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THE AVATARS OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE.

HOW COULD CITIZENS STRENGTHEN DEMOCRATIC INTEGRATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION?

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Abstract

In the complicated historical-political circumstances of the democratization of the Central and Eastern European countries, this essay proposes the outline of a socio-cognitive model of strengthening democratic integration in the European Union. From the perspective of the interaction of society and knowledge, some socio-cultural landmarks of strengthening European democratic integration by increasing civic cohesion and moral solidarity are identified. Creative-dialogic thinking is the operational center that analyzes and designs solutions to strengthening civic cohesion and democratic integration. The communicative-securing interaction is the linguistic instrument by which the implementation of the creative-dialogical thinking in the society takes place. The culture of mutual recognition and "well tempered" ideology are the socio-cultural landmarks that offer openness and meaning of strengthening democratic integration and civic cohesion in the European Union. The purpose of this socio-cognitive model is the operationalization and testing of its socio-cultural landmarks - the creative-dialogic thinking, communicative-securing interaction, culture of mutual recognition, "well tempered" ideology - in interdisciplinary researches and case studies.

Keywords: democratic integration, civic cohesion, socio-cognitive model, socio-cultural landmarks, creative-dialogical thinking, communicative-securing interaction.

The avatars of democratization in Central and Eastern European countries have raised many concerns among the supporters of liberal democracy. For example, in an overview of the state of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe developed by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the following characterization appeared: "Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe is at a crossroads, as citizens across the region are protesting (...) For the countries in Central Europe, resilience to autocratic, populist, and polarizing politics is taking shape as political parties and civic organizations affirm the democratic values and principles that sparked the 1989 revolutions with a new generation of citizens." (Central and Eastern Europe, n.d.). In turn of, the prestigious *Journal of Democracy* dedicated a special number of the analysis of some pressing and specific problems of democratization in this geopolitical zone: "the crisis of liberalism; Orbán's illiberalism laboratory; stopping Poland's rebellion; Czech democracy under pressure; Slovakia's conflicting camps; Soft Decisionism in Bulgaria; anti-corruption populism in the Italian style of Romania." (Explaining Eastern Europe, 2018). It should also be added that many books, studies and empirical researches on the state of democracy and the avatars of democratization in Central and Eastern European countries have emerged over time (Tucker & Schramm, 1992; Keyserling, 1993; Berend, 1996; Debord, 1998; Tismăneanu, 2000; Mungiu, 2007; Hassner, 2012; Rupnik, 2000, 2015; Markowski, 2015; Suchocka, 2015; Horne, 2017; Livezeanu & v. Klimo, 2017, etc.).

At the same time, in the circumstantial statements of some important officials of the

European Union the references are often made about the "natural place" of the Central and Eastern European countries within the European Union. For example, at the beginning of 2019, on the occasion of taking over the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union by our country, European Commission President Jean Claude Juncker said: "Romania has its place in the center of the European Union. (...). Romania's natural place is also in the center of the Schengen area" ("Romania", 2019). Of course, such statements aim to send an encouraging message on policies to strengthen European integration. Beyond such diplomatic statements, we can reflect on the profound meaning of the expression "natural place" and its political significance in the context of strengthening European democratic integration. Without going into hermeneutical details, I will make a small commentary on the expression "natural place" and on its meanings then when we are talking about the place of the young Central and Eastern European democracies in the European Union.

I. Is there a "natural place" in the European Union of the young Central and Eastern European democracies?

The place is "the limit of the thing (...) the unchangeable and immediate limit of the thing (...) the place exists with the thing, because with the limited thing is also the limit" (Aristotle, 1966). As a closing of the place occupied by a thing, the limit, the place and the thing form together an *existential unity* in the immediate material reality. But, the meaning of the words "limit", "place" and "thing" exceeds the meaning of the strict spatiality and, animated by the consciousness, penetrates the world of the being and of the thinking of the being. We observe how of the *topological*, spatial sense of the limit that contains the content we reach the *ontological*, existential significance of the limit as the essence of a thing. This means that the relationships between thing, place and limit are intrinsic, dynamic, universal. At the same time, this means we can talk about the thing, place and limit as about an existential unity and, simultaneously, as about a conceptual structure which could be operationalized in various research fields. The ontological significance of the words "thing", "place" and "limit" converts, therefore, this usual words in philosophical concepts with a strong existential load.

