

*BUZALIC Alexandru*¹:

Religion and Identity – Anthropological Guiding Lines²

Abstract.

The human being is *homo religiosus* through his ability to experience the sacred, laying special emphasis on the meaning of existence of all things, expressed afterwards in a metaphysical interpretation concealed behind symbolic-religious language. One of the most important processes of integration into reality is self-identification as a person and gaining a group identity –processes that take different shapes over the history of human existence. The formation of state entities has always been preceded by a process of creating a social identity that manifests itself through the spiritual life materialized in culture and religion. These processes have led to the birth of mediaeval states and then to the shaping of modern Europe, necessary to the deconstructions and reconstructions in the inter-war time. These processes are also visible today during cultural globalization. What we need is a critical approach on unity in diversity that characterizes humanity in history and that will shape the future evolution of humanity.

Keywords: church, faith, state entities, globalization, identity, nation, religion.

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Introduction

The term identity defines a dynamic, complex process, vital for each individual who becomes self-aware and is able to answer the question: Who am I? Identity concerns the identification and differentiation of one individual from the “other” and implicitly leads to identification with a psychosocial pattern, shares the same view of the world, and is actively involved according to the common values promoted by an identity group.³ We thus distinguish a biological identity, a psychic-psychological identity, a group identity, and a social identity. To these are added the meta-identities through which the individual recognizes him-/herself and adopts a specific system of values, of which the most important will be given by religion.

Ontogenetically, building up an identity goes through different stages; it acquires nuances and precise criteria of identification with the psychological age of the individual.⁴ This process is conditioned by many endo- and exogenous factors, from the issue of personal identity that each individual builds up to the issue of social integration that forces the same individual to relate to the “other” while safeguarding his/her individuality and otherness in a being of the “together” type. It generates the feeling of belonging and influences group solidarity.⁵

The process that allows the acquisition of an identity facilitates at the same time the integration of the individual in the world according to his/her specific structure: body and soul, matter and spirit, as man manifests himself as a spirit in the world through culture and religion. It is a dynamic process of adaptation and manifestation/responsible and conscious action in the social, cultural, and spiritual environment in which humans live.

The special condition of man in relation to other living beings is given by the specific relationship he has with the transcendent aspects of reality. Man is *homo religiosus*. Religion is the experience of the sacred.⁶ Able to perceive the sacred, man has a specific

³ LICATA, Laurent (2007): La théorie de l'identité sociale et la théorie de l'auto-catégorisation: le Soi, le groupe et le changement social. In: *Revue électronique de Psychologie Sociale* 1. 19–33.

⁴ BUZALIC, Alexandru – BUZALIC, Anca (2010): *Psihologia religiei*. Galaxia Gutenberg. 213–214.

⁵ Op.cit. 203.

⁶ Religion is defined by Mircea Eliade as “the experience of the sacred”. ELIADE, Mircea (1971): *La nostalgie des origines*. Paris, Gallimard. 29. This definition allows us to approach the foundations that underlie all religions. Behind the different forms of expression, specific to each

knowledge that raises him beyond the simple integration into the natural environment; human knowledge is already an interpretation and expression in a language approved by man through culture and religion.⁷

Next, I propose the following axiomatic definition to the term “culture”: *culture is the materialization of the human spirit in history*.⁸ Culture is generated by the creative intellectual and spiritual powers of man, is materialized by image, sound, word, or body expression, and is intended only for man –the only being capable of spiritual acts and of understanding the meaning of material signs that reveal the intention of the creator of culture. Intergenerational transmission is dynamic and accompanies the human phenomenon in history as an intangible heritage; in this context, the vestiges that lose their ability to be deciphered through hermeneutics accessible to a historical time become signs of dead cultures, which have either metamorphosed or have been replaced by the new geo-cultural substrate that coexists alongside the human phenomenon at some point.

Religion coexists alongside man by providing him with the specific means necessary for the knowledge of the world, for responsible and moral action, for cultural manifestation and social organization. Thus, religion is socially materialized through empirical structures, or church institutions. By ensuring the relationship with what is seen beyond the barrier of transcendence and revealed through the sacred, religion becomes one of the most significant factors that contribute to the spiritual maturation of the individual by giving him fixed, trans-historical, and strong ontological landmarks in building his personal or group identity.⁹

Hence the importance of the relationship between religion and identity is further pursued in terms of ontogenesis of personal identity and group identities within a geo-cultural space, in terms of national identities that precede the emergence of state entities in history. The space defined by borders overlapped with one or more cultural-spiritual

culture, there is a primary experience of the cognitive type through which one becomes aware of the existence of things by integrating the empirically perceptible and the unseen aspects into a “whole” that becomes the “world” experienced by man.

