting interests. Throughout history, geopolitical relations have resulted in huge oscillations in stereotypes about the Balkans, as Maria

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approaches, here the belief in God transcends rational knowledge: it has to be experienced in order to be understood and therefore requires a personal attitude, understandable only by the ones who share similar experiences.

<sup>9</sup> Poetic philosophy has had a long history from Pythagoras through Plotinus, Tertullian, Eckhart and other thinkers who believed in coming to know ultimate reality through personal mystical experience. The opposite path in the philosophical tradition has gone through positivism and analytical philosophy, ending in antagonizing and the severing of any communication with the metaphysicians.

<sup>10</sup> Thus, some of the ways of technologically inferior cultures, such as the Bushman and Eskimos, appear superior from the point of view of human adaptation to the environment.

Todorova has pointed out. These oscillations bring further turmoil to Balkan identity and to its development.

The current post-Cold War transition to a new global stage of human relations involves reshaping ancient as well as modern identities. This global transition coincides with the central region of the Balkans – Serbia – as a challenge to the new rising global integration. Let us explore this issue. Prospects for the global integration of different cultural traditions are a hot issue of our times. The purpose is to create a potential global society in regard to actual economic and technological processes of globalization. The fact of the matter is that the relations among the various parts of the world are becoming stronger than ever before; still, globalization might be seen as largely polarized. On one side, we observe ‘globalization from above,’ as a primarily economic integration of societies. This ‘globalization from above’ is connected with international domination and the hypostatization of a single world economic system. Its ideal is the Western neo-liberal tradition, in relation to which all marginal traditions serve as barriers to global integration depending on the possible harmonization of their values. On the other side, there is support for a complementary ‘globalization from below.’ The latter presumes the possibility of integration of societies while, at the same time, preserving their distinct traditional identities.

However, if we look at the ‘reduction’ of traditional identities to their cultural dimension (as in the second, ‘globalization from below’ approach), it is obvious that the two approaches are opposed only on the surface. At a deeper level, the power relations are not altered. The second approach does not search for the integrity of traditions with their respective cultures or with their political and economic spheres. It is already too late for that; the process of globalization has already gone too far. Thus, the complementarity of these two concepts of globalization relates only to the notion of tradition in the narrower sense of a culture.

Yet, there is a difference between these approaches. It lies in their relation to values. The ‘globalization from above’ approach is primarily concerned with material, instrumental values, that is, concrete values related to the use of power. Unlike the ‘globalization from below’ approach, it is indifferent to the existence of subtle values and shades of universality.

The issue of a possible universalization of values, or a non-reducible relativity, is an actual theoretical concern. It is the origin of different standpoints focusing on contrasting evaluations of traditions. We should investigate these standpoints in regard to their relation to the question: Are all traditions equally valuable? From the standpoint of universalism, the purpose of this question has been to construct a value-hierarchy of traditions, with the dominant values in a superior position. The resistance to this concept of universalization has increased with postmodern deconstruction and the relativization of values. However, from the viewpoint of value-relativity, the issue of the equal evaluation of traditions has mainly had a practical purpose; it is theoretically pointless because

decisions in values cannot be comparative but rather inhere in the context of each tradition. Hence, the relativization of values denies the possibility of establishing an intercultural hierarchy and domination imposed from the position of power.

Another view of universalization is possible, though. This view does not understand universalization as the reduction of manifest differences to a generalized, empty essence – a common denominator. Rather it sees this essence as presented in various forms – as a matrix, pattern or structure – through common values and universal meaning. From this latter meaning of universalization, a value approach to the global integration of world societies may be deduced. It assumes a broad respect for values that might be recognized as common or universal. These universal values for global linkage and the integration of humanity have the potential to include various particular cultural manifestations, individual as well as collective.