The universal character of unity thing-place-limit explains, in my opinion, the existence of different ways-of-being of the places. Aristotle had observed that there are various kinds of places because the things, places and limits are constantly moving, so "some things are searching their place, and others are in their place. (...). Others things are in a place by accident (...). And, of course, it is understood that every thing goes to its own place (...). And each thing remains logically in nature in its own place" (Aristotle, 1966). Against the backdrop of the dynamics of things, places and limits, starting from the Aristotelian text, we can distinguish different ways-of-being of the places. Thus, on the one hand, we distinguish the *potential places* to be acquired by testing their limits and, on the other hand, the *places in the act*, places that have already been acquired and have become operational after testing their limits. In the dynamics of things, places and limits, may sometimes happens as one thing to inappropriately test the rules and limits of the place and thus, sooner or later, that thing fails to get that place. In this case, we are talking about a *place by accident*.

Returning to the current political reality, I think that the issue of the "natural place" of the young Central and Eastern European democracies should be analyzed in an objective way and from a broader temporal perspective. I am thinking of the beginnings of economic integration and interstate cooperation in Western Europe in the dramatic historical and political context of the "cold war". Looking at things from this perspective, we first notice the presence of initiators and founders of a place which became in time European Union. From the perspective of historical truth, the place called "the European Union" is the place of its founders, the founding states of the European Coal and Steel Community, "the first in a series

of European supranational institutions that have finally become the European Union" (Europe Day, n.d.). As founding states - France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg - the signatories to the Treaty of Rome (1957) are, in fact and in law, the holders of a "natural place" in the European Union. In the rest, the dynamics of things, places and limits followed, in the last half century, the ways of democratic integration of European states into the European Union. During the waves of joining the European Union, the potential place was the stake for each candidate country. It may be also notice that, despite the difficulties and uncertainties, the acquisition of a place in the European Union it still remains a stake for some countries from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet space. In these circumstances, the place acquired by a young Central or Eastern European democracy in the European Union should not be regarded as a prize for fulfilling the conditions of accession, but rather as a continuous assumption of Community policies.

What significance acquires, therefore, the expression "natural place" when we are talking about the place of young Central and Eastern European democracies in the European Union? The place of the young democracies in the European Union becomes a "natural place" -- high officials of the European Union draw attention -- when these democracies succeed to consolidate the place they have acquired through the European Union accession process. Only by consolidating democratic integration, the young democracies from Central and Eastern Europe can aspire to a "natural place" in the European Union. In these circumstances, it is regrettable and unproductive the confusion maintained by some autocratic, sovereignist and populist circles, between *ethno-cultural* and *geographical* European belonging of countries from Central and Eastern Europe and their "natural place" in the European Union. However, if we should talk about a "natural place" of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, this is their natural place in the European ethno-cultural and geographical space. Which is not a small thing! The fact that, after a complicated accession process, a young democracy from Central or Eastern Europe, which has its origins in a post-communist transition, succeeds to acquire a place in the European Union, I do not think it is less meritorious than having a "natural place". More important than claiming a "natural place" in the European Union, I believe it is the *democratic consolidation of the acquired place*. Democratic consolidation of the place already acquired through the successful implementation of Community policies would confer to young Central and Eastern European democracies the *credibility* and the *right to really aspire to a "natural place"* in the European Union. On the other hand, the accidental occupation of a place in the European Union would prove to be a historic catastrophe for any of the young democracies in Central and Eastern Europe.