⁷ TAJFEL, Henri (1981): *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 84–87.

⁸ SCHLEIERMACHER, Friedrich Daniel Ernst (1838): *Hermeneutik und Kritik*. Berlin, Reimer. 103.

⁹ BUZALIC – BUZALIC 2010, 239–240.

identities, pluralism thus living on even after the historical moment of the affirmation of the nation-states in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. Finally, we can sketch a forecast of the future in the context of the processes of globalization, contemporary migrations, and cultural evolution in continuity-unity with the European cultural heritage and dynamism-diversity caused by coexistence in a cultural, spiritual, and religious pluralism.

1. From Personal to Group Identity

Man is born into a family, the core that ensures his subsistence and, through a gradual process of gaining independence, marks the socialization process of the individual. Being essentially a social being, man is conditioned by the social environment in which the parents live: he has genetic traits specific to his ethnicity, learns his mother tongue and thus communicates with the world in a vernacular language that shapes – through specific grammatical structures – his beliefs and ways of expressing himself.¹⁰ Moreover, he will be cared for, fed and dressed according to the customs of that culture. In other words, spoken language structures the way of thinking, the habits of the cultural environment, the behavioural reactions, and the character traits of the individual.¹¹

Each individual belongs to a biological gender that conditions him in his body development through the endocrine system and thus becomes another determining element in the process of building his own identity as an individual: this is biological identity.¹² Subsequently, psychosexual identity is built gradually, starting with the relationships within the family, around the age of 2-3, by identifying the male or the female pattern. The mother tongue configures and structures of thinking, the way in which the individual communicates with the world through cultural transmission or by experiencing it, depending on the transposition of this data into a common language. The individual specificity of the young child (biological, sexual, pattern, etc.) is manifested through play, by integration into the group of children during the school years. Educational specificity

¹⁰ GIUST-DESPRAIRIES, Florence (2002): Approche psychosociale clinique de l'identité. In: *Recherche & Formation* 41. *Les dynamiques identitaires: questions pour la recherche et la formation, sous la direction de Mokhtar Kaddouri.* 49–63.

¹¹ EDMOND, Marc (2005): *Psychologie de l'identité. Soi et le groupe.* Paris, Dunod. 57–60.

¹² BUZALIC – BUZALIC 2010, 214–215.

and cultural-religious environment shape – initially by mimicry, later by adopting cultural customs – behavioural reactions and the visible external appearance of that culture. During this period, identity is lived in an egocentric way.¹³

Puberty and then adolescence are marked by the confrontation of personal identity with the otherness and especially by the need to identify with something higher that offers stable landmarks in self-identification with the world. The identity of adolescents begins to be strongly influenced by social and cultural factors, going through processes of self-acceptance and adoption of values, identity crises accompanied by disorders in the field of psychiatric psychology or unusual/antisocial behaviour when talking about anxiety, rejection, social alienation, acts of aggression, etc.¹⁴

This period of psycho-social development concentrates on redefining biological and group identity in a system of values that becomes the identity through a transpersonal process¹⁵ of searching for those transcendent values that have become trans-historical landmarks for a geo-cultural environment. Within this identity, the human being manifests himself/herself fully, at all the levels of his/her existence, expressing himself/herself at a biological, psychological, emotional, social, cultural, and spiritual level.

The adult acts dynamically, through a permanent process of adaptation, affirming him-/herself individually and as part of a group by widening his/her spiritual universe, thus integrating him-/herself into a narrower reality or into a wider horizon in which the individual and the otherness have a meaning.¹⁶ There are also different degrees of identities included in each other, which mark the transition from individual to universal.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Op. cit. 225–228.

