

The hope for Philosophy in the global age

by Jelena Djuric

The affirmation of philosophical matters in the transition of millennia, in the context of a globalized world, certainly owed to noble endeavors of George F. McLean, director of the Center for Research in Values and Philosophy (CRVP). His actions are directed to general recovering and confirming the prospect for philosophy, principally in relation to globalized humanity. With endorsement of that hope the vision of the reality that realize such philosophy could be accepted as the matter of great importance for all cultures and inhabitants of the globe.

Some essential ideas that circulate through intellectual space illustrate this. Among researchers and scholars, joined together in McLean's CRVP projects, from all parts of the world, a productive abundance of thoughts, accessible through internet¹, was already established. Most of them contribute from different perspectives, to the virtual construction of an innovative worldview. It is neither linear nor complete, but it might be significant as a promising projection for increasingly globalized humanity. Most ideas of these respectable philosophies, either those belonging to McLean himself or to other thinkers from various cultural backgrounds, converge to the hypothetical worldview. However, they could not be considered now thoroughly. A serious realization of the concept would demand the profound study and methodical synthesis of all essential elements from entire collection of texts. At this occasion I just want to highlight that in these philosophies there are some marks of a common view that offer an expanding vital perspective for the future philosophy. Let us express it symbolically as emerging of 'the bright new worldview'. In this article I will use some of those ideas from CRVP site that to my mind approach to that worldview. Contrasting cynical consequences of Orwell's 'brave new world' para-phrase, this attempt strive to find the way through their integration in the conscious vision. To see the world as wonderful, is not to flee from its horrors and pains, but to hope that the further evolution of humanity is possible under the condition that initially we could see it positively. This is the point where the constitutional role of a viewer is focused again.

Dynamic philosophical exchange owes to McLean's concept of CRVP mission to concentrate philosophers from all around the world on contemporary global issues. These theoretical

¹ <http://www.crvp.org>

activities generate a ground for potential emerging of the new paradigm. If it now seems eclectic, that may be because of the narrow perspective. So, if the wider perspective was attained, it might be possible to see these ideas as congruent pieces in the global puzzle. An intuition about which parts of the puzzle are already placed, could lead one either to recognize the quest for a bright worldview with its potential improvement, or to ignore, or criticize it as the vain construct. Anyway, this is only the initial attempt to join philosophical efforts for a new paradigm in the benefit of the collective of humanity.

“The world is now unifying itself from the local contraries to the one globalized culture in order to create a new philosophy of humanity. We are no longer semi-human but human, and are initiating a creative philosophy for all of humanity in its present technologically cohesive situation.”² However, (Medjutim, povezivanje ideja razlicitih autora u jednu smislenu, kohezivnu filozofiju, ili pogled na svet, nije bas zahvalan posao. Razne ideje idu u mnogo pravaca i njihovo pribiranje iziskuje stalne intervencije u tekst uz menjanje, dodavanje ili oduzimanje mnogih njegovih delova koji imaju svoje utvrdjeno mesto u izvornom kontekstu. Neprijatna je i mogucnost da sve ispadne nezrelo, da bude shvaceno kao prepisivanje, ili da se promenjen tekst previse razidje od namere autora.

Bez obzira na ‘tekovine’ postmodernih uvida, mnogi principi racionalnosti neprikosnovenno vaze i dalje. Filozofija pogleda na svet ipak podrazumeva odredjen nivo preciznog diskursa, kao uslov komunikacije. Postoji tu i dilema o prihvatljivosti postupanja sa tekstovima drugih kao sa sirovim materijalom, ma kakva da im je buduca filozofska namena. Stvaranje tekstualnog kolaza nije postupak koji je prihvacen kao kod vizuelnih umetnosti. Razlog ozbiljnosti je neprikosnoven premda on tera na ponavljanja, ne samo utvrdjenih postupaka i pravila, nego i prethodno mnogo puta iskazanih ideja. Tako da u nastojanju da autenticno izrazimo ideje i postignemo originalnost, mi cesto potvrđujemo u stvari ‘identitete’ svojih malih ega. Govorimo o slicnim stvarima ali ne postizemo saglasnost koja je potrebna za razvijanje zajednickih vrednosti, opstih ciljeva i univerzalnih interesa. Svako unosi u svoj izraz sopstvene zanose i ideale, ali i slabosti i zablude. Mnozeci pojmove i predstave ne olaksavamo mogucnost medjusobnog nadovezivanja i usavršavanja, pa zato kumulativnost humanistickog znanja ostaje problematicna, a filozofije nastaju kao hermeticne spekulativne