For this concept of global integration, which includes mutual differences, the centralization of power is the main problem. Concerning subtle values, this power uses not bare physical force, but the power of manipulation through social consciousness.<sup>11</sup> Understanding the importance of collective human consciousness for the future of a global human society requires efforts to transform the structures and relations influencing it. In a time of global transition, it is necessary to reconsider the roles of cultural traditions in relation to contemporary global change. This reconsideration should enable a humanization of the idea of ‘progress.’ We need a progress that will allow people, apart from all rationalistic and nationalistic dichotomies, to express their identities, instead of uniformizing or impersonalizing themselves. In nature, the importance of a diversity of natural kinds is quite clear. In human cultures, diversity is important for the development of an ecology of global human society.

After the modern ‘myth of progress’ has been criticized and an awareness of dead-ends in civilization has occurred, it is nevertheless still possible to retain the concept of progress. In our time, it should be sought in

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<sup>11</sup> Durkheim pointed out the conditioning of the social consciousness, by defining collective representation as something which is not a social or metaphysical obligation, but rather a kind of moral or intellectual obligation. Mary Douglas has recently reminded us of this point in her book *How Institutions Think* (first published in 1986 by Syracuse University Press; Serbian translation: 2001), in which she pointed out the appropriateness and applicability of Durkheim’s teaching on the social roots of individual thinking for contemporary society. She supplements this teaching by Ludwig Fleck’s theory of cognition as the socially most influenced human activity.

From the perspective of an ordered society, it is understandable that institutions have attributed this power to conditioned social consciousness, as Douglas has done. However, from the perspective of a destroyed society, as in Serbia, this power is transferred to authorities with strong media support.

human interests outside those spheres of political and economic power that are conducive to confrontation. But even if it is possible to find deep wisdom in universal human experience, a common language that makes dialogue possible, as well as mutual understanding among different cultural identities and traditions, there still remains the problem of how to implement this progress. For now, we can see this as a basis for the improvement of local and global structures which could permit the opening of and interconnection among cultural identities and traditions. However, before we can do that, it is important to go all the way with this global transition and its transformation of identities. This is particularly so in the case of societies that have experienced the annihilation of their earlier environments after the fall of the Berlin Wall – that serves as a symbolic end of the Cold War and the polarization of the world.

We have strong examples of this transition in the former Yugoslavia as a whole, and in Serb society<sup>12</sup> in particular. An effort to think consistently about Serb society today is not very easy. Apart from the fact that the term ‘tradition’ is frequently mentioned in the media, it seems that Serb society is left without practically any deep-rooted Tradition<sup>13</sup> that is ‘alive’ – i.e., not just in books or in the vanishing memories of our great-grandmothers, but rather in the everyday activities of the people. While it is possible to argue that the influence of Tradition is not sufficiently noticeable to me as a member of the culture lacking the necessary distance, arguments can still be adduced as to the virtual disappearance of an effective Serb tradition nowadays. Before we consider this issue, let us close the more general account.

From the thesis that Serb society was left without any evidently traditional values animating its beliefs and ways of life and which are incompatible with values of global civilization, it is possible to derive the

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<sup>12</sup> English translation usually uses the term ‘Serbian’ to refer to its ethnic attributes or language (i.e., ‘Serbian language’). On the other hand, in the Serbian language, there is the adjective *srbijanski* (Serbian), denoting “belonging to the country of Serbia.” Thus *srbijanski* does not connote a reference to the national/ethnic tradition of the Serbs, or to their language as such. The adjective *srpski* (= ‘Serb’), on the other hand, combines an ethnic and state reference. So it would be more adequate to say in English the ‘Serb’ (language) instead of the ‘Serbian’ (language). However, the concept of ‘Serb society’ (i.e. its connotation in Serb language) that is dealt with here, is a challenging notion, because it refers differently to Serbs in and out of Serbia, as well as to the citizens of Serbia themselves. It would refer all the more to the overall population, if Serbia defines its distinctiveness more clearly. In the Serb language, the notion of a ‘Serbian society’ was neither usual nor appropriate until now, because it excluded a substantial part of the national corpus which was united until recently.