But, despite the historical gap and multiple difficulties of Central and Eastern European states, I share the view that there is, however, a "long way" of the young Central and Eastern European democracies towards a "natural place" in the European Union (Democracy Index 2018, n.d.; Democracy in Retreat, 2019). In these circumstances, I will no longer resume the presentation of data and information on the state of democracy and the trends of democratization in Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, I do not intend to elaborate an empirical research on the historical, economic, geopolitical factors so often invoked to explain the autocratic and populist deviations of the young democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. Instead, I propose a *sketch of a socio-cognitive model* of strengthening democratic integration in the European Union by increasing civic cohesion and moral solidarity.

II. Towards a socio-cognitive model of strengthening European democratic integration

In this essay, I aim to focus the analytical interest on *mental activities and socio-cultural landmarks that can inspire and support the strengthening of European democratic*

integration by increasing civic cohesion and moral solidity. This change of the analytical interest is explained by the awareness of the fact that social and political processes are, in fact, the materialization of individual and collective mental activity of the people. More specifically, the social and political processes within the European Union actually expresses the dynamics of individual and collective mental activity of the people in the context of the evolution of mentalities in the increasingly globalized European society. Inspired by a hypothesis and some guiding ideas, this reflexive approach identifies some socio-cultural landmarks whose interaction shapes a socio-cognitive model of consolidating European democratic integration by increasing civic cohesion and moral solidarity. In fact, this essay proposes a *sketch of a socio-cognitive model* on strengthening European democratic integration by increasing civic cohesion in the European Union. It is a socio-cognitive model because with his help we can research the social context of mental activity and also the impact of mental activity on social processes.

The socio-cognitive model advanced in this essay is inspired by the epistemological suggestions of late modernity. It is known that in the intellectual climate of late modernity, hermeneutical researches, relativistic-contextualist studies and systemic epistemology of complexity have known a remarkable development. In this circumstances, a socio-cognitive model of strengthening democratic integration in the European Union should be perceived as an reflexive model characterized by a nuanced thinking receptive to the synthetic intuition and life experience, the empathetic attitude and moral responsibility, the research of the socio-human complexity and, of course, the pre-eminence of the qualitative analyzes. In this context, I remember an observation of my professor Jean-William Lapierre: "the one who builds the model must not forget that this is a method artifice. He must also not forget that his model is, among other things, a point of view regarding the complexity of the object or system being analyzed. Therefore, there is no single "true" or best model. The quality of a model can only be appreciated in relation to research problems " (Lapierre, 1992, p.55-56). From this postulate it turns out that the modeling of the process of consolidating European democratic integration implies not only the existence of a multitude of imaginable models of the same process, but especially the plurality of research and modeling methods. This is a natural epistemological consequence that derives from the freedom of choice and specificity of professional development, diversity of cognitive strategies and variety of problems expressed.

Returning to the socio-cognitive model advanced in this essay, it should be said that one of his guiding ideas is that strengthening the democratic integration of young democracies from Central and Eastern Europe into the European Union implies increasing civic cohesion and moral solidarity in and between the different communities of the European Union. Guided by this idea, I propose a *reflexive approach* focused on the identification of some socio-cultural landmarks specific to the development of civic cohesion and moral solidarity. This reflexive approach is inspired by the following hypothesis: *citizens could strengthen democratic integration in the European Union by increasing civic cohesion and moral solidarity with the help of creative-dialogical thinking, communicative-securing interaction, culture of mutual recognition, "well tempered" ideology.* The path to increasing civic cohesion and strengthening moral solidarity is marked, according to the previous hypothesis, by certain socio-cultural landmarks which highlight the quality of mental activity in the flow of social communication. The first landmark - *creative-dialogical thinking* - is the operational center able to find solutions for improving civic cohesion and strengthening democratic integration in different social contexts. The second landmark - the *communicative-securing interaction* - is the linguistic instrument that brings the creative-dialogical thinking into the flow of social communication and interpersonal securization. In their turn, the *culture of mutual recognition* and the *"well tempered" ideology* are the socio-cultural landmarks that

offer openness and meaning to democratic integration and civic cohesion. As for the opportunity of such socio-cultural landmarks, I think for young democracies in Central and Eastern Europe their opportunity is even more obvious.