¹⁵ According to Abraham Maslow, the term “transpersonal” defines the experiences of self-transcendence beyond immediate needs, a “vertical” transcendence. Values are linked to a transcendent or transpersonal reality. Starting from the study of motivation (classified into five levels: psychological, safety, integration, self-esteem, and self-realization), Abraham Maslow adds “self-transcendence”. Experiences that tend to the Transcendent become a “meta-necessity” or the “need-to-be”, which pushes the individual towards sacrifice and fidelity to all that is Truth and Beauty, ultimate transcendent reality thus removing selfishness out of immobility. Consequently, the transpersonal is a self-transcendence towards the Transcendent. Cf. Marc-Alain Descamps (1997): *Le transpersonnel dans les psychothérapies*. In: Guyonnaud, Jean-Paul: *La dimension spirituelle en psychothérapie. Corps et Transpersonnel*, Editions Somatoterapies. 157.

¹⁶ BUZALIC – BUZALIC 2010, 228–232.

Each stage determines how many individuals have something in common, the high point being given by the proper understanding of the human condition, what theology identifies as the creature state that man has, the image and likeness of God, saved by the passion, the sacrifice, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, subject to the universal plan of salvation of all humanity and the eschatological tension that directs history to its finality.¹⁷

Through religion, in general, and through the Church, in particular, man expresses symbolically but also effectively his own identity relating himself to the group, the society, the nation, or to all humanity, finding in God the effective transcendent landmark of historical existence specific to man.

2. Faith and Confessional Identity

Any religion is articulated around a doctrine and morality, is recognized through the practice of religious worship, and generates a socially representative institutional and administrative structure, which is the church in the case of Christianity.

Religious doctrine offers the individual the knowledge of the world as it is interpreted in a certain cultural space. Through the doctrinal content, man acquires a perception of God, builds a cosmological idea in which he integrates the answers regarding creation, consolidates an anthropological and soteriological concept, and he accepts the meaning of history through eschatology. Doctrinal language is based on symbolic expressions and a specific language that encodes true metaphysical interpretations and cognitive experiences behind which lies the reality of the world as it is lived by man.

But along with the religious cosmological elements and spiritual anthropology present in the doctrine, man benefits from the progress of scientific knowledge with which it is ultimately confronted the concept of the world that each individual constructs as a result of the adequacy of the elements of each source of knowledge, in different ratios. **But** the meaning of being goes beyond the powers of empirical knowledge, the only possible answer being the eschatology which integrates the passage of the individual through history and the destiny of the world in a coherent explanation, necessary to man, without which his own life would be marked by chaos and absurdity.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ GIUST-DESPRAIRIES 2002, 51.

If through doctrine man knows what the purpose of his existence is, morality is the cognitive-behavioural aspect, a practical guide that shows the concrete path that reaches the finality presented by the doctrine and undertaken by a concept of the world. Morality imposes an appropriate behaviour towards the promoted religious values; it becomes a stable, trans-historical landmark which goes beyond civil laws and customs in a continuous change-transformation.

The doctrine and morals undertaken by the religious man impose the external manifestation of faith through acts that generate the religious cult. Ritual gestures are the expression of the spiritual act (prayer, symbolic gesture, representation, etc.) made by man, body and soul, in the cultural environment in which they carry out their historical existence. It is obvious that the spoken language and/or the liturgical language, the traditional music and/or the sacred music and cultural peculiarities will fully provide many shades to the religious cult.

But the most visible aspect remains the social organization within which a religion expresses itself. There is a double interference: religion shapes the society, and the society determines the religious institutions. For Europe, the relationship between Christianity and social evolution is reflected by the church.

The church is a divine, human, spiritual, and material reality, seen and unseen, which incorporates the number of all those who have been baptized into an ecclesial body that evolves in history. We note the historical evolution of the concept of self that the church has, i.e. the ecclesiological concept, which implicitly expresses the way in which the collective identities within the European culture are outlined and materialized.¹⁹

Christianity irreversibly transformed European culture and gradually lent it unity due to the fact that different peoples shared the same values that led to the development of society and due to the particularities of the sacred arts of painting and sculpting and of architecture.²⁰

Christian antiquity was marked in the first centuries by the appearance of the first communities, the persecutions against Christians, the appearance of ascetic, anchoretic, and pre-coenobitic movements and then of monasticism; it is the period of the first

¹⁹ BUZALIC – BUZALIC 2010, 15–18.

²⁰ TESSIER, Robert (1994): *Déplacement du sacré dans la société moderne: culture, politique, économie, écologie*, Bellarmin, Quebec. 34.

theological disputes around heretical movements. The administrative structures and commercial networks of the Roman Empire became the catalysts that accelerated the territorial expansion of Christianity, to the outline of a *Christian ecumenical world*. During this period, the Church defines itself through the mystery of unity that communities live spiritually. Moreover, conceptually, Catholicism-universality takes shape by overcoming the limits of Jewish-Christian ethnicism and by accepting God's plan to save all nations, the unity of faith and baptism thus becoming the central elements of a universal-integrating meta-identity in this mystery: "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:27–29).

