

Modernity after Modernity*



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***Abstract.** A strategy for the second modernization raises, beyond objectives, a series of epistemic responsibilities. It is known that modernization stemming from the Enlightenment had, among other things, the pretense that it is a project which is self-legitimizing. Its profound rationales are the only justification. Referential self-centering proved to be the one that made possible a practice of the new. Modernization having the function of renouncing myth – meaning an eliminatory formula for the past – and the fixation in the opportunity and potentiality of the present, seemed to close an insoluble but extremely engrossing problem: that of a propensity towards utopia, of the risky escape towards the future. The traditionalization of the new constitutes a support for the daring to break out of the captivity of the moment.*

Modernization becomes the experience of combining the new which, thus, creates a succession of present times. The future is no longer the result of fantasy, but a system's direct expression to combine the new. Therefore the future is an option for one or another model of the present, often tested previously somewhere else. In a non-metaphysical way, the future can be seen, touched, tried, lived by simple geographical movement. The sense of evolution has de-temporalized taking the form of the concomitant, parallel, enclosed, neighboring space. We just have to be in the trend, to evolve in the context.

Globalization defines the context and its conception – as a project of the second modernity – shows us the trends. The problem is how to understand the context in order to find the sense of the trend. Are we the load the sense with the values of the first modernity or will we have to turn to the values of another modernity? Why do we have to move away from the significance of the processes which made up the first modernity? How do we relate to the content of the new context in which the structural trends of today's world are taking place? What is the key to understand both the context and the trends?

Key words: changing the paradigm; vague values; explicative model; ordinate principle; global age.



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The subject I chose is part of those destined to help us understand the things that happen around us.

I must say that in the last decades something seems to have occurred which did not leave us too much time to understand that which it is most important: what is happening with us, with each of us and with all of us, together.

Change – as a form of existence at the change of the millennium – became so precise that it usually treated us, human beings, as objects.

We cannot, for instance, ignore the feeling that we are caught in a project we do not control. It is a project which we disquietly perceive on the personal side, but most

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uneasily in what we have been used to consider our identifying destiny.

Why this? It is simple to say: we are in a project we do not know, of which we have vague ideas, diffuse or confuse (or none at all) and which, therefore, we do not understand.

I would like to make it clear from the start that I am not trying to exaggerate. I am the sort of person opting for prudence, choosing the middle-ground, avoiding excesses. But I can not ignore the fact that vague projects have influenced us, Romanians, at least since 1937.

If we haven't succeeded in doing something on the personal side – either against or in favor of these projects – it's hard not to notice that these vague projects have created dependencies, have carved paths and tunnels out of which we found our way out with difficulty.

Each time the public reaction meant something: recovering the past. The bickering over the past is what denied consistency to every project, either invented by us, or exported here from other parts of the world. This is how our passing through history was interpreted rather as being stranded in the project: in the projects looking back towards the past. The many changes of direction show that we could not decide what the direction could be, the often radical regime changes were the consequence of the lack of clarity in the direction. In fact, since 1937 we managed the counter-performance of completely missing the direction, and from 1988-1989 to approximate it with difficulty. I am not referring to the phenomenology of politics, but to what students call being “trendy”, making a public show of the option for the battle for the trend.

What do we see today? 1) we have recovered a bit in the project of modernity derived both from the values of Enlightenment and as well from the effects of the industrial revolutions and the consequences of national revolutions in 17th century Europe and 2) we have already been hesitating for two decades about making our own projections according to the new wave of modernity prevailing now in the world.

Practically, we are in a new intermediary state, defined by the specific non-fulfillments of the configuration of society in the last two or three centuries and by the confusion about the elements of the recent process of world-reconfiguration.

If we were to define a project of modernity compatible with what is happening in the world we could say on a strategic note (Dinu, 2007) that: our current status is that of the periphery, that the sense of a definable project would be that of coming out of the periphery, the means to be used being the battle for the trend.

But how can we tackle the internal architecture of the project? There are two ways: 1) to perceive the essential alignments of knowledge; 2) to put together the explicative model of what is happening with us and the world we live in.