III. Creative-dialogical thinking: the operational center of the civic cohesion and democratic integration

Living cognitive, affective, volitional experiences in different cultural environments, assessing situations and finding solutions by practicing *inner* dialogue and *interpersonal* dialogue encourage the emergence and development of creative-dialogical thinking. Interactive and problematize, the creative-dialogical thinking can play, in these circumstances, the role of an *operational center* of democratic integration and civic cohesion. In order to achieve such a performance, creative-dialogical thinking combines the inner dialogue supported by *metacognition* - monitoring of its own processes and cognitive strategies - with the interpersonal dialogue maintained through the contacts of the person in the private and public space. By monitoring their own knowledges and reflections, the metacognition generates a process of self-exploration and mind cultivation. Monitoring reflexive experiences through awareness of mental states in different cultural environments and situational contexts allows the discovery of self-consciousness and the increase of self-confidence. In this way, the mind is favorised to escape from the captivity of errors and prejudices, temptations and illusions, but also from manipulation and misinformation of propagandistic systems. On the other hand, the other's encounter in the private and public space triggers interpersonal dialogue, allows the verification of the states of personal consciousness and, implicitly, a better orientation of the person in the world. We can say, therefore, that creative-dialogic thinking is a *heuristic thinking modeled through dialogue*.

As an interpersonal reflexive process, the creative-dialogical thinking imagines solutions, solves problems, initiates under the guidance of practical reason the communicative interactions. The creative-dialogical thinking works, thus, as a *vector of mental causation* in the immediate reality and also as a true *modus operandi of intercultural dialogue*. From what has been said so far, it follows that creative-dialogical thinking pursues a practical, therapeutic purpose. Referring to the therapeutical purpose of a theoretical approach, Alasdair MacIntyre made an interesting observation. "It is very important (...) - remarked the Scottish professor - that in our culture the therapeutic concept has been given an use that goes beyond the sphere of psychological medicine, in which its legitimate place is evident (...). The types of theory involved and invoked in justifying these therapeutic procedures are extremely varied; but the process itself has a much greater social significance than the theories that are so important to its protagonists" (MacIntyre 1998, p.57). In these circumstances, we could say that creative-dialogical thinking can inspire certain therapeutic strategies because of its ability to initiate actions and cause certain positive behaviors in different socio-cultural environments. To achieve this, there is a need for a special communication tool. The instrument by which creative-dialogical thinking could improve civic cohesion and strengthen democratic integration in the European Union is, from a socio-cognitive point of view, the *communicative-securing interaction*.

IV. Communicative-securing interaction or social implementation of creative-dialogical thinking

One of the guiding ideas of this reflexive approach states that improving intercultural dialogue in the European Union depends, in the context of contemporary globalization, on encouraging the communicative-securing interaction at interpersonal and institutional level. I have to say from the beginning that the conceptual structure "communicative-securing interaction" has been suggested to me by the Habermasian concept "communicative action".

In order to support his theory of communicative action, Jürgen Habermas has resort to a pragmatic approach that takes into account the success of a speech act. By linking communicative reason to teleological reason and the meanings of words with the efficiency of speech acts, the German philosopher has moved his interest center from the semantics of representation to the pragmatics of communicative action. Perceived from a pragmatic perspective, "the concept of communicative action refers to the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action that establish interpersonal relationships (verbal or non-verbal means). The actors aim to understand the situation of the action and the plans for its coordination through the agreement. The central concept of interpretation refers, in the first instance, to the negotiation of the definition of situations in which consensus is admitted " (Habermas, 1984, p.86). In the communicative model of action, language and consensual negotiation of meaning have a prominent place. When it comes to communicative action, Jürgen Habermas considers, therefore, the communicative attitude through language acts in the spirit of intersubjectivity and communicative rationality.