² Imamichi, Tomonobu. “Contraries and Compatibilities in a Time of Cultural Globalization”, in Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change, Cultural Globalization, Chapter VIII

tvorevine koje, osim u hermeneutičnoj podatnosti, ne drže korak sa promenama stvarnosti i tako (p)ostaju neoperativne.

Dok odusevljena nekim idejama iz tekstova objavljenih na CRVP sajtu, pokušavam da ih povežem u tkanje jednog novog pogleda na svet, savladjujem želju da odustanem postojećem izgledu nedostizno, ali i podstičem želju da uspešno dovršim ovaj prilog proslavi McLeanovog jubileja. Dugujem zahvalnost svim autorima koji inspirišu svojom mudrošću i molim za izvinjenje zbog neuobičajenog citiranja. Mastam o idealu prepoznavanja koje bi podstaklo njihovo priključenje za ostvarenje pozitivnih potencijala ove zamisli.

U duhu debate zacete u 'cyber' sferi o "copyleft vs. copyright"³, implikacije ideje prava na slobodu da se menja 'software' da bi se prilagođavao potrebama korisnika, pod jednim uslovom da i nakon toga ostane otvoren za dalje promene, nedovoljno su istražene. Naravno, to nije slučajno, jer potencijalna revolucionarnost takve slobode rasi ustanovljene vlasničke (proprietary) odnose i remeti uhodane tokove moći. Filozofi su pozvani da se suoče sa tim, bar na planu ideja. Uvidjajući bitnost temeljnih promena, filozofi treba da na njih ukazu, a time možda i da ih prizovu. "The aspiration of freedom has electrified hearts, evoked great sacrifices and defined human progress in our age."⁴

In accordance to⁵ 'a present socio-economic paradigm', which is 'the imperative of political and cultural freedoms' and 'the force of the postmodern mentality', humanity suppose to overcome 'strategies of self-interest and control', while transcending the ruling concept of the modern world 'as an order of possessions', in purpose to reach 'a spiritual disposition', without which 'is impossible to visualize an inclusive human horizon'.⁶ However, when we relate this to ourselves, we could easily reach the limit. In ubiquitous need of human ego to be, and in a more subtle level, to be right, manifestations of human nature as transformations of will for power seem hard to conquer. We do not have to go far, or to become aware that underlying principles and

³ <http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/philosophy.html>

⁴ McLean, George F., "Aesthetic Sensitivity as Completion of Ethical Freedom", *Personalist Ethics and Human Subjectivity, Ethics at the Crossroads, Volume II*

⁵ Dei, H. Daniel . "Identity and Globalization: The Metaphysical Question of the 21st Century", in *Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change, Cultural Globalization, Chapter XXI*

⁶ Ibid

symbolical structures of our societies are ‘linguistic games’ that are ‘essentially power games’. We just should look sincerely in ourselves. ⁷(?)