Concerning the configuration of the frame of reference

The referential context which lends significance to our learning efforts is cumulatively defined by the theoretical visions of Enlightenment, by the material breakthroughs of the industrial revolutions and by the institutional consequences of the national revolutions.

What has the Enlightenment taught us?

a) To better the human condition – the ensemble of conventions within which we harbor our representation about the fulfillment of needs and aspirations.

This means the conquer of nature, transforming it in the consumables storage room of mankind. The ultimate phase: the draining of nature and substituting it with virtual nature. The artificial, including with regard to man, is the ultimate cause, not just absurd, but apocalyptic.

b) To secularize thought and as a consequence to rationalize values and motivations, to set the evolution of life on the principle of efficiency, a triumph of materialism, to be interested in the utility of gestures and sentiments, to dehumanize rules, to “economicize” society, the market economy becoming market-society, being becoming a consequence of material structure and a function of the mechanism.

Thus the illusion of overcoming the constraints of life is generated by the supremacy of technical progress and the accumulation of material wealth; science is power, and power is tested by the destruction of natural life and the ambition of creating alternative life, including by cloning.

The Enlightenment hypnotized us in seeing the Universe as an horologe: us, humans, being an un-performing cog if we do not renounce our sentiments. It lead us to conceive life as a struggle, as a Hobbesian test of irreconcilable adversity among parts, as a competition which is invariably won by 1-2% of us.

Dependency became the hierarchical rule, the world is ordered centripetally, the periphery grows and the center is condensed – blurring the sense of evolution. Enlightened hegemony builds for itself a citadel of political correctness.

c) There is no doubt that the project of Enlightenment was a progressist one, it brought us out from the long night of the inquisitorial control of thought.

The break produced by the Enlightenment on the path of emancipation of man was radical, it pushed the trends to the extreme; man saw in it the possibility of taking the place of the Creator, even by killing God. Enlightenment freed us from the condition of being moral out of fear of Divinity and gave us the freedom to choose being either immoral, or moral towards our kin.

d) The Enlightenment had, on the other hand, provided through generalized progress the solution without an end, of the uninterrupted run, without pause, in which the will for power needed to consume the will for life, mankind exhibiting its propensity towards self-destruction.

Enlightenment gave us science and we used it to rationalize sentiments. Moral and social relativisms have invented the science of dialectical and historical materialism, they have legitimized the idea of the pre-established progress of society and have always persisted in creating a new man (Habermas, 2000).

What did the industrial revolutions bring us?

- The multiplication of power by machine, first of all of the power in fighting nature, including human nature.
- The possibility of constructing the artificial universe, creating new degrees of freedom for human nature, leading to contractions, even extinctions of the natural.
- In accordance with the Hölderlian belief which expects the possibilities of escape to increase as the danger increases, a new path of evolution opened, represented by the revolution of the vision on progress through a use of resources that is specific to the knowledge society.
- The coherent founding of the idea of knowledge society closes the vicious circle of the materialism of the industrial revolutions, announcing a path of rebuilding the vital relations between human nature and the mother-nature, man finding within himself the resources for fulfillment without destroying the environment.

What did the national revolutions bring us?

- The instrumentalization of the management of power in the form of the nation-state for the distribution of rights and responsibilities.
- The logistic support for confrontations for external domination, with mechanized warfare its violent form and for internal domination, by resorting to civil war and class war.
- Inventing the culture of dependence through the formula of the need for national sovereignty, fixing the sense of citizenship in the framework of the

geographic symbols of the nation-state, manipulating fundamental rights after the preeminent significance of such values as national interest, defending from an external enemy, solidarity to the leader etc.

- An international regime in which the institutions of governments are marked by adversity motivated through formulas such as “state policy”, “the balance of power”, “the world concert” (Nye, 2005).
- The consequence of the adversity in configuring the international regime is the hierarchical system, of the unipolar world, the dead-end of an evolution accompanied by feelings of concern.

Here is a framework on whose guidelines we understand the world and understand what is happening with us.

What does it mean to break-loose from the constraints of this framework?

It practically means to force the exit from the values of a modernity emerging on the alignments of the Enlightenment, industrial revolutions and national revolutions. How? This is the challenge to which the present analysis responds.