Based on the communicative attitude, the creative-dialogical thinking assumes, in the spirit of intersubjectivity and practical rationality, a therapeutic purpose. This means that by adopting a communicative attitude in the intersubjective spirit of practical reason, we interact, limiting in this way the risks of personal and interpersonal insecurity. Thus, it appears what we could call the *communicative-securing interaction*, in other words, the *interpersonal action transmitting a securing message*. The communication acts represent the technical-discursive, linguistic-semantic part of the practical reason and the therapeutic-securing action. Important is the correlation of the communication with the therapeutic purpose through the mechanism of processing thoughts and mental states, because conscious mental activity is the coordinating center for communication acts and securizing actions. Communication acts and processing consciousness merge in an organic whole: the creative-dialogical thinking able to coordinate individual and collective life of the people. *The instrument by which creative-dialogical thinking becomes capable to coordinate individual and collective life of the people is the communicative-securing interaction*. More specifically, communicative-securing interaction is achieved through the creation, multiplication and generalization of interactive networks of people, small and medium groups interested in respecting the values and principles of mutual recognition, civic cohesion, securing cohabitation. As a *psycho-social mechanism of reflection through propagation*, communicative-securing interaction becomes, therefore, a linguistic instrument and, at the same time, a test of creative-dialogical thinking.

However, we can ask ourselves how relevant is the communicative-securing interaction as a test of the creative-dialogical thinking. The most convincing argument for communicative-securing interaction would be to test its effectiveness in an empirical research of the real process of increasing civic cohesion and strengthening European democratic integration. But, conducting such field research exceeds, for the time being, the objective of this reflexive approach. In these circumstances, to see how relevant is the communicative-securing interaction, I will refer to Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson's researches on the relevance of statements and information in communication and cognition (Sperber & Wilson, 1996). The relevance of informations is transposed, by the cited authors, in the terms of efficiency of the action. The processing of a new information provides an increase of its multiplier effect in the efficiency of the action, implicitly, an increase of its relevance. The higher the multiplier effect, the more relevant the information is. "When the processing of a new information gives rise to such a multiplication effect, we call it relevant. The greater the multiplication effect, the greater the relevance" (Sperber & Wilson, 1996, p.48). According to the communicative principle of relevance, information is particularly relevant when it triggers positive cognitive effects; the information is sufficiently relevant when it catches the attention of the public and is irrelevant when it does not attract the public's attention. Although the

information-cognitive relevance is an important factor, I think that other factors should also be taken into account in assessing the relevance of the communicative-securing interaction. For example, the impact of emotional-affective, motivational-volitional factors and, of course, the quality of the decisions and the outcome of the communicative-securing interaction. The quantity, quality and opportunity of informations contribute together to ensuring the cognitive and communicative advantage that can make the difference between securing civic cohesion, on the one hand, and insecurity due to the absence of civic cohesion, on the other hand.

Summarizing, the communicative-securing interaction is an operational tool of the creative-dialogic thinking due to its functioning as a *psycho-social mechanism of reflection by propagation*. In these circumstances, I consider that communicative-securing interaction could be the basis of some reflexive-therapeutic strategies such as: converting aggression into securised affiliations; interpersonal securing through the culture of mutual recognition; tempering ideological discourse, sanctioning sophisms and countering propagandistic excesses. At the same time, it can be said that the communicative-securing interaction is relevant when fulfilling its functions in its multiple plans: informational-cognitive, emotional-affective, motivational-volitional, decisional-actional. Finally, we arrive at the third landmark on the path of increasing civic cohesion and moral solidarity: practicing of democracy in the spirit of the culture of mutual recognition and of the "well tempered" ideology. The culture of mutual recognition and the "well tempered" ideology could configure the directions of a strategy of strengthening democratic integration by increasing civic cohesion and moral solidarity.