Now, in the beginning of new millenia, when ‘the exaltation of scientific-technological devices’, ‘the hypertext, cybernetics and epistemology, leaves us blinded by the footlights’, philosophers are again confronted with ‘the challenge of the metaphysical dimension’.⁸ The awareness increase that “the decision in metaphysics concerning the nature of reality and the corresponding decision in epistemology determines our understanding of the nature and meaning of freedom and indeed of human life. The results of the exclusions made by the empiricists are devastating for human life and meaning: there can be no sense of human nature and hence no freedom of self-perfection; there can be no sense of human existence and hence no natural freedom of self-determination.”⁹

That turns us to the superior evaluation of philosophy. “The link of man to philosophy makes of this discipline, at the same time, knowledge, attitude and, above all, passionate testimony to life, and finally a path towards truth.”¹⁰ Moreover, we are tempted to create a philosophy for this, global age. “Philosophy must now take an independent role, trying to state its own identity aiming to collaborate with all branches of human knowledge to promote peace and human welfare.... It has the ambition of bringing all human knowledge and experience into one perspective and explains all human interest under one perspective: global philosophy or philosophy of globalization”.¹¹ The magnetism of philosophy is strong, and hence dangerous for making us inclined to forget that ‘love’ for ‘love for wisdom’ (philosophy) is not self-sufficient. We should be vigilant for the lessons of history which are supposed to have taught us that the world should end its speculative stage and enter the stage of an operativity of the spiritual kind or, otherwise, it would be disposed to obscurity.

⁷ For example, in our feelings about our own text. We do not feel well when someone else take our text and change it according to some different criterion. Also it is embarasing to be deleted, or criticized - basically a criticism itself is also an obvious transformation of will for power... and so on... We are in that power game so deep-rooted, until our daily lifes. At the same time we need the power to be what we are ment to be – ourselves on our own identities.

⁸ Dei, H. Daniel. - Ibid

⁹ McLean, George F., “Aesthetic Sensitivity as Completion of Ethical Freedom’

¹⁰ Dei, H. Daniel. - Ibid.

¹¹ Bunchua, Kirti. “Creation of New Philosophy in the Age of Global Village” in Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change, Cultural Globalization, Chapter XV

Evidently, there is a great hope to recover a genuine metaphysical quest. Yet, there is no promise that distancing to the reductionist scientific exactness, as ‘a symptom of the spiritual weariness of Reason that emptied knowledge of meaning’, would reward us with the ‘reflective conscience’ and ‘existential commitment’. However, there is the faith and the longing is present in many cases, as in the words: “Desacralized knowledge has made man spiritually homeless, he has become a stranger to himself.... As one man put it, ... “A purely scientific civilization destitute of ideals and values, devoid of the humanizing and mellowing influence of religion, philosophy and art, would be cruel for the soul as the pre-scientific civilisation was for the body”. ...” The greatest need of this age is a great prophet who can accept the facts of science and at the same time give inspiration to fill the great spiritual void”¹². ¹³

Having in mind that in the sphere of philosophy one is less appealed to wait for a prophet than to try to find him/herself a *telos* of humanity, we could read the opus of George F. McLean as philosophy that is systematically designed for that purpose. “If there be truth to the commonplace that the first millennium was focused upon God and the second upon man, then this beginning of the third millennium should be the opportunity to unite both.” ...“True progress must be... implemented by the development of human dignity, creativity and responsibility; and it must be centered upon what is ethically good and aesthetically moving because inspired by the Spirit. Precisely in these terms new and exciting ways open to a life with meaning and value for all.” ¹⁴ Very important is that this basically Hegelian approach is enriched with a sense of the particular. Therefore, “...the concern is to look not only for what is essential, necessary and universal, but especially for what is existential and unique in the free and creative exercise of life.” ¹⁵

Hegelian provenance is also present in Day’s ‘philosophy of postmodern *Aufheben*’. Together with E. Hobsbawm, he put emphasis on an apparent failure of all modernity programs that deal with the issues of humankind. However, his philosophy that is ‘anchored in a living metaphysics’ was not principally directed to a personal improvement, even though his proposal

¹² From the Proceedings of the Eighth Session of the Pakistan Philosophical Congress in Karachi 1961, according to B.H. Siddiqui, Ibid.

¹³ Siddiqui, B.H. “ Knowledge: An Islamic Perspective”, Philosophy in Pakistan (Series IIA, vol.3), Chapter 10.

