

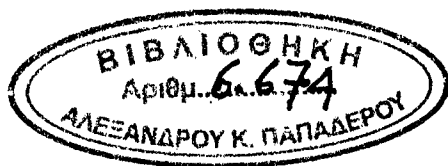
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CIVILIZATION: SOME OBSERVATIONS ON TERMINOLOGY*

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IN THIS city which welcomes us, people once paid attention to the wise saying: "the beginning of wisdom is the knowledge of the terms" - in other words the knowledge of the exact meaning of the terms. I cannot maintain that this advice is strictly adhered to as far as the term *Civilization* is concerned. Very often we observe obscurity and as a result it is more usual to be in confusion rather than in comprehension or clarity. For this reason I propose to consult the Philosophy of Civilization, the Study of Civilizations (Politismology) and the Comparative Study of Civilizations, in the hope that they will help us interpret more securely¹ the terms and concepts which are related to Civilization, to Law in general and in particular to the Public Law.

The Term "Civilization"

As it is generally known, Graeco-Roman antiquity did not have a special technical term for the phenomenon we call today Civilization. As a corresponding term in Greek, can be considered the term *Paideia* (Culture:

* Editors' note: This text is the translation in English of the Greek original.

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¹ Caution in this is justified by the fact that systems of the diachronic study of Civilizations are, by necessity, and in many ways, flexible (as for example those of Berdyaev, Coulborn, Dawson, Kroeber, Northrop, Quigley, Sorokin, Spengler, Toynbee etc.). Read also: MATTHEW MELKO, *The Nature of Civilizations* (Boston Mass. 1969). Caution especially applies with regards to works which are clearly full of prejudice, as for example the attempt of FELIKS KONECZNY (*On the Plurality of Civilizations*, London 1962) to completely devalue the Byzantine achievement!

"Greeks are called those who take part in our *paideia*"¹), or other similar terms, and in Latin the approximate term *Humanitas*.

At the end of the 18th century in France we first have the appearance of the term *Civilization* which was used to refer to the high quality of life the people in the *cities* had, in contrast to the people of the countryside and by extension to the "barbarian" natives of the colonies². The French Academy only recognized the new term in 1798³.

When Adamantios Korais, the Enlightener of the Greek people, was searching for a corresponding term in the Greek language, he tracked down, chose and introduced in 1804 the term *Politismos* (corresponding to Civilization) which was adapted to our language⁴.

We meet the term only once in ancient literature. Diogenes Laertius (4, 39) writes about Arkesilaos: "he was always doing everything in the Academy, and ignoring Civilization". It seems Arkesilaos was a great admirer of Plato's Academy where he spent all of his time, and avoided fulfilling his duty to society.

With this meaning the term Civilization is connected with "the duty to the city" as Dimosthenes writes⁵. The conscientious citizen "carries out his

² For the origins of the terms: Civilisation, Culture, Kultur, Politismos, see: *Civilisation - Le mot et l'idée*. Exposés par LUCIEN FABVRE, EMILIE TONNELAR, MARCEL MAUSS, ALFREDO NICEFORO, LOUIS WEBER. *Fondation Pour la Science, Centre Internationale de Synthèse, Première Semaine Internationale de Synthèse, Deuxième Fascicule, La Renaissance du Livre* (Paris c1930). Les conflits de Civilisations Compte rendu in extenso des Cours et Conférences, *Semaines sociales de France, Versailles XXVIIIe Session 1936* (Lyon 1936). T.S. ELIOT, *Beiträge zum Begriff der Kultur, Deutsch von Gerhard Hensel* (Berlin 1949). T.S. ELIOT, *Der Mensch und die Kultur* (Stockholm 1938); JOSEF NIEDERMANN, *Kultur - Werden und Wandlungen des Begriffs und seiner Ersatzbegriffe von Cicero bis Herder, Bibliotheca del Archivum Romanum* (Florenz 1941). WILLI VIKTOR, *Das Wesen der Kulturhöhe und der Kulturhöhe in der kultursoziologischen Sicht Alfred Webers* (Köln-Opladen 1953); ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΣ Κ. ΠΑΠΑΔΕΡΟΣ, Πολιτισμός, *Θρησκευτική και Ηθική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια* (Αθήνα 1966), 507-514 (ALEXANDROS K. PAPADEROS, *Civilization, Religious and Moral Encyclopedia* (Athens 1966), 507-514).