V. Strengthening democratic integration by increasing civic cohesion and moral solidarity. About the culture of mutual recognition and the "well tempered" ideology

The path of young democracies from Central and Eastern Europe to a "natural place" in the European Union passes, as I have argued throughout this essay, by strengthening their democratic integration into the European Union. Strengthening of European democratic integration supposes the increasing of civic cohesion and moral solidarity within and across the various European Union communities. But how could civic cohesion and moral solidarity increase in the European Union? In addition to the involvement of creative-dialogical thinking and the encouragement of communicative-securing interaction we should consider, according to the assumed hypothesis, *the practice of democracy in the spirit of the culture of mutual recognition and of the "well tempered" ideology*. The culture of mutual recognition and the "well tempered" ideology are, in my view, two socio-cultural landmarks that, well assimilated into an increasingly educated society, could help us to increase civic cohesion and strengthen democratic integration in the European Union.

The culture of mutual recognition is not an accidental theme. About increasing of civic cohesion and moral solidarity by recognizing the other

The problem of recognizing a particular entity - be this person, community, institution, etc. - in different socio-cultural environments has always characterized the history of human civilization. But in the contemporary world, an increasingly complicated world and full of uncertainties, the need to recognize the dignity of the person and community forces us to rethink the concept "culture of recognition" (Carpinschi, 2008, 2015). In a world of accelerated growth of globalization and multiculturalism, the culture of recognition should be reconsidered as a *culture of mutual recognition*. The culture of mutual recognition is the culture of a *double recognition*, more precisely, of *two-way recognition*: the recognition of A by B and of B by A. In other words, it is about my recognition by the other and the recognition of the other by me. As a community way of thinking, feeling, creating, culture becomes a culture of mutual recognition when, through the play of its components - values,

symbols, verbal and non-verbal languages, rites, traditions - mutual recognition multiplies becoming a fact accepted in different social, political, cultural environments. The culture of mutual recognition is, therefore, the placing in a coherent form of the different expressions of life by correlating their dynamic and contradictory content.

But, how could the culture of mutual recognition become a reality in the contemporary world? What “routes” could lead us to a society whose members educated in the spirit of understanding and recognition would make the world more intelligible and, implicitly, more acceptable? Beyond an apparent idealism that might seem naive, these questions lead us towards the difficult topic of living together in today's world. Indeed, globalization, multiculturalism, movements for the defense of identity confront us with existential issues which claim appropriate solutions. As a recognition of the other systematically cultivated, the culture of mutual recognition may provide a change regarding the liberation from prejudice and subjectivism, as also the improvement of the human way of being. The culture of mutual recognition, we could say, is a *moral solution in a world morally educable*. The problem that arises, further, refers to the *social implementation* of the culture of mutual recognition and, implicitly, to the strategy of increasing civic cohesion through the culture of mutual recognition. The thesis I support in this context is the following: *increasing civic cohesion through the culture of mutual recognition becomes possible when civic-democratic inclusion and recognition of the right to difference is balanced in a climate of political reasonableness*. The civic cohesion depends on the depth of the culture of mutual recognition transposed into appropriate attitudes and actions of inclusion and differentiation. In other words, the social implementation of the culture of mutual recognition in a climate of political reasonableness offers to civic cohesion the possibility of its manifestation in a globalized society. A culture of mutual recognition implemented in a globalized society is the culture of mutual recognition of citizens, a culture acquired and verified by the understanding and assumption of cleavages, either these of gender, age, ethno-cultural, racial, confessional-religious, ideological-political, socio-economic, etc. But, achieving such an objective involves assuming a courageous policy package: humanizing power relations; respect for the rule of law; continuing education; civic-democratic inclusion; regulating the relationships between the public sphere and the private sphere; fair management of resource and, at the same time, the acceptance of multiple cultural and religious codes, the conversion of antagonistic modes of life into alternative ways of life.