<sup>13</sup> Tradition with capital letter ‘T’ should indicate a fundamental kind of cultural heritage which is continually transferred by the means of customs and oral history from generation to generation.

idea that the Serb tradition cannot be a barrier to global integration. However, observing everyday life in Serbia, it seems that lack of tradition as such could in fact be an obstacle for hypothetical global integration. Tradition as such presumes a certain order of values, which can then be changed, renewed, improved, harmonized, and integrated. Without Tradition, a society is left with no established values, and probably without any values whatsoever. Devoid of an order of value, a society inevitably finds itself in a critical condition – in an identity crisis. Societies do not necessarily get out of such crises, let alone get out of them in an improved condition. Crises may recur until a complete disintegration of the actual society takes place. Something like this is happening in Serbian society. Its frequent transformations and continual transitions to opposing societal systems have produced a crisis of identity for as long as its tradition has diminished; its identity has, paradoxically, become a transition.

The possibility that transition becomes the tradition seems paradoxical. From the context of rational discourse, a transition (meaning ‘a passing’) always involves a change to something else, to something different, rupturing with a previous tradition or at least with some of its aspects. Probably, such an idea could not even emerge if the questioning of the rationalistic dichotomies of modernity had not already led to doubt. But, after this insight, we can no longer be unaware of the dynamic nature of reality and the failure to conform to any rigid categorization. Besides, a cumulative historical change of things and relations over time causes conceptual changes. Understanding these changes makes it possible that some seemingly known things and relations no longer appear contradictory, because their inner logic and meaning are recognized.

Real changes initiate conceptual changes, and vice versa. These changes of meaning, understanding, and relations are such that it is not possible to determine conclusively what is prior to what, and to what extent. Regardless of whether the present changes in conceptions and values reflect changes in society, or whether changes in society reflect the former, they obviously announce the emergence of a new age which could lead to the global integration of humankind. As we have seen, this possibility presupposes the recognition of universal values, and the idea of universality also triggers a review of various obsolete meanings. A reconsideration of these preceding meanings should enable ideas to take an appropriate position in contemporary times.

Distancing themselves from earlier traditional values, modern processes based themselves on the values of bourgeois revolutions: liberty, equality and brotherhood. Have recent historical events really devalued these ideals of freedom, equality and brotherhood? This might seem likely if we think that ideas have worth only if they are being realized in practice. However, the opposite claim is equally likely, i.e., that universal values should not be rejected, even if not practiced today, since such values (as those of democracy and human rights) contain “primordial” values which were common to both the bourgeois and communist revolutions. The

endurance of these values is enabled by the power of their universality. Having in mind that the modern époque, whose dawn was announced by these values, has now announced the arrival of a global world, we can consider these values as part of the tradition of a future global society.

To ask whether universal values exist shows that much is dependent on our choices and beliefs. But if this is so, then it is more reasonable to choose an approach which has the anthropological advantage of stimulating human progress. Therefore, we believe that, if they are universal, values cannot be overcome, even though wrong ways of application (and finally, their abuse) may and should be overcome. Their misuse is frequently a consequence of misinterpretation.<sup>14</sup>

It is possible, then, to accept that universal values exist even if we rarely see them. If everyday reality loses sight of them, this does not mean they are just illusions to be abandoned. Even if actual experience does not show their existence, it is still worse for people to live without them. The only question is to what extent those living in such societies are responsible for this state of affairs, because humans are, more or less, always responsible for their situations. Let us, for example, pose this as the question of the responsibility of Serbs for their destiny. Unlike the dangerous potential of the notion of 'collective culpability,' the meaning of

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<sup>14</sup> Thus, for instance, the idea of freedom cannot be properly applied in all spheres of human activities. From the anthroposophical perspective, it primarily belongs to the spiritual sphere. Here, it indicates a freedom of choice, thought and expression, which are considered to be basic human rights even today. In the sphere of law, however, it is not a basic value because it is limited by the laws. When this idea of freedom is accepted with no limitations in the sphere of economy, it leads to the supremacy of the stronger and to less humane social relations.

Similarly, the idea of equality primarily belongs to the legal sphere. Its application in the economic domain has proven to be wrong. We have a recent historical experience of the socialist economy, in which its application led to egalitarianism and consequent problems. In the spiritual sphere, the idea of equality regularly leads to the terror of single-mindedness.