³ ANTON HILCKMAN, *Die Wissenschaft von den Kulturen. Ihre Bedeutung und ihre Aufgaben* (Meisenheim am Glan 1967).

⁴ ALEXANDROS PAPADEROS, *Metakenosis. Griechenlands kulturelle Herausforderung durch die Aufklärung in der Sicht des Korais und des Oikonomos*, Verlag Anton Hain (Meisenheim am Glan ²1970), 29.

⁵ From *Timocrates* 192. Cf. ΑΝΑΣΤ. Ι. ΤΑΧΟΣ, *Ελληνικό Διοικητικό Δίκαιο*, Θεσσαλονίκη 2003, 53 (ANAST. I. TAHOS, *Greek Administrative Law* (Thessaloniki 2003), 53).

responsibilities." He does his duty and he asserts his rights, without being an interfering person, or an "*idiotes*" (a "civilian") who cares only for his own affairs. The term "*idiotes*" has been adapted in other languages to describe the idiot, the fool. About such people or nations Aristotle maintained that he who does not communicate with others and has need of nobody because of his self-sufficiency is either a *wild beast* or a *god*⁶!

Polis (city) and *Civitas* constitute therefore the origins of the terms *Civilization* and *Politismos*. As Aristotle states, because justice is necessary for society, and the Rule of Justice is necessary for a civil society, and since the Law is the just dispenser of Justice⁷, it becomes clear that the *Law* in general is an essential part and integral element in Civilization. Furthermore, *Public Law*, which regulates dealings between the city and state as well as the citizens and society, has a singular role in the structure and the functioning of the Civilization, and defines its quality.

Some people use the term *Civilization* (singular), to express the ideal goal towards which the progress of all mankind strives, initial stages of which are considered the various historical manifestations of Civilizations (plural), or cultures.

The Christian belief in the *unity of mankind*, which has been preached by Paul just a few meters away from the spot we are right now (*Acts 17, 16- 34*), which is expressed also in the vision of Christian Eschatology of *one flock and one shepherd*, ("there shall be one flock, one shepherd", *John 10, 16*), can be considered to be directing thought towards a universal unity and an ideal Civilization, but of course without the impositions and aims that modern *Globalization* entails!

Apart from the term *Civilization*, we use the term *Culture, Kultur*, also to mean Civilization⁸. A distinction between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* is made by German speakers from the 19th century onwards. In the conception of global history, according to Oswald Spengler⁹, *Zivilisation* is the last stage of every *Kultur*, its "winter" or twilight. According to his theory

⁶ *Polit. A, 2. 30 - 31.*

⁷ *Polit. A, 41.*

⁸ The word *cultura* (deriving from the verb *colo*) meant in ancient Latin "agricultural work," "cultivation", *cultura agri*. Later on the word acquired the meaning of "cure," or "care," particularly with the moral meaning of the cultivation of the soul: *cultura animi*, (*CICERO, Tusc. 2, 13*) or the cure and the exercise of justice. On the other hand the word *cultus* signified devotion to god. There was however no word with the exact meaning of Civilization (e.g. *civilisatio*).

⁹ *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (München 1923).

that Civilizations are analogous to biological organisms, Spengler believes that they have a total lifespan of not more than a thousand years.

In modern Greek we have the tendency to generalize the use of the term "culture" (*koultoura*). I believe that it is an unfortunate, dissonant, unnecessary, and also misleading word. The derivative "koultouriaris" (cultivated man) has the rather derisive meaning of an eccentric, who pretends to be a lover of arts, of someone who claiming to have "culture" considers himself to be superior to someone who supposedly does not¹⁰.

A different, restrictive use of the term Civilization is used to describe the affairs of the Ministry of Culture: antiquities, folklore, the Arts and in part, Literature. Of course each of these are elements of Civilization, but they do not cover the whole range of the meaning of the term, as we will see below.