Starting with the Constantine era, the ecclesiological concept evolves in the direction of the institutionalization of the church. Gaining freedom following the edict of Milan (313 AD), Christian communities are forced to organize themselves as dialogue partners with state authorities, to undertake not only pastoral care but also administrative and legal responsibility on behalf of believers living within a certain area. The church visibly becomes "a church of churches", a social meta-structure that brings together all the local/private churches spread over different continents and that expresses itself according to a specific *heritage*.

This is how church rites appear. "The rite is the liturgical, theological, spiritual and disciplinary heritage, differentiated by the culture and the historical circumstances of the peoples, which is expressed through a way of living the faith that is specific to each Church *sui iuris*."²¹ The rites mentioned in the Code are those that have their origin in the Alexandrian, Antioch, Armenian, Chaldean and Constantinopolitan traditions."²²

Within a short period of time, the spiritual life of a people would be visible through the evolution of ecclesiastical institutions, local churches preaching in the language of the people, according to the sensitivity and aesthetic feelings specific to the place.²³ In other

²¹ Churches in their own right that have their own specific form of manifestation according to a legitimate tradition of a certain geo-cultural environment in which the Word of God was spread.

²² *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium*. Can. 28 - §§ 1, 2.

²³ MÜLLER, Klaus – STRIET, Magnus (eds.) (2005): *Dogma und Denkform. Strittiges in der Grundlegung von Offenbarungsbegriff und Gottesgedanke*. Regensburg, Verlag Friedrich Pustet. 286–290.

words, folk art, vernacular traditions, songs, and architecture would shape the identity, the otherness of one group in relation to another, in the consciousness of integration into a unifying meta-identity of the universal Church. Another consequence of the delimitation of territorial competences is the establishment of the order of precedence between dioceses and hierarchical structures: bishops, archbishops, metropolitans, and patriarchs. In the 14th–15th centuries, the main patriarchal churches were formed, *sui iuris*, the centres of diffusion of the main rites (and liturgical families) mentioned above.

In the Middle Ages, ecclesiastical institutions took the social form of the state structures of the time, rethinking themselves as kingdoms and being under the visible sign of God's presence in the world. In the East, the inside of the churches became a symbolic universe that introduced us, through the icons displayed, to the reality of the seen and unseen world, a world that makes sense and which – despite the terror of history – gives hope and optimism to the triumph of the good. In the West, the Gregorian reforms of the 16th century established the model of cohabitation of the secular world and of the spiritual world through the “doctrine of the two swords”, the two authorities of the government – civil authority and the authority of God, the Lord of history – are interconnected, and the mediaeval royalty is subordinate to the authority of the divine providence.

The beginnings of the modern age were to bring about the most important changes in ecclesial consciousness and identity. The causes were multiple: the emergence of constitutional monarchies put political leadership in front of the pluralism of all citizens in a territory; the mediaeval model of *cuius regio eius religio* was no longer viable. Then, the split of Western Christianity between Catholicism and the Reformed Churches led to the consolidation of group identities. Belonging to the Christian Church was no longer a functional identity factor, so the confessionalization of ecclesial institutions gained more ground, Christianity being expressed from that moment on not through the rites of apostolic origin but through *confessio*.

Western Europe is marked by armed conflicts that seek their trans-historical authority claiming a certain denomination – hence the term of religious wars –, while Central and Eastern Europe becomes a living laboratory of the formation of multicultural and multi-denominational spaces. The churches of Greek-Constantinopolitan rite in these territories are identifiable by the “ancestral law” or “Russian faith”, i.e. by the consciousness of the people's belonging to a liturgical rite, with a calendar and a series of customs that regulate the social, economic, cultural, and spiritual life of the community.