It seems that the idea of brotherhood has experienced the greatest historical devaluation. Yet, this is not a proof that it does not represent a universal value. Although it is generally abandoned in its literal meaning, it is still present in the indispensable concepts of *humanity*, *solidarity*, and *altruism*. But, it is hard indeed to make it an institution, and it is not a regular practice anyway; in the sphere of law, it is not necessary and, in spirituality, it is presumed. The main area in which this value should be applied is the economic one. Not everyone is equally able to acquire material wealth, but everyone has the basic vital needs that have to be satisfied. Therefore, it is necessary to share it in a brotherly way with others if they are deprived due to the accidental circumstances. That is why universality of basic vital needs makes the value of 'brotherhood' universal.



responsibility is not so blame-centred, though many hold that leading an inauthentic life is much worse than blaming. Some modest consolation can be found, however, in certain historical streams converging in the thesis of the end of the Serb Tradition.

It is well known that a half century of the dominance of atheistic ideology brought a complete change to the earlier Serb tradition. Its place was occupied by a new 'communist tradition' of 'proletarian' principles and values. The belief that, among all the ex-Yugoslav nations, this was especially the case with the Serbs, lies in the specific circumstances of its history and culture. Its position on the borders of the Balkans worked together with the isolation of its Christian Orthodox Church. The deterioration of the Church's influence started in the Middle Ages under Ottoman rule. After a short break in the nineteenth century, it was continued in the first Kingdom of Yugoslavia, for political reasons of organizing the population belonging to different religions and for reasons of responding to the Western influences of modernization and industrialization, thus subordinating tradition based on spirituality to one trusting in science and material progress. This spirit of modernity, opposed to previous traditions, was the origin of modern European concepts of value.

The Communist government accomplished the modernizing spirit of the times through eradicating all traces of the local bourgeoisie and through transforming the former 'land of the peasants' into the 'land of the proletarians.' Compared with European countries that have not gone through communism, where previous traditions were gradually integrated into modernity, the rapid abandonment of the Serb tradition was profound. The transformation of some folk practices via the new forms of social content – as was the case with the myth of the enemy or with heroic myths – represent a continuation of the folk tradition in the level of usefulness in communist propaganda. We should also bear in mind that the cited myths were not exclusive to the Serb tradition, and often embodied archetypes reflecting the universal inheritance of humankind.

Under communist ideology several generations grew to maturity. For them, Marxism, Leninism, antifascist resistance and socialist self-government became a 'tradition.' Then came the even more suspicious concept of a 'return to the Serb tradition,' constructed and imposed during the period of post-communism and the dismantling of the SFR Yugoslavia. Indeed, the misuse of the proclaimed ideology and its values in everyday communist reality stimulated a need for values that were imagined to exist in the forms of the prohibited ancient Tradition. Actually, the proclaimed 'return to Tradition' was prevented largely because of the obsolete structure of the Church, which long ago lost the touch with the spirit of the times, and has been manipulated by politics and the media for the sake of homogenization and identification of a continuous people. Under the stream of social and mental pathology, intensified with the pressures of global transition, spirituality remained discouraged.

The previous regime resorted to abuses of power in order to condition social consciousness. By means of the mass media, neo-myths of the Serb 'tradition' were constructed. Other sources were historical fragments, the symbolism of St Sava, and the vague 'greater Serbia' projections of the SANU (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts) Memorandum. However, outside of the media, the living Serb tradition no longer existed. It began to vanish with the suppression of its ancient identity, because it was considered to be a hindrance to modern times. Communism required another identity and imposed another tradition and, when its system of values had almost become tradition, the new post-communist turnover happened, and this again initiated inevitable social chaos. From a humanistic point of view, the acceptable communist ideology of brotherhood and social justice, although challenged by the forbidding of traditional practices, national feelings and disappointing egalitarianism, was now replaced by the opposite ideology of the social Darwinist principles of the market as the basic value of a globalizing transition – which resulted in dangerous scarcity and new social segmentation. Milosevic's regime, isolated by the international community, managed to survive for such a long period because of the spurious conservation of the socialist tradition. Behind the scene, social property was being devalued and, through corruption, transferred into the hands of domestic private owners. Privatization is an integral part of the transitional changes of 'globalization from above,' and it has been continued after the change of government. The difference is only in the fact that the society now is 'open,' so that foreign capital arrives to heal the broken remnants of national companies. At the same time, no one seems to have noticed the sudden termination of the tradition of designating capitalist imperialism as the 'greatest enemy' of the 'transitory period' towards 'social liberation' in communism. In this way, Serbian society has remained a society in transition, only this time it is moving back to capitalism, whose power has managed to grow beyond the nation-state, increasingly assuming a global dimension.