Summarizing, the culture of mutual recognition appears as an *intercultural synthesis* expressing the capacity of conciliation and reconciliation through the mutual recognition of identity, principles and values of different collectivities: racial, ethnic, political, religious, linguistic, gender, age etc. From a *psychological* point of view, the culture of mutual recognition refers to the configuration of attitudes and behaviors capable of recognition, learned, shared and transmitted by members of a collectivity. *Sociologically* speaking, the culture of mutual recognition brings together values and norms transposed into systems of action characteristic of intercultural dialogue. But, the culture of mutual recognition is not just a psychological configuration transposed into a social action, but also a *non-substantial, symbolic reality creating structures, meanings, models of thinking and action*. Here we notice the interpenetration of the *psycho-educational, ethno-sociological, historical-axiological* plans and meanings. The *psycho-educational* plan provides the framework for the preparation and socialization of the individual as a person and a citizen; *ethno-sociological* plan captures the indestructible ties between culture and the social group; the *historical-axiological* plan forges culture as a synthesis of values in the horizon of their becoming in time. The culture of mutual recognition is therefore an *intercultural synthesis achieved through the cooperation of multicultural communities*.

Ideological option: an experiential state of consciousness politically involved

"Ideology, said David Mc. Lellan, is the most confusing concept from the field of social sciences " (McLellan 1998, 24). This is probably due to the fact that "the history of the concept of ideology is the history of the various attempts to find a sure archimedic point outside the sphere of ideological discourse, a place from which the levers of ideology can be observed" (ibidem). Trying to find this "archimedic point", I mention for the beginning the perspective of the external observer from the specialized dictionaries, there where ideologies are perceived in a descriptive manner as concurrent ideological "objects," assemblies of ideas, texts and speeches which expresses the positions and interests of a social group or of a party in the competition for conquest and exercise of power. As a project between knowledge and action centered on the values and interests of some group or of a party, the ideology focuses, therefore, on political goals and means of conquest and exercise of power.

Unlike this canonical position, I propose a change of the analytical perspective: *from focusing attention on ideologies as ideological objects present in political texts and programmatic discourses towards the perception of the ideological option as the experiential state of the politically involved consciousness*. Of course, the ideologies coagulated in systematic texts and programmatic discourses exist in their diversity, but each of them - from liberalism, conservatism, socialism, social democracy, communism, fascism, Nazism up to environmentalism, feminism, religious fundamentalism - is fed by the experiential state of the ideological option. I therefore conceive the ideological option as an *experiential state of consciousness that assumes political interests through power relations*. I am thinking of the experiences lived on personal and collective level aiming promoting group, class, party interests through power relations in a particular society. For example, an entrepreneur's ideological option is directed towards securing property rights, market freedom, obtaining profit. His own life experience determines him to adhere to the liberal ideology that promotes the rule of law and democratic freedoms under the conditions of free market play. On the other hand, an employee at a factory or a company feels attached to the principles and values of equality and social redistribution. Therefore, his ideological option is directed to the ideas and values of the social-democratic ideology. An opponent of globalization and open society becomes the supporter of an authoritarian political regime and of an undemocratic, sovereignist ideology. Instead, a defender of human rights and of the cause of democracy engages in civic movements or progressive parties. In each of these cases, it seems important the fact that we are living an ideological experience in a certain social-political environment, that we assume an ideological state of the consciousness politically involved. Generalizing, I consider the ideological option a *personal and collective experience of promoting group, class, party interests by controlling power relations*.

As an expression of the games of interest and of the power relations, the ideological options are exposed to various political and mediatical instrumentalizations. Beyond the specific differences between the ideologies above mentioned, it should be noted the strategic role played by media and propaganda systems in the competition for the conquest, exercise and preservation of political power. In the case of an ideological option, both in the non-systematic form of current opinions and in the systematized form of political programs, party statutes, ideological-political works, etc., this is a thinking with a tendency resulting from the evaluation of certain social-political situations and a responding in a partisan manner to these situations. In this sense, an ideological option suggests, recommends, induces or sometimes imposes certain attitudinal schemes, patterns of action, types of decision, depending on the interests of the people, group, the party and the political regime whose emanation is. Motivating the positions and interests of a social partiality, designing a desirable ordering over-reality, ideology is a *politically involved thinking*. Concluding, the ideological options express in concrete-historical discursive forms the *experiential state of consciousness focused on interests engaged in political action*.