At this point it is necessary to clarify what many people accept, that *Civilization, Religion and Language* are three fundamental phenomena, exclusively and completely human, which are not confused with each other because they are independent, which are closely connected by varying degrees of interaction and interdependence, and which constitute the basis and the context of all human expression, individual and collective¹¹.

Definition

As far as the *definition* of the term *Civilization* is concerned in particular: There have been many definitions suggested. I do not recognize that any has been generally accepted.

¹⁰ The distinction between subjective and objective, spiritual and technical/material types of Civilization and also of the related adjectives: cultural and educational, where the former seemingly connotes the spiritual while the latter the technical arts, is arbitrary and unsubstantial. I believe it is safer to use both of the adjectives without distinction.

¹¹ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΣ Κ. ΠΑΠΑΔΕΡΟΣ, Χριστιανισμός και Πολιτισμός, *Θρησκευτική και Ηθική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια* 12 (Αθήνα 1968), 187-190 (ALEXANDROS K. PAPADEROS, Christianity and Civilization, *Religious and Moral Encyclopedia* 12 (Athens 1968), 187-190). On the problems that have been caused, especially in modern times, by the confusion of these phenomena caused by breaking their mutual boundaries, especially between Religion and Culture (and as a result between Morality, Justice and Politics), see N. LUCHMANN, *Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik, Studien zur Wissenssoziologie der modernen Gesellschaft*, Bd. 3 (Frankfurt: M 1993), 259ff.

As a simple basis for discussion therefore I suggest, pro-scientifically if you will, that Civilization represents the total of the heritage and the commonly understood experiences in the life of a people or a group of peoples. The total of all those things that feed the historic memory, and form the values, structures, rules, institutions, activities and by and large *the way of life* of these peoples, constitutes the individual and collective identity, and motivates the freedom to contribute productively in the political system. In this sense, man could really be considered as the creator and at the same time creation of Civilization¹². By extension, Civilization involves all the domains of human life and of human action.

An important and current issue is the unity of Civilization. Samuel Huntington, who has caused many headaches, claims correctly, I believe, that the basic elements which define this unity and as a result the whole conception of the Civilization, have been named already by the Athenians with the answer they gave to the Spartans when they were assuring them that they would not give them away to the Persians and were giving the reasons why they would not. The words of Herodotus to which the American researcher refers to have a very modern ring: *the same blood, the same language, the same institutions dedicated to the gods, the same mores*¹³.

¹² MICHAEL LANDMANN, *Der Mensch als Schöpfer und Geschöpf der Kultur* (München/Basel 1961).

¹³ "First of all the burned and destroyed statues and temples of gods obligate us to take revenge and not to unite with those who ruined them. Besides, all Greeks have *the same blood, the same language. The temples of the gods are common to them, the sacrifices and the mores are the same.* And it is not right for us the Athenians to be traitors to these things. Also learn the following, if you did not know before: that as long as even one Athenian remains alive, there will be no union between Athens and Xerxes. Your interest is laudable concerning the destruction of our goods and the decision you undertook to support our families. Your kindness is great. But we have decided to stay as we are, and not to burden you. Now, as the things stand, send us an army as quickly as you can, because we suppose that the enemy, as soon as they learn that we are rejecting his offer, will invade our country. Now, before they invade Attica is the suitable occasion to campaign to Boeotia". HERODOTUS, *History viii (Urania) 144*, Translation-Comments: Ad. Theofilou, *Papyrus* (Athens 1953), pp. 488-9. See also S. P. HUNTINGTON, *The Clash of Civilizations*, German edition: *Kampf der Kulturen* (Europaverlag München - Wien ⁴1997), 52.

Civilized and Barbarian

As we saw previously, the term Civilization is considered to refer to the escape from barbarity, and the progressive change towards the ideal Civilization, according to the conception that has dominated from the late Enlightenment until now.

If the term Civilization loses its qualitative criteria and is considered simply to mean a particular way of life, then the distinction between "civilized" and "non-civilized" or "barbarian" becomes meaningless. Even the so-called "primitive" man has his own way of life, and so, it can be claimed, his Civilization.