The fact that we are still not clarified on the evolutions of modernity, but sensing the change, we opted for vague solutions. Today we talk of post-modernism. We try to explain to ourselves many things as being of a regressive consistency to the model. We are talking of post-communism, even of post-capitalism, of post-national.

On the configuration of the world

Things are not different with the concept of globalization. We can distinguish different areas of confusion:

- Of a functionalist nature – between the hierarchical vision, of an imperial/hegemonic type and the vision of the democratization of the international regime (Brzezinsky, 2005).
- Of a political realism nature – between the vision of the status-quo of unipolarity and a polycentric type of vision, as the effect of regional integration (Fukuyama, 2006).
- Of an ideological nature – between mondialization/mondialism and globalization/globalism (Todd, 2003).
- Of a determinist nature – globalization being an expression of technical progress, of the increasing of inter-dependencies etc. (Friedman, 2007).

The source of confusion lies also in the exclusivist option for a perspective, all others being eliminated. The fragmentary condition of the vision creates confusion.

As it was outlined in literature, globalization covers alternative meanings:

a) As a consequence of the growing interdependencies between countries in a context of liberalization of international trade and of internationalization of the markets centered on the ideas of, among others, Krugman (1996) regarding the functioning of the international economy;

b) As an expression of the absolute triumph of liberalism, imagined around the idea of Fukuyama (1994) regarding the “end of history” – the TINA concept (There Is no Alternative);

c) As an institutional management solution to the distribution of power, from the point of view of the access to resources, which supposes the reformation of the UN and Bretton Woods institutions, ideas promoted vigorously by J. Stiglitz (2005);

d) As a synthesizing formula which includes the emergent post-communist and post-capitalist processes, structured around the idea of Wallerstein (2005) regarding the global system (TIA – There Is Alternative).

The option of the alternative configuration of the sense of globalization resides in two movements, both of ideas and of militants:

1) the one aggregated around the ideas promoted by the World Economic Forum, also called “the coalition of capital”;

2) the one that intertwined in the context of the reactions culminating with the organizing of the World Social Forum, called “the coalition of citizens” (Monbiot, 2005).

Especially these last perspectives are visibly, on the open scene, conflictual. One perceives the other as aggressive.

The diffuse, in some ways maybe even confused character, of the concept of globalization is justified through the phenomenology of conflict; the explanation, though, must be found. It is, in fact, what I am proposing next.

I must specify that the state of confusion is correspondent to a situation suggested previously, that of the captivity in the sphere of rational significances and guidelines of a system of values specific to the modernism of the Enlightenment and to the industrial civilization.

Today we find ourselves in the tail of the comet appeared from the decaying of Enlightenment values, meaning in the interval of the intermediary values of post-modernism (Lyotard, 2003), values of a decadent nature, in the way suggested by the metaphors of the

twilight and the crepuscular universe, so well analyzed by Nietzsche (see the available analyses on www.dinumarin.ro).

The collision of significances between modern values and post-modern values means, on one hand, the inertial preeminence of the significance of Enlightenment values, of paradigms that created conditional cultural reflexes – to call it this way – through school and, on the other hand, the progressive attachment of significances to another tutelar paradigm, situated beyond the transitive interval of post-modernism.

The best sort of an epistemological cut in this respect was achieved by Ulrich Bech (2003), who spoke of the conflict of values of the first modernity – the Enlightenment one – and of the second modernity – that of globalization, whose manifestation takes place after the exhaustion of the comet-tail of modernism, which is the post-modernism.

The state we are in: we are in the passage – with many swirling currents in knowledge – between the first modernity and the second modernity.

Practically we are very close to a fault line in history – in experience of knowledge – the one that divides history in the Pre-Global Age and the Global Age (Dinu, 2006).

What lends coherence and plausibility to this vision? The ordinate principle, meaning the expression – of a metaphorical or narrative type – which seems to legitimize the phenomenology of world evolution. Obviously the principle is rational, but sufficiently relevant to explain the irrational, too.

