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Das sprachliche Bild der Bernsteinstraße-Region

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THE CULTURAL SPHERES OF EUROPE AND THE ISOMORPHISM OF ALGEBRAIC STRUCTURES

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It is almost commonplace to speak of different cultural spheres in Europe, yet, at the same time it is actually disputed by some whether different cultural spheres really exist in Europe. Since ARNOLD TOYNBEE the notion of contrasting civilizations has gained general acceptance. He treats civilizations as sovereign entities, beings that are born, live, develop and die. He was neither the only one, nor the first one to point out the self-contained specificity of cultures. With OSWALD SPENGLER the notion of "cultural sphere" or "culture" acquires a particular sense, which suggests an organic, living being. We may no doubt agree that the model TOYNBEE puts forward is an exact system set up by an expert specialist, while SPENGLER does not provide a groundwork for further exact investigations — if, descriptive theories are to be considered as such. Of course, there is room for further work in the field, and new ideas may always come to light. However, if we are to use the notions of "cultural spheres" and "cultural regions", we must use them in a clear and unequivocal sense, as demanded by scientific logic.

The question before us is the following: can Eastern Europe be regarded as a civilization different from the central and western parts of the continent, and if so, where should the boundaries be drawn; by what concrete criteria should certain local, national cultures be assigned to the European or to the Eastern European civilization, respectively? Already the question itself is ambiguous. The ambiguity in its formulation is deliberate: European as opposed to Eastern European? The ambiguity is both terminological and logical: one half of the European culture is actually European, while the other is Eastern European. Or should we perhaps call the Eastern-European half Asian? Such semantic reductions may be found in the language of the Hungarian peasant, as well. The ques-

tion put to the parents of a new-born baby is often as follows: "Is it a child or a girl?" Because the word "child" really means two things (in Hungarian): an actual child (in other words "boy"), or a girl. So there are two Europes, too: an actual Europe, and another one which is different somehow. Now, while it may seem justifiable to use these terms in such a way, it is also obvious that they can by no means be accepted as rigorous scientific categories from the point of view of the philosophy of culture.

Sometimes it is said that that part of Eastern Europe which is of the Orthodox Church is part of the Asiatic culture. At times serious scholars in the field will ask: "How is it possible, that Asiatic culture has produced sub-types so different in mentality, artistic form and in many other ways, as the Russian and the Japanese?" And then these same authors will discuss at length the many ties with which the Russian and Eastern European culture is linked to the culture of the Balkans, of Byzantium, and how these two are in fact one and the same. Sure enough, the *Cambridge Medieval History* treats of Russian medieval culture in the chapter on Byzantium, as a sub-chapter. If we go along with all this, then it would seem logical to say that on the one hand the Byzantine-Balkan and Russian cultures, and on the other the Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian cultures are components of one single Asiatic cultural sphere. However, this conclusion cannot be accepted without certain reservations.

By Eastern Europe one usually means the Russian culture. Yet the Ukrainian and the White Russian cultures are also undisputably parts of Eastern Europe, too. We have not drawn any boundaries as yet, this essay has not delimited Europe's cultural regions and we have not listed any criteria along which this delimitation could be made. Yet we know that Eastern Europe cannot be restricted to the Russian region for the very fact, that in that case Ukrainian culture would have to be assigned to Central Europe. And it certainly could not be maintained that the Czech, the Hungarian or, for that matter, the Austrian culture (this latter being considered

Central European, as well) are just as close to the Ukrainian culture as they are each other. At the same time it would be equally wrong to say that the Ukrainian culture is just a variety of the Russian. As YEVHEN SHABLIovsky says: "During the 16th and 17th centuries the Ukraine was not cut off from the political, scientific and cultural life of Russia, Poland and other Slavic lands of from the rest of Europe in spite of the general extremely grave situation. Ukrainian scholars studied at the foremost European universities. Thus, Yuri Drohobich (Western Ukraine), received a master's degree in Rome in the 15th century and published some of his works in Latin in that city. In 1481 he headed the University of Bologna, one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in Europe. The Ukrainian Pavlo of Krosna was appointed head of the Ukrainian literature department at Cracow University in 1505. During their stay at the European universities Ukrainian scholars, as the researcher Hrihory Nudha has shown, not only mastered the achievements of world learning but also popularized Ukrainian history, culture and songs among the students."