How could we increase civic cohesion and moral solidarity having, at the same time, different ideological options? About the role of "well-tempered" ideologies

As a reporting to the world through the group interests, the ideological option is a partisan expression of thought, the motivational substrate of the interested action of a social partiality. As a partisan way of political thinking, the ideology is, in a literal sense, a thinking besides the neutrality of the logic, in other words, a thinking less logical. This specific position, a *para-logical* position confers to the ideology a combative, limitative and exclusive identity with social and cultural effects often unproductive and dangerous. As an expressing of the interests and values of a particular part of society, and more, as an assuming of some positions and interests in order to exercise domination or, at least, the influence, the ideological option is, by its nature, far from the exigences of increasing civic cohesion and moral solidarity.

In these circumstances, the following question arises: how could we increase civic cohesion and moral solidarity having, at the same time, different ideological options? A possible answer could be prefigured by the following hypothesis: *strengthening democratic integration by increasing civic cohesion and moral solidarity becomes possible through the elaboration of ideological options on the horizon of a polyscopic consciousness*. By the term "poliscopic consciousness", I mean a multi-minded consciousness oriented towards a series of specific experiential states of consciousness: *common knowledge, scientific research, philosophical reflection, artistic sensitivity, spiritual experience*. Thus, the ideological option appears as an experiential state of consciousness in the horizon of other experiential states of the polyscopic consciousness. The harmonic positioning of some ideological options among the other experiential states of polyscopic consciousness reminds us of the harmonizing of the tones as in Bach's musical art from his famous opus: the "well tempered harpsichord". This means that the "well tempered" ideology should harmonize with the other experiential states of polyscopic consciousness: *experience* of common knowledge, *rationality* of scientific research, *wisdom* of philosophical reflexivity, *sensibility* of the artistic experience, *depth* of spiritual meditation. An ideological option filtered through the experiential states of polyscopic consciousness becomes a *moderate ideological option*, an ideological state of the consciousness enriched and thus, an *ideological option politically reasonable*. Such an ideological state of enriched consciousness favors the diminishing of the interpersonal insecurity and, implicitly, the increasing of civic cohesion and moral solidarity. In conclusion, the modulation of the ideological option from the perspective of a polyscopic consciousness offers to the ideological option the openness to the other experiential states of polyscopic consciousness and, implicitly, the chance of cultural enrichment and of the moderation of ideological partisanship. The openness and receptivity to the other experiential states of polyscopic consciousness allow, therefore, the counteracting of the subjectivism and paralogical irrationality, so troublesome and dangerous in the ideological-propagandistic activity.

Instead of conclusions

Preoccupied by the avatars of democratization in Central and Eastern Europe, I have tried through a reflexive approach to develop a socio-cognitive model of the democratic integration in the European Union by enhancing civic cohesion and moral solidarity. *The finality of this socio-cognitive model and its conceptual apparatus* -- creative-dialogical thinking, communicative-securing interaction, culture of mutual recognition, "well-tempered" ideology -- *is its testing in empirical researches, case studies* and, especially, *public policies*. In this regard, some interesting and profitable suggestions seem to come from the rich research experience of the Dutch School of Thinking and Action. I am referring to the researches of Geert Hofstede (Hofstede, 2001), Huib Wursten (Wursten, 1997, 2014; Wursten & Fadrhond, 2012), Fons Trompenaars (Trompenaars, & Hampden-Turner, 1998), and to the

prodigious activity of the *Hofstede Insight*. In these circumstances, one of the possible ways to test the socio-cognitive model of strengthening democratic integration in the European Union could be an empirical research project of the democratization avatars in Central and Eastern Europe configured on the Dutch model of cultural dimensions and cultural clusters. The socio-cognitive model of strengthening the democratic integration in the European Union of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe could therefore be tested by *operationalising its conceptual apparatus with the help of some variables and indicators and their application in a comparative empirical research of certain cultural clusters*. For example, cultural cluster of the Baltic democracies, Visegrad area, Carpathian-Balkan multicultural cluster. In these circumstances, we could participate at a possible meeting and cooperation of the philosophy of public action with the psycho-sociology of intercultural management within the European Union perceived as an interstate union of cultural diversity.

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