The obsession for an ordinate principle has forever existed, from the divine principle (of the demiurge), to the evolutionist principle (of natural selection) and the principle of progress (the preeminence of technology, of the forces of production) and up to the principle of the physical forces (of universal attraction etc.), of determinism (the chain of cause-effect), of self-creation (the living systems) a.s.o.

In social sciences the obsession is not different. The Economy has gathered as a science around the principle of competition, sociology around the conflict of interests (with class struggle as its culmination), anthropology around the idea of structure, politology around the idea of hierarchical representation.

What insures unity, at the level of significances, to the Pre-Global Age? The ordinate principle of adversity. The world taken as a whole is imagined as being made up of parts which are in a state of adversity. Adversity explains the inclination towards war, conquest, domination etc., but as well competition, exclusivism,

polarization, hierarchy, castes. One side (state, domain) has the tendency to control another side and so on, empires being a significant result of adversity. The internationals where expressions of the reconfiguration of parts on non-territorial criteria in order to generate adversity.

The principle of adversity is polarizing both at the level of the world as a whole (North-South, West-East or among races, cultures etc.), but also at the level of parts, within states (polarization of classes, rich-poor, power-opposition, state-citizen, elite-masses).

To come out of this situation of conflictual polarizations, be it even in a sublime state (the equilibrium of opposing powers, welfare state, consensual power etc.), there is only one possibility: to change the ordinate principle.

Evidently we find ourselves in the plane of desires, with powerful propensities towards the utopian options. It means we are forcing reality, in the sense that we are forcing the knowledge and the power of man of making use of it. There is no surprise in saying that changing the ordinate principle is a natural impossibility; it is as if we would create another nature – including another mother-nature – different of the one we had until now.

In reality it is about forgetting. What are we forgetting? We are forgetting that the situation we are in is part of a state of fact created by the rebellious evolution of human nature, as a second nature, opposed to nature in general. Human nature is in most part the habit of understanding what goes on, on the basis of hypotheses, concepts, knowledge taken as plausible or even accredited as truth.

Fixing human nature within those guidelines gives us the Archimedic support for the understanding of the world and of nature. Now the guidelines of thought are fixed by the Enlightenment, while the guidelines of action are fixed by industrialism. The patterns of knowledge are in accordance with our minds. They make visible those significances inculcated in memory. We are forced to see through the lens of the Enlightenment paradigm. The world becomes visible only through the principle of adversity. The world has been organized to offer the specific frame of manifestation of adversity. The final consequence of this situation is that the changing of the forms of organizing the world without the changing of the ordinate principle generated epistemic confusion: it is in fact an operation lacking logical consistency, it is a reformist prestidigitation.

What situation are we in? A part controls the whole. It is the absolute expression of the manifestation of the principle of adversity.

What does it mean, for instance, in our situation, to reform the international financial institutions and those in the UN system, as a structure of global governance? To confirm the situation in which one part controls all the other parts? And the last question: Can this situation be called globalization?

Any affirmative answer has now epistemic underpinning, it is not plausible because it does not reflect a profound reality, with a specific essence. A new language hides an old truth. Which means, the ordinate principle has not changed in order to legitimize the new language and the new reality. We do not hold the lenses of the new paradigm.

What can we see? Today we talk of globalization as a new formula for organizing the world. In reality we apply the sense of a new concept to the unmodified state of the world. The correct way is to say that we are assimilating an exceptional modification in the manifestation of the ordinate principle of adversity – meaning the evolution of its ultimate consequences – with globalization. We can call this state – simply and significantly – Americanization (with the variations around hegemony) (Dinu, 2006). Logically, mankind has not come out of the Pre-Global Age – as a space for the manifestation of the ordinate principle of adversity.

We find ourselves in the intermediary zone of the diffuse concepts defined by post-modernism – the comet tail of post-modernism – and far from the second modernity.

The new modernity has outposts of significances which approximate the sense of globalization, the most advanced being the integrative project of the European Union (Rifkin, 2006)

The distortions of the significances of the condition of the world is due to culturally consolidated partisanships – even ideologically – for the Enlightenment paradigm and for the performances of the Pre-Global Age.