After the attempts to restore the unity of the church initiated with the Florentine Council (1438–1439), the Eastern Ukrainian–Lithuanian–Belarusian confessional space (Union of Brest 1595) and the Romanian Transylvanian one (Alba Iulia 1700) were to be divided between “united” and “not united”. From this point on, the contact area between the West and the East, the North and the South is configured as a territory where Roman Catholics and Reformed, Orthodox and Greek Catholics coexist. To these are added over time specific communities that express themselves from a spiritual point of view through the traditional confession or on ethnic criteria (Orthodox Armenians, Armenian Catholics, etc.; then the denominations that emerge from the reform movements through the phenomenon of neo-Protestantism).²⁴

The consolidation of group identities on confessional criteria inevitably led to the expression of “national consciousness”. This implies identification with a nation that has a historical past and a different culture but with common general features (as is the case with the Christian roots of European culture). It is also an involvement by virtue of assumed values that converge towards the promotion of unity and the assertion of “self” in an ideal but real/non-virtual identity “meta-structure”.

Starting with the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, the wear and tear of socially regulatory mechanisms within multinational state entities inevitably led to the events of the early twentieth century and the negative identification – by isolation from the “other” –of the “nation”.²⁵ European history shows us that these processes of identity/state coagulation are not without conflicts, an important role being played by charismatic characters and political as well as military contexts of the time, culminating with the unification of Germany or Italy. After the First World War, the

²⁴ BUZALIC – BUZALIC 2010, 33–38.

²⁵ The distinction “negative”–“ positive” is made by metaphysical abstraction: the search for transcendental elements is done either in a "negative" way, by separation-isolation from other entities and by focusing on what that entity is “in itself” (categories: *res, unum*), or in a “positive” way in relation to the other entities (categories: *aliquid, bonum, verum, pulchrum*) – cf. KRĄPIEC, MA (1988): *Dzieta, Ja – człowiek*. Lublin, Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego. 135–220. I propose the extension of the analysis and the extrapolation from an individual to socio-cultural entity in the sense of meta-analytical hermeneutics of Mircea Eliade, i.e. the specific “social body” (social group, ecclesial body, etc.) reacts as the sum of individuals, metaphysically being a (meta-)entity composed of a (meta-)identity.

nation-states of Central and Eastern Europe emerged. A nation-state is based on the nation, i.e. on a “stable community of people, historically constituted as a state, emerged on the basis of unity of language, territory and economic life, which mirrors itself in specific features of national culture and in consciousness of common origin and destiny”.²⁶

The National Church becomes an identity marker of unity. It is the result of history and quantifies the concrete way in which faith has borne fruit in a geo-cultural space in a functional continuity. Belonging to a National Church means the transcendent guarantee and landmark of belonging to a group meta-identity. To claim belonging to an original spirituality means to be part of the spirit of that reality that exists today in an intergenerational continuity with the ancestors.

Thus, the meta-identity of a “national group” that can generate a state structure is based on the assumption of a common historical past that legitimizes the “roots” of a geographical space, is based on a majority language that has become “official”, on particular expressions and the general ethno-psychological features specific to an ethnic group, the economic relations and the cultural uniqueness thus contributing essentially to the close ties between the different regions. Determining some state territories leads even more to highlighting the identity in a negative-isolationist way, the nation-state overlapping with a nation with a political entity that represents it.

However, the concrete reality is different and much more complicated than the idealized and the restrictive substantiations. The state is a political entity that is based on international law and at the same time, historically, it is the result of geopolitics that influences events at a given time. Drawing borders is always conventional and leaves part of the representatives of a nation out of the “nation-state” because the nation as such is an ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and spiritual entity that extends by diffusion beyond the barriers established diplomatically at the green table. Hence, there are not only the frozen conflicts but also the tensions that can be seen by reconfiguring the ethnic structure of Europe as a result of migratory waves. In the age of globalization, the dynamics of the evolution of contemporary culture and civilization brings new challenges to the cultural and spiritual identity acquisitions and will force nation-states to rethink their identity discourse in a way that it is viable in the context of tomorrow’s world.

²⁶ *The Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language (DEX)* (1998), 2nd edition: art. “nation”. Romanian Academy, “Iorgu Iordan” Institute of Linguistics, Univers Enciclopedic Publishing House.

3. Religion – Migration – Globalization

At present, we are faced with the globalization process of economic relations²⁷ and – as a consequence of the acceleration of history – of culture. The intercommunication between people (belonging to different geographical and cultural areas) puts face to face not only different cultural features but especially different religions and spiritualities.