We should bear in mind, that those members of the Ukrainian clergy that were educated in Italy, Rome, Bologna, or possibly in Paris, became in fact Uniates, as for example Feofan Prokopovich, educated in Rome, who was a prelate of *Uniate* allegiances when Peter the Great came to know him and invited him to his court. Feofan Prokopovich, who had made himself a reputation in Kiev with his ideas and his oratorical skills, then went on to steer through with an iron hand the transformation of the Russian Church in Peter's court. It should be noted: the man who reforms the Russian Church for Peter the Great is a *Uniate*, i.e., a Greek Catholic prelate. It is only through him, through a church leader with an *occidental* education and outlook that Peter's reforms, as regards the Church of Russia, could be realized.

With her many prelates educated at occidental theological faculties, the Ukraine has therefore numerous close ties linking her to Western European culture. And those

prelates and church leaders who represented the occidental influence on the Russian cultural scene were generally *Uniates*, either of Ukrainian or White Russian descent, as for instance Meletii Smotrickii. The above examples should already indicate that the Eastern European cultural sphere cannot be identified with a somewhat Asiatic Russian cultural sphere. It is another question exactly to what extent Russian culture may be considered Asiatic; I do not wish to enter upon that matter now. But it is a fact, and may be stated as such, that within Eastern Europe the Russian element may be separated from the Ukrainian-White Russian element, while both are combined in constituting the Eastern European cultural region.

We may then say that the area considered as Europe in the geographical sense may be considered as one single macrostructure in the cultural sense, too, divisible into several, clearly separable sub-systems. These sub-systems, in spite of all the differences among them, are more closely related to each other, than to other macrostructures, outside the great European one. It is legitimate therefore to call these sub-systems Europe's cultural regions.

Among Hungarian scholars the essay published in the 70's by JENŐ SZÚCS about *The Three Cultural Regions of Europe* has become a classic, and, as I assume that the present audience is familiar with this work, I shall be referring to these cultural regions in the sense used by him.

Having thus outlined the terminological background, I should like to ask two questions: first, how is it possible that a certain cultural region that belongs to a particular cultural sphere, being therefore the sub-system of a given macrostructure, can be just as closely related to another great macrostructure as to its own? Or, to be more concrete: can a given region of the European cultural sphere be part of the Asiatic cultural sphere to the same extent?

My second question is this: can descriptive cultural philosophy remain objective, i.e., is it at all possible to talk about different cultural regions without introducing our value

judgments? Can we ever discuss these cultural regions in such scientifically exact terms as to preclude the terminological ambiguities referred to in the introduction, i.e., the "is it a child or a girl" type of confusing formulations.

Let us take the model of areal linguistics. As you know, in areal linguistics the area where a given language is spoken is considered as the sum total of various dialects, so it is never uniform. And in the different idioms one encounters the particular features of different languages. As part of a *linguistic union*, a language may acquire attributes which are genetically alien to it. Now, in the case of an *areal philosophy of culture*, we must set up cultural isoglosses, or "isocultures". As a result, instead of asking which cultural sphere, which macrostructure does this or that cultural region belong to what we have to examine is to what extent *x*, *y*, or *z* cultural specificities are present in the given cultural region. So, for example, if we cross the Daugave river, we find a completely different world on the north side. But if I call it more northern, more Scandinavian, all I do is express my subjective, emotional impressions. If cultural atlases were made, similarly to linguistic or ethnographic atlases, containing information on religion, way of life, literary and artistic expression, as well as other areas, then undoubtedly we would see those cultural isoglosses or "isocultures" which connect Lithuania with the Polish and Central European regions, Latvia and Estonia with the Northern European region, and the three Baltic cultures with each other, as the closest ties are obviously between them, so most of the cultural isoglosses, "isocultures", would be Baltic. Supposedly. Because without exact investigations and findings all we have are emotional and artistic impressions — including the evaluatory works of literary scholars — which are insufficient for making such conclusions. It is to be stressed that the model outlined here can only be applied, if from its linguistic terms of reference it is adapted to a cultural reference system.