The successful insinuation of the distortions at the level of common knowledge is explained by the fact that the universe of knowledge is build around the paradigm of the Pre-Global Age. The cultural pattern also creates specific habits out of which it is hard to come out, and the exit we perceive as an apocalypse.

What sort of suggestion is proposed to us by the breakthroughs and formal approximations of the Pre-Global Age?

1. Solving the problems accumulated in the Pre-Global Age, like poverty, underdevelopment, pollution, polarization etc. cannot be done without the changing of the ordinate principle.

2. The evolution of the world is a process of learning, of knowledge, and the change aims at the understanding of the human nature as a structured universe of values.

World evolution is in fact marked by the changing of the defining context of human nature and by the cultural pattern which holds an explicative model internalized through education.

3. The significances of the idea if change must not contradict the essence of the human nature and must not oppose it to nature in general.

4. The harmonic principle of competition/cooperation could be the new ordinate principle of the Global Age. In essence, this signifies: the inclination of human nature towards assumed and confirmed performance and its reinsertion in the global framework of nature where self-organizing is in a network forever opened towards equilibrium.

Collective games give us a suggestion of the model: the restarted dispute of performance, minimal rules, impartial arbitration, participation.

The conclusion? Globalization does not really exist but is diffuse, either through connotative expressions like globality (for common and grave problems of the planet) or like globalism (as a formula for the management of power in an imperial/hegemonic guise) or through approximations of globalization (like the European integration).

Globalization will become reality only as an expression of the management of global powers on the basis of the harmonic principle of competition/cooperation. Globalization refers to and has only sense in the idea of world order and implies the institutional solution of global government. Any crediting of a real or theoretical entity with the attributes of globalization/global must be in logical accordance with the significances and phenomenology of the harmonic principle of competition/cooperation.

On the configuration of the project

1. The operational difficulty of any referential model of a paradigmatic nature is evident. To make the transition from horizon of conceptual significances to the structuring of evolution according to its pattern any model needs to spend some time in the curve of learning. To become reality the theoretical model has only one alternative: to inculcate its values in the minds of the people. When it arrives at generating representations congruent with its logic, at motivating gestures and behaviors of acceptance and in the end at entering the conditioned reflexes of the deciding elite, we can talk of it gaining in substance.

It looks like a project of social engineering, but in essence it follows the scenario tailored by the Enlightenment

project, responsible for the first modernity, in which we are now evolving. If this manner of provoking development and modernization looks like social engineering then mankind has no other possibility available. The reservations are not, evidently, about the method, but about the fact that the new project discards to the history's garbage bin the habitudes with the old project and with the architectural arrangements of power, particularly with those of access to the powers liberated from the rationality of the first modernity.

The new project of modernity represented by globalization is defined through critical comparison to the preceding project. In a subtle way it does not present itself as an anti-Enlightenment project, but one for the escape from the exhausting consequences of the Enlightenment, born out of the fundamentalism of the rational thinking, out of the intolerance towards non-rational explanations. The cultural, epistemic and economic print of Enlightenment meant a breakthrough on the path of rationality, of relativism and materialism, of the limits of human nature. Unfortunately the feverishness of the advancement counted more than the consolidation of the infrastructure that would provide safety and would minimize the risks. Through the industrial and national revolutions the cornerstone was laid for an efficient system for the management of powers – natural, economic, scientific, political, military etc. – but with insufficient inverse connections, of self-control and self-adjustment for the advancement.

2. The methodological consequences of the Enlightenment are also affecting the understanding of globalization and the operating positioning of the actors in its project of modernity. Dramatically, globalization is forced to jump into the Procrustean bed of the Enlightenment paradigm, falsifying its senses.