Serious problems arise when we are asked to explain *the return to the barbarity* of some people or societies, which although believe or are believed to have come up to a high level of Civilization, then fall to a terrifyingly low level of spiritual and moral decay, as we have seen happening indisputably and tragically in the last century.

It seems that the "barbarian" constitutes a necessity. Even if he is missing he has to be invented. The ironical question of the poet Konstantinos Kavafis, "*And now what are we going to do without the barbarians?*", refers to a real, existential problem which is confronted diachronically by all those who define their identity, not by a calm introspection, but through a comparison with otherness, with the *variant*. The "other" is necessary in order to stigmatize him according to their own criteria as "barbarian", so as to show their superiority. Such an arrogant discrimination allowed, even in the last century, for "wise and illuminated Europe", for the American superpower and for technologically developed Japan, the application of the logic: He is "savage", "barbarian", of inferior "race".

So without any inhibition to your conscience, attack with chemical or nuclear weapons, turn on the faucets of gas! In this way Civilization regressed greatly and can easily now keep on bombarding with "clever" bombs any annoying and "uncivilized" peoples.

Of course, the invocation of extreme phenomena does not allow for blanket generalizations. On the contrary, scientific research and the systemization of its findings from "Politismology," leads to the discovery that throughout history several peoples managed, each to a different level, to cultivate and to develop the capacities of their manpower and their natural environment in their given space and time, and managed to give a creative *Response* to the *challenges* of the age: natural, historical or of any other form. This procedure has two consequences: The diversification of Civilizations and the genesis of Great Civilizations.

Diversification of Civilizations

We recognize in history and in the modern human world many different Civilizations. The sense of difference can be proved first of all by the experience of *otherness* and *foreignness*. Let us approach Herodotus again. About Egypt he wrote that: "*In this place everything is different - both the land and the customs: We knead the bread by hand, they do it with their feet!*"¹⁴ He also makes some other comparisons, which are extremely interesting and amusing, and indeed incorporate a dose of self-criticism, when comparing these foreign customs to those of Greece.

The diversification of Civilizations is the result of many factors. It is accepted that the most important differential factor is both *the way* people from different Civilizations comprehend the three fundamental aspects of existence: *Beauty, Good, and Truth*, and also the degree to which they have advanced in their interpretation of these related aspects, in the forms of their expression and in their manner of living. In other words what the people of a certain time and place regard as true or false, how far they have progressed in their search for the truth (which includes wisdom, science, philosophy etc.), and finally how important the truth is for them in their everyday life. So, are they sincere as persons? Are their thoughts and manners fake, or not? The same applies to the aspect of Beauty - what do the people believe to be beautiful or ugly? What do they judge to be good or bad?

In this respect it is obvious how important a position is held by the conception of Good, consequently the conception of *justice* and *law*, and its subsequent expression in *rules* and *laws*, as well as their reception in the society.

The Great Civilizations

Those peoples who managed to develop their aptitudes and their natural environment as much as they could, created the so-called Higher or Great Civilizations.

To the question, *which* and *how many* those Civilizations are, there have been different answers, depending on the criteria used. Without having much time for analysis, it is enough to remind you that according to the panoramic view of global history, as the English historian Arnold Joseph

¹⁴ HERODOTUS, *History B' (Efterpi)* 36, 6, 114.

Toynbee wrote it (1889-1975)¹⁵, humankind to date has had 21 Civilizations which are worthy of the title of Great Civilizations¹⁶.

This list is justifiably disputable, and can be extended or reduced. For example in certain cases, as the one of *Judaism* and general *Islamism*, where predominant is the *hierocratic - theocratic element*, some would class the respective manifestations to Religions and not to Civilizations.

Intercultural Relations

I would like to remind you that five of those Great Civilizations have arisen on European land - a reminder which is more of an obligation than a boast!