The European Church and Christianity suffered cultural erosion through the mechanisms of secularization and desecration that became more forceful after the second half of the twentieth century. The history of internal conflicts in the European cultural space, the political divisions of the Iron Curtain, the wars in the former Yugoslavia or in various areas where the tensions of frozen conflicts are felt (e.g. Transnistria, the Crimean Peninsula, etc.)²⁸ all seem to be a thing of the past when looking at the dynamic changes of the parameters of local and global stability. The most important contemporary phenomenon remains the migratory flow along the line of the great historical migration routes from East to West and the newly formed Mediterranean migration routes from South to North.

In the front-line of a European secular culture, there are new populations with a “strong” cultural identity, founded on the spiritual landmarks of their religions. The vitality of the Islamic Asian religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Daoism, and Confucianism) is due to the so-called cultural Renaissance of the populations who have access to the progress of modern technology and the infrastructure of the civilized world but reject the Western values and institutions, capitalizing their own traditions, legitimated and anchored in their historically continuous culture, not at all inferior to other traditions. “The Asian uplift is rooted in economic growth, while the Muslim rising is due to social mobilization and population growth.”²⁹

Religion, inextricably linked to the human phenomenon and the ontological constitution of man –*homo religious* –, begins to be rediscovered by a Western society in crisis precisely by confronting people belonging to those cultures built on the strong values of a continuous message, from the beginning of human emergence, in a history

²⁷ In the sense of growing interdependence between transnational economic and financial structures.

²⁸ HUNTINGTON, Samuel P. (2002): *Ciocnirea civilizațiilor și refacerea ordinii mondiale*. Bucharest, Antet. 122–145.

²⁹ Op. cit. 148.

that makes sense through humanization and perception of the sacred. Also, religion is the main element of identity that plays a crucial role especially in times of pressure and strain generated by migration, uprooting, and acculturation.

This paradox was expressed by Andrei Marga:

“today – in the age of unprecedented expansion of science, the unparalleled multiplication of philosophical perspectives, the most daring intellectual initiatives, the globalization of science, exchanges, communications –,making religion the mainstay (of society) may seem a forced gesture of bringing to the present day a form of spiritual life not only very old but also inevitably wearied down by time. The accusation of the asynchrony of religion is within the reach of many rash people, unprepared, uninformed, too unreflective.”³⁰

Indeed, the scenarios of the rediscovery of the sacred, of the revenge of God, and of the failure of secularization are increasingly outlined. They all start from the spiritual nature of culture and from the cultural-genetic character of religion. Over time, people have given different definitions for spirit and culture, but in all of these, the actions of the human spirit transcend the purely biological condition of human existence. Whether the spirit is perceived as a metahistorical reality that transcends the material world conditioned in space and time or is considered a qualitative leap of matter in a momentum of self-transcendence, it accompanies the human existence and manifests itself. It is related to the inner life of the individual, being even more powerful by accompanying specific human acts: thinking, art, religion. And it does not remain closed within the individual sphere; it is materially efficient in the historical reality, generating culture.³¹

Any diagnosis paves the way for therapy... Wrong directions and deviant behaviour, generating conflicts and suffering, once understood, can lead to that psychoanalytic insight (in German: *Einsicht*), in cultural perspective and meta-psychoanalytic, which leads to a harmonious continuation of personal development:

³⁰ MARGA, Andrei (2014): *Religia în era globalizării*. Bucharest, Editura Academiei Române. 284.

³¹ For the issue of the link between religion and migration, cf. BUZALIC, Alexandru (2016): *Migrație și religie*. (ebook). Cluj-Napoca, Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană.

“Undertaking the study of man not only as a historical being but also as a living symbol, the history of religions could become –forgive us the word – a meta-psychoanalysis. As it would lead to a reawakening and a rediscovery of the consciousness of archaic symbols and archetypes, alive or fossilized in the religious traditions of all humanity. I risked using the term meta-psychoanalysis because it is a more spiritual technique, which aims primarily to clarify the theoretical content of symbols and archetypes, to render transparent and coherent what is ‘allusive’, cryptic, or fragmentary in them. We might as well talk about a new maieutic method.”³²

Mircea Eliade noted that the deciphering of the human spirit, materialized in culture and manifested especially through religion, can be achieved only through an adequate hermeneutics that “would contribute to the liberation of modern man from his cultural provincialism and especially from historical and existentialist relativism”.³³ Eliade saw in his hermeneutics of religions that spark of a new humanism that will regenerate humanity in its spirituality because “modern man is called to rediscover his treasure of images, to rediscover himself, to find ways to communicate with the otherness in order to be able to integrate into the intercultural dialogue that the phenomenon of global redefinition of identity implies”.³⁴

In this context, we speak of post-secular as an innate metamorphosis of the current culture and civilization and especially of transitions (always accompanied by crises) as a qualitative leap that humanity as a living sociocultural organism makes by virtue of its existence and destiny.