The significances of globalization are bordered at the extremes – as we have seen – by Fukuyama's vision of the absolute triumph of liberalism which marks the "end of history" (Fukuyama, 1994) and by Wallerstein's vision expressing the assumption that liberalism has entered its dissolution (Wallerstein, 2005). Which means that the centrifuge of history spreads, in the first case, an unique model, with the apodictic "there is no alternative" (TINA) and, in the second case, announces a radical reconfiguration of the order, of a restrictive nature, after the formula "neither this/neither that", a sort of resuscitation in a state of emergency of the older inspiration represented by the theory of the convergence of systems in the manner of Duverger. The "conquering liberalism", however, was quickly covered by the absolute extension of the global radiations of the unipolar system

of the management of the powers of the world, while the expected death of liberalism cleared the space for ruinous retro-projections, reloaded utopias or fantasist overestimations of national sovereignties. Between these limiting block-stones are huddled, in fact, constructions adhering to the rule of proportional combining of the two theories. The results are hybrids kept alive with ideological energizers, from those obsessed with the theology centered on the consequences of the scientific and technical revolution in communications (a sort of new Utopias which put together the preeminence of the material cause with the rationalization of knowledge), through to those build on the principle of rising interdependence (an utopian mix between diamat determinism and scientist progress), to those motivated by conjunctural judgments of geostrategic sort or polished by sufficiency through ceremonies of formal conversion to the ritual of the correct language (random arrangements of transcendent concepts and life experiences). The mosaic seems dense, although social innovation is being voided by the coming into effect of the authoritarian formula of the superpower which is the US; Americanization, as a designator of specific values, simply replacing globalization for form and content (Dinu, 2004).

By the power of things only one model proves to be real, the one developing practices, the other models being postfactum attempts of a response, usually under the guise of heresies which extinguish themselves out of lack of internal force.

The expressiveness and infallibility of the American model of managing the global powers, consolidated by the American dream, comes into collision not with the ordering models counterfeited with the tools of utopias – in fact their mission is akin to those of the butterflies flying around the lamp – but with another model, built on pragmatic underpinnings, in which globalization proves to be an exercise of testing the conjectures pertaining an European world escaped from the control of the angels (Rifkin, 2006).

3. The conceptual state of globalization is not only incipient (even innocent!) but, as we have discovered, also confuse. From the almost religious invocation of the term to the ambitious projects of theoretical synthesis, the epistemic consistence of globalization remains a failed objective. It cannot, in effect, be attained within the paradigmatic guidelines of Enlightenment.

The epistemic relevance of the concept of globalization is build upon:

a) The theorization of making operational the hegemonic position in an unipolar international system, with

neoconservative ideological alignments of a radical type, centered on the discretionary control of global powers – economic, political, military, cultural etc. It is the compatible formula with the hierarchical visions of the first modernity and it fits with the rigors exerted in the Pre-Global Age;

b) The tendency to restructure international regime and relations, after overcoming the bipolar model of global confrontation, through instituting the values of democracy in the global administration of powers. This is the path that announces the entering into the Global Age.

In fact, globalization experiences in the first situation the re-loaded state of imperialism, which sends it in a class of processes in which the structure of the world has evolved on the principle of adversity (fixed in the Enlightenment pattern), and in the second situation globalization must actually be defined as a novatory process set in motion by another principle, that of cooperative competition.

Even if in the language of analyses the leveling of sense appears as truth, deep down numerous and consistent reactions of delimitation take place, especially for the recovery of the real sense of the process of globalization. The mediatic pressure exerted through the logistics of the hegemonic vision discounts the majority of public perceptions to its profit. It couldn't even be any different so long as the exercise of adversity is reproduced as a legitimate expectation of the part for which the winning agenda sits in the unipolar order.

The control of today's world powers inevitably also means the control over the dictionary of globalization.

The ingredient represented by political correctness seems natural for an order in which the rules are imperial without demonstration. The baptism of reality becomes the consequence of an inflexible rule which orders everything in the set of significances adjacent to self-sufficient power.

The problem of functionality can also be put in terms of time. The period cannot defy the limit of logic. The unipolar formula is an extension whose success is applied only through complicating the alternative in the threads of prudence. When it is said that the current formula of world order is the ultimate consequence of the principle of adversity (Brezinski, 2000) it's not only a critical formula, in fact observant of an implacable evolution, but also an expression of the inevitability of the end of "history in overtime". The end of the Enlightenment paradigm comes naturally, even if it disturbs the rites of the birth of another paradigm.

In conclusion, together with my thanks for your attention, I must say what idea I represent: globalization is not what we all know it to be. It will be only after our common understanding will be realized.

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