¹⁴ McLean, George F. “Ways to God, Personal and Social At the Turn of the Millennia”, in Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change, Series I, Culture and Values, Volume 17, Series IIA, Islam, Volume 6

¹⁵ McLean, George F. “Ways to God...”

for philosophy is “an openness to truth, not the possession and legitimization of one truth above the other.” The key to this is “to discover that we confront not problems, but questions of meaning.” And the goal is “...a leap in the consciousness... In this way the dystopic experience of modernity reflected in postmodern culture can be thought of as the human possibility of a free decision to exist in the world according to an identity which is not one of appropriation, grasping or consumption. “

A comprehension of identity questions at the individual level could allow a better understanding of their general and universal principles related to the consciousness of the whole. Thus, globalization would ‘lack its own identity’ without ‘giving priority to a planetary conscience’. Leaning on ‘the mechanisms of supremacy’, with excluding the other, ‘the so-called phenomenon of globalization’ ‘may continue as a tragic imitation of instrumental reason... anchored in the fragmentation and isolation of populations and human beings’. If that kind of “instrumental reason can find in globalization its universal meaning, this universality... is a universality without identity...”¹⁶

However, complementary with a gloomy side of globalization exist its cheerful version that presume *Aufheben*, as well as raising of global conscience. Arranged by McLean it is considered as 'today's challenge to achieve a comprehensive vision whose integration is not at the expense of the components, but their enhancement and full appreciation'. This process transcends particular concerns 'not to deny them, but to respond to them from a more inclusive vantage point'. ‘This is the heart of the issue of globalization and cultural identities’. ... ‘If a global outlook be evolved in which unity is promoted by diversity, then the progress of world unification could be, not at the cost of the multiple cultures, but through their deployment and interaction.’¹⁷

Discovering the insight in questions of global thinking in philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa, McLean reanimate archaic principles of the mind that were forgotten in modernity. Those principles does not see diversity as negating but as promoting unity. With detailed analysis of Cusa’s philosophy that culminate in the power of intellection, joined with the imagination, McLean clearly shows the disadvantage of modern discursive reasoning and ‘knowledge

¹⁶ Dei, H. Daniel . “Identity and Globalization...”

¹⁷ McLean, George F. "Globalization as Diversity in Unity", Philosophical Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization, Series I, Volume 19, Chapter XXIV

constructed on the basis of multiple limited beings understood as opposed one to another’, which ‘proceeds essentially in terms of parts... without taking account of the overall unity’. He points out that, in Cusa's global view, not only the realization of each is required for the realization of the whole, but ‘the reverse is also true, namely, it is by acting with others and indeed in the service of others or for their good that one reaches one's full realization.’¹⁸ And because knowledge as such, ‘is directed toward an ordered reality -- ours and that of the entire globe -- the central questions are not merely epistemological, but ontological and ethical...’.¹⁹

Without a doubt, ethics involves the most actual question today, that of ‘the meaning of the human dimension in a globalized world’. According to the study of Ghislaine Florival²⁰, ‘issues of the human person which underlie ethical responsibility’ are principally ‘tied to a practical anthropology which infolds from the center of action.’ ... ‘Therefore, ethics can no longer be only a theoretical science, a reflection either *a priori* on the essence of action or *a posteriori* on acquired human experience, but must begin and carry out work on new matters, yet unexplored, which have an immediate impact on the life of individuals, cosmic possibilities, the protection of peoples, or socio-cultural life.’ ... ‘The integrity of the human in its natural habitat and cultural dimension the whole of existence is put in cause in its goals and values.’²¹

These words are clarifying for values behind a number of analysis, since, ‘Radical transformation of individual and social life raises new ethical questions becoming conscious of the philosophical urgency of redefining all in terms of a destiny which now has come to be shared universally.’²² Thus, B. Kirti reminded us, “the time of change calls... for a change of value base. The appropriate value base must respond to the characteristic needs of globalization. Globalization means... that we must learn how to live in the globalized world as our ancestors lived in a village. Surely we need an appropriate philosophy...”²³ Considering philosophy as the source of a globalized culture he proposed ‘contemporary paradigm’ that to his mind leads to: responsibility; collaboration; trust; mutual understanding and peace. “Only by deliberately engaging in breaking down the walls of distrust can we open the way to the trust on which