Secularization has hit hardest at self-awareness in the sense of weakening the identity of the European man.³⁵ The development of techno-sciences and the transformation of the Western economy into a consumer society gave the impression of establishing a secularized identity built on conventions, rules, hedonism, and material well-being. Behind them is the belief in the supremacy of science that becomes a universal panacea for all problems, provides answers to any question, and, as an eschatological projection, will come to overcome suffering, disease, aging, and death.³⁶ Agnosticism, along with militant

³² EDMOND 2005, 78.

³³ BUZALIC 2016, 42–43.

³⁴ Op. cit. 44.

³⁵ MARGA 2014, 112–125.

³⁶ DOUGLAS, Allen (1978): *Structure and Creativity in Religion: Hermeneutics in Mircea Eliade's Phenomenology and New Directions*. The Hague, Mouton. 60.

atheism, derided not only the anachronistic religious behaviour, unadapted to the new conditions, but also demonetized the values of Christianity and diminished the authority of the church. The modern world wanted to export technological civilization along with the secularization and desecration of life, a *tandem* long considered the model of modern civilization.

In the dialectical evolution of the sacred, Eliade distinguished a process of camouflaging the sacred into the profane, a spearhead being marked by the “theology of God’s death”, the culmination of the desecration that generates all the change processes. Total desecration is the equivalent of an end –we reach “a radically secularized existence, without God and gods ... susceptible to be a starting point for a new type of religion”,³⁷ a *coincidentia oppositorum* that leads to the rediscovery of the sacred. Moreover, man cannot live in chaos: whether he has rejected the religious practice or the authority of the institutions of the traditional church, he needs to know his destiny, a model to follow, and an eschatological hope; he cannot endlessly live in nihilism and all kinds of crises without overcoming them.

Contemporary Europe, like any outdated social institution, is not besieged by immigrants and does not suffer from conspiracies that attack it from the outside but has reached the brink of collapse due to its internal evolution that has undermined its integrity “from within”.³⁸ Passive and irrational in the face of the dynamic changes, it is subject to adaptation efforts that generate a state of crisis. Without the support of the metahistorical landmarks given by the sacred, European culture has become weak; the identity of *homo europaeus* is traced by abstract theorizations broken by the vital dynamism of the spiritual manifestation that animates the culture. Europe is suffering from a “maladaptation syndrome” in the face of globalization.

The current face of modern Europe is about to disappear; the current period is a stage of transition to a new cultural era in the continuation of the Stone Age, Iron Age, ancient, mediaeval, and modern ages. We are in full transition, and it is no coincidence that the phenomenology of change is similar to the transition from the Neolithic to the Metal Age, the fall of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the feudalization

³⁷ ELIADE, Mircea (1987): *Le Sacré et le Profane*. Collection Folio essais (n° 82). Paris, Gallimard. 10.

³⁸ STRIET, Magnus (ed.) (2008): *Wiederkehr des Atheismus. Fluch oder Segen für die Theologie*. Freiburg–Basel–Wien, Herder. 78–81.

phenomenon, the transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age, all accompanied by the decadence of internal state systems, the relativization of moral values and a lot of “bread and circuses”, inconsistency in crisis management and military responses, immigration being a symptom and at the same time the catalyst that accelerates change.

With the emergence of other economic powers in the background and the crisis of energy resources that are unfolding at the horizon of history, the civilization of the Old Continent is obscured by the rise of new actors on the stage of globalization.³⁹ The European of the weak culture is faced with representatives of strong cultures, secularization, and desecration clash with spiritual and cultural rebirths that have found the balance between secular society and religious space; the representative of a glorious past that feeds the feeling of superiority is in front of the exponent of a present that reveals a successful future...