I recall those five Civilizations, in order to refer to the major and current issue of *intercultural relations*, which in our case consist of *Apparentation* and *Affiliation*. So according to the theory and the terminology of Toynbee, the Minoan Civilization inseminated the ancient Greek Civilization. The Greek, retaining and compounding in each occasion the new elements (the Roman, the Germanic, the Christian, the Slavic etc.) inseminated the Orthodox Civilization/Main Body (Byzantium), the Orthodox Civilization in Russia and in general the Slavic and the Western world. That is why those three Civilizations, the Byzantine, the Slavic and the Western, despite their differences, have mutual origins and a brotherhood which binds them, and so they can mutually supply each other with new material without serious side effects. Probably for the same reason it is scientifically acceptable to talk about a European Civilization, at least up to a point.

¹⁵ *A Study of History, 1-12* (London 1934-61).

¹⁶ According to Toynbee the Great Civilizations are: 1) Western Civilization; 2) Orthodox Christian Civilization, Main Body/Byzantium; 3) Orthodox Christian Civilization in Russia; 4) Iranic Civilization; 5) Arabic Civilization; 6) Hindu Civilization; 7) Far Eastern Civilization, Main Body; 8) Far Eastern Civilization in Korea and Japan; 9) Hellenic Civilization; 10) Syriac Civilization; 11) Indic Civilization; 12) Cinic Civilization; 13) Minoan Civilization; 14) Sumeric Civilization; 15) Hittite Civilization; 16) Babylonian Civilization; 17) Andean Civilization; 18) Mexic Civilization; 19) Yucatec Civilization; 20) Mayan Civilization; 21) Egyptian Civilization. According to Toynbee the Iranic and the Arabic Civilizations united later on and together constituted the Islamic Civilization. See also: O. ANDERLE, *Das Universalhistorische System A. J. Toynbees* (Wien 1955), 130.

The Whole and the Parts

As far as the subject of the Conference is concerned, important are, I believe, the issues of: the relation of the Civilization as a whole towards its parts, the relation of the parts towards each other, the relation of each part towards the whole. Civilization is a combination of spiritual and material realities, which can be classified or expressed in several domains and acts (mythology, philosophy, sciences, arts, a system of moral values, rules of law, agriculture, trade, finance, health systems etc.) and which have an internal unity and harmony.

For each Civilization two *postulates* can be made:

First, that the whole is more than the total of its parts.

Second, that for each Civilization there exists a *specific principle* which rules, which is definitive for the whole and the parts, that constitute the Civilization.

The relation between the whole and its parts is analogous to that between the body and its limbs: A relationship that Paul analyses in an impressive way in the 12th Chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians (12, 12ff.).

Aristotle has already pointed out that the whole is necessarily superior to the part: "*because the whole is much more important than the part*"¹⁷. Therefore, to comprehend a Civilization it is not sufficient to simply calculate: Finance plus Technology, plus health System etc. = this Civilization is like this or like that. To comprehend the members, we have previously to understand the whole body and especially the specific principle, the spirit, which gives life to the body and to the limbs.

Concerning the subject of this Conference, it is obvious that Civilization and Law are not two elements which are independent, different or equal. Civilization includes Law, and Law both in general and in its parts constitutes the component element of a given Civilization by being in total harmony with the *specific principle* and in unity and co-functioning with respect to the whole and its component parts.

Crisis of Civilization

Any disorder in the relations between the whole and the parts or between the parts can cause a *crisis* to the Civilization. The disorder can be caused by *internal* or *external* factors.

¹⁷ *Politics A'*, 2. 22-23.

The most dangerous internal disorder is considered the one which can be provoked by the hypertrophy of one part at the expense of other parts. For example of Finance, Technology, or the Military etc. It is then that we encounter the *Elephantiasis* of this part - a very dangerous disease for the Civilization! This disease can condemn the whole Civilization and can lead to its decline and fall. One of the causes of this generalized Elephantiasis and decline is thought to be the geographical expansion of a Civilization, which can cause a kind of "fatty growth" as Toynbee observes¹⁸.

External disorders can be provoked from intercultural influences. Every Civilization emits a kind of radiation, of a different scope and power in each case. The most powerful Civilizations exercise attraction and the weaker Civilizations tend towards reception and *mimesis* (emulation).

When the cultural body is influenced (e.g. by a foreign Law system), then it is in a position to adapt the incoming elements, by reforming them and subjecting them to the specific principle, producing a very useful revival, and a reforming Synthesis. On the other hand, when it submits to the foreign