Serbia and its society will have to adapt like the others did. In a time of the overall stimulation of the dynamic preservation of cultural heritage, who cares about the hardships of a society in permanent transition in preserving its own tradition? The idea that transition as such, regardless of its direction, may become tradition, is actually ironic, because there is only a slight theoretical chance that a society becomes so dynamic and flexible that no transition may deeply disturb it any longer. In concrete reality, again, continuous sudden turnovers of social values constantly take place; these hinder all the advantages of a continuous development of society and causes confusion in people's minds. As the most conspicuous continuity of all of the transitions of the Serbian society, there remains the negative continuity of people's alienation from the 'institutions of the system.' This gloomy bureaucratic heritage has influenced all of the apolitical individuals, who now actually comprise a majority of the population. Their apathy towards social involvement reflects the long-term

hardships caused by brutal authorities who used to destroy generic values, bending and abusing them to their own ends. As a consequence of that practice, in spite of a variety of ‘non-governmental organizations,’ conferences, and editorials on ‘civil society,’ people have remained mostly alienated. They are still not able to make ‘horizontal networks’ to improve their daily environment. This very remoteness from being able to immediately connect oneself, keeps social values intact and hypostatizes them into the sphere of ideals, whose contact with reality becomes marginal. This creates the opportunity – on the part of those who assume power – to once again hide tyranny behind the newest ideal of ‘democracy.’

What follows from the foregoing is that, of all the actual meanings of the surviving traditions of Serbian society, the negative ones are the more conspicuous, be it the abuse in conditioning social consciousness by politicizing nationalism, or the lack of tradition in the sense of the lack of civil behavior or respect for the law. The positive elements of tradition, besides the collective cultural heritage and its influence, are certainly present in homes, familial heritage and customs, and in friendly socializing. The fact that the vital elements of tradition are so personal may be pointing to the role of individuals in preserving, transferring and creating tradition. After all, one’s choice of the aspects of tradition that one adopts determines what is going to be transferred to one’s descendents. However, even more influential agents of tradition represent the creative contribution of individuals. Because of that, tradition, especially in the cultural sphere, is defined by creative personalities, poets and thinkers who contribute to the evolution of society. Their importance is almost (traditionally, so to say) neglected in Serbian society. However, in spite of this, the Serb tradition will always be represented by authors such as Dositej, Vuk, Zmaj, Dučić, Kostić and other creative personalities who incorporated elements of universal human experience into their works.

Even simple individuals may significantly improve daily social life by discovering the values that bring universality into the specific requirements of the present time. The appearance of a ‘critical mass’ of such individuals in a society facing the task of reclaiming its authenticity might enable the modeling of such a dynamic identity, organized around universal values, which is capable of surviving in the situation of the global ‘transition.’

Therefore, the reconstruction of institutions as important elements of an integrating tradition of society should draw the support of the individuals who can contribute to its progress – first and foremost to its internal progress, but also to external integration. This is so because, without an internally integrated dynamic identity, it is impossible to take part in a wider intercultural integration; what remains is only a terrifying pressure of ‘integrism’ at all levels. These distinctions between integration and ‘integrism,’ tradition and traditionalism, universality and universalism, and other positive and negative notions characterize the opposition

generating the current historical situation. It is in everybody's interest to resolve these dilemmas before globalization outruns human control.

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