Last, I should like to mention two more similarities with linguistics. Let us take swear words as an example.

Although the Hungarian language is really rich in swear words, Russian is still richer. On the other hand, there are no swear words in Modern Hebrew, which was created from the dead Old Hebrew language. The religious, normative character of the culture carried by Modern Hebrew can explain this. In Europe the swear expressions in Lithuanian are relatively mild, while in the Estonian language there are hardly any words that a Hungarian would call swear words. It was GÁBOR BEREZKI who pointed out that in Orthodox and Catholic regions swear words are usually stronger and there is a wider range of them, than in Protestant areas. We may add that this observation is true not only for Protestant regions, but also for those where puritanic ideas are prevalent, like the Judaism of the Old Testament, or the German Protestantism of the Baltics. We can therefore formulate a *cultural universality* on the pattern of linguistic universalities: in areas where the Orthodox or the Catholic religions are stronger, the system of swear words is also stronger and more developed. However, since in Hungary the geographical area called the Great Plain happens to possess a significant number of Protestant elements, and since the language of the peasantry living there is rich in swear expressions, the cultural universality we have formulated must be taken to be a quasi-universality. Another example: if there are Uniate, i.e., Greek Catholic clergy in a given region, then that region may be considered as being the contact point between typologically different regions. In other words, if the Uniate clergy play any ideological role in a given circle, then it is always a mediating, linking role.

Finally, we have another model borrowed from linguistics: the mathematical concept of isomorphism. As you may know, two algebraic structures are said to be isomorphic, if there is mutual, definite correspondence (bijection) between them. An algebraic structure is a given set "A", and the set of operations on it:

$$\mathcal{G} = \langle A, F \rangle$$

where $A \neq \emptyset$ and $\forall f \in F \exists (n \geq 0)$, f is an n -variable operation on A .

Let $\mathcal{G} = \langle A, F_A \rangle$ and $\mathcal{B} = \langle B, F_B \rangle$ be algebras of the same type, then

$$\varphi : \mathcal{G} \longrightarrow \mathcal{B}$$

is a homomorphism, if

$$\forall f_A \in F_A \quad \forall f_B \in F_B \quad \varphi (f_A (a_1, a_2, \dots, a_n)) = f_B (b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n)$$

and it is an isomorphism, if it can be inverted.

\mathcal{G} is homomorphic with \mathcal{B} if φ is a homomorphism, and \mathcal{G} is isomorphic with \mathcal{B} if φ is an isomorphism.

Two cultures, or two cultural regions may be considered isomorphic, if their different components, elements and relationships correspond. In other words, what is to be examined is not whether the same elements, the same phenomena are present in both cultures, but whether there are any systematic correspondences between the different elements of the two cultural regions. For instance, during the Enlightenment the Uniate clergy in the East, the enlightened nobility in the Central European region, and the bourgeois intellectuals in the West may be considered as each other's equivalents, and the processes in which they played their roles may be considered as algebraic operations, between which definite correspondences could be constructed. Should we actually construct such correspondences, then we could talk about mutually homomorphic or isomorphic cultural spheres.

Or let us take another, more typical example. It was very common to compare the Marxist ideology — in the form it took in the Socialist countries — with the role played by Christianity in the feudal state. To consider Marxist state

ideology as a religion is excellent material for utilizing algebraic isomorphisms. For if an ideology has a morphology — and all phenomena in the world have morphologies, and the job of science is to discover and to describe these —, then the study of ideologies actually means the description of the structures of the different ideologies and the demonstration of whether these ideological structures are mutually homomorphic or isomorphic.

It should be stressed that no definite, concrete assessment or conclusion has been reached with the aid of the linguistic and algebraic methods presented here. But evaluation, or assessment is not the aim of a descriptive discipline. The aim of this draft has been to present a few analytic tools, and to point out that while in the last three or four years — due to compelling historical factors — we have been referring to Europe's cultural regions in a normative sense, indicating thereby a desirable course of development, now the time seems to have come to deal with this matter within the framework of scientific description, free from the influence of current events.

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