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Florival, Ghislaine. “Reconstruction of the Subject in View of Contemporary Globalization”, in Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change, Cultural Globalization, Chapter XII

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Bunchua, Kirti. “Creation of New Philosophy...”

friendship is based. History has brought us to the brink of a "high-tech" global society. ... The pressing task is to learn how to collaborate with sincerity...' The way to this leads through "both a *kenosis* and a *metanoia*. *Kenosis* means emptying oneself of the "old man"... This emptied self can then be filled up through a *metanoia* to open eyes to a new way of seeing: the contemporary way or paradigm. With this new outlook, we can become a "new man" that sets no limits on love."²⁴

Kirti sees all these considerations as 'a serious program of education for preparing humanity for the culture of the global village'. But, if 'education' has to become operative it should go beyond the level of words and its interpretations. And with doing so, it will be rather an issue of personal self-discipline than intellectual education aimed for future global humanity. Of course, to compose the order for the collective of humanity we should not neglect any aspect of the world. Perhaps to begin with 'metaphysical question of choosing a new way'. This 'must refer explicitly to the tremendous task of reformulating the symbolic universe that has sustained the history of humanity up to this day.'²⁵ Then we would find the way how to 'prevent global solutions to aim unilaterally at the benefit of developed states and plutocracy. This achievement is depending on human concern for 'the dimension of totality' that fuse solutions of scientific rationality with the 'reasonbleness'²⁶ of human reasons in the social and political sphere.

"Science and democracy have been the watchwords of modern history ... But wherever there are two the problem of their unity and harmony becomes central to the realization and value of both. So it is at the present moment that we are in search of an adequate context which will enable both science and human freedom to be realized under the title of democracy in our day. If this can be found it will enable scientific capabilities truly to implement a humane and free life and our democracy to become, not merely a well ordered tyranny of the majority, but a context for personal and social realization."²⁷ That 'adequate context' might be found in the bright new worldview, as well as that worldview we are searching for, might be the adequate context for future 'acquired freedom' of 'self-perfecting' the individual, the societal, and, why not? - the global world order.

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Dei, H. Daniel . "Identity and Globalization..."

²⁶ Shen, Vinsent "Scientific Rationality and Hermeneutic Reasonbleness: Implication for Education", *Philosophy of Science and Education: Chinese and European Values (Series III, volume 9)*, Chapter 3.

²⁷ McLean, George F., "Aesthetic Sensitivity as Completion of Ethical Freedom'

In searching for the entire comprehension of questions of meaning, values, and freedom, with McLean on his forefront, the CRVP was published a tremendous amount of texts that became difficult to embrace (*nepregledna*). During time that resource of ideas continue to multiply itself to the virtual infinity. Therefore, it will be impossible (for an individual) to examine it completely so to include everything of importance. In this manner the idea of cumulative wisdom is not possible for mortal human being. However, we can hope that main principles would be somehow transmitted to us, so that we could discover the pattern for a paradigm that corresponds to the spirit of our time.

Sometimes we could find the wisdom that appears between lines (*naslucuje se*). As in McLean's words that 'freedom and love are the highest of human realities', so that 'search for what is required for them (and hence manifest by them)' award us with 'an especially penetrating exploration into the heart of being itself'. Whether on example of Cusa's philosophy, or that of Kant and Confucius, or any other philosopher and philosophical question, McLean profoundly discover what he is looking for, and that is 'the intimate nature of reality'. He finds the harmony between dilemmas, such is the one of freedom and order, and succeeds 'to appreciate from within the more intuitive insight' and 'thereby to engage this in new ways particularly adapted to present times'²⁸.

²⁸ Ibid