Salvation can only come from the rediscovery of the sacred and the re-evaluation of religious identity. Any cultural contact between populations of different religions leaves visible traces, the natives perceiving the aspects of acculturation through the prism of inevitable crossbreeding, allogenic through adaptive efforts and distinctiveness. Living civilizations are built on the dynamism of permanent economic, demographic, and cultural spiritual exchanges through a continuous, universal process specific to humanity. The cultures that come into contact depend on the social institutional relations that are established – being in either “strong” or “weak” positions – in the progress from acculturation to assimilation, on the establishment of multicultural spaces, or on resistance to culture, in all cases standing for the distinctiveness of spiritual values, a two-way acculturation.⁴⁰

Religious and cultural pluralism that fragments monolithic cultural territories (passive to change and trapped in immobility and the illusion of supremacy over others) is a chance for the Christian Church to be spiritually reborn and fulfil its mission. Neither immigrants nor host populations remain unchanged in the long run: after hostility and circumspection accompanied by rejection in both directions, there is the acceptance or selective rejection of viable cultural elements that allow both the affirmation of the host culture and the reaffirmation of the specific traits of the original culture. It is a

³⁹ MARGA 2014, 80–88.

⁴⁰ BUZALIC 2016, 105–111.

permanent dynamism of confusion-free mixture, of reinterpretations, of assimilations, of the syncretisms and crossbreedings that structure the viable cultural *facies* of tomorrow's world.⁴¹

Homo religiosus finds himself in the ontological structure common to all people regardless of the environment of origin, the experience of the sacred unites and allows the assertion of a unity in diversity in respect of each legitimate tradition, and, when the categorical content of religions hits resistance and isolation, the foundation of dialogue returns also to the anthropological bases and to ethical personalism, the man. *Homo religiosus* is a person, the only transcendent value that deserves to be promoted and respected in the individuality and uniqueness of the historical finitude and the permanence of the spirit in metahistory, in eternity.⁴² In other words, those who seek to prove that all conflicts are generated by religion not only make mistakes but omit an essential thing: religion is the only solution for man, *homo religiosus*, to find himself in the fullness of his humanity and the most important cultural-genetic element that can shape the image of a humanity that has reached the stage of full globalization, a unity in diversity.

The European Christian Church, regardless of denomination, is faced with new situations, first of all with the change of the ethnic structure of European populations – nothing new in history because we have had several stages of ethnogenesis from prehistory until now, the last one being specific to the early mediaeval period.⁴³ The essential problem is to preserve a core identity that ensures continuity; otherwise the scenario leading to the establishment of a new *cultural facies*, the culture of the Old Continent will become one of the dead cultures of terrestrial civilization.

Conclusions

Even if globalization leads to greater mobility and more intense cultural-religious exchanges, group identity and especially national identity remain fundamental elements that will ensure the social functioning and cultural progress of mankind. An important

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² RAHNER, Karl (1965): *Saggi di antropologia soprannaturale*. Roma, Edizioni Paoline. 25–32.

⁴³ Op. cit. 60–71.

role will be played by integrative meta-identities that can give an identity of the unity in diversity type, in which each entity can assert itself its own dignity to the full and without tarnishing.

The concept of nation remains operational in the future, national identity being necessary for the manifestation of unity in diversity specific to humanity. Globalization does not mean uniformity but the dynamism of exchanges between living cultures, marked essentially and remaining as viable entities due to the awareness of belonging to a specific identity. However, all specific identities must be found in a meta-identity that ensures a set of common values, recognizable and respected by all.

Consolidation of state, national, confessional identity, etc. will be done in the future in a new civilizational context.⁴⁴ The European cultural model and the development of a techno-civilization are the features of a “unique civilization, but not a universal one”, as Samuel Huntington stated in the above-mentioned work. National and religious identity will play a particularly important role in renewing and preserving European civilization in the face of other specific cultures in the process of Europeanization by changing the ethnic structure as a result of population movements, especially due to the fact that the identity of political Europe today is of the weak type, without transhistorical and transcendent landmarks,⁴⁵ while the emigrants come from geo-cultural spaces with a strong identity rooted in the values of specific religions, the most important remaining Islamic and Asian religions.⁴⁶

Religion confers the universality of a creative God of the entire Universe and of a humanity that throughout history reaches a pluralism of religious beliefs. The man has a unique position in the cosmos; therefore, the return to a new humanism that brings back into question the sacredness of human life and dignity remains the only viable solution of a globalized culture and civilization, of the unity of supreme values, and of a diversity of specific identities. Any other scenario would lead to discrimination, dictatorship, and conflict.

⁴⁴ HUNTINGTON 2002, 94–121.

⁴⁵ TESSIER 1994, 78–81.

⁴⁶ MARGA 2014, 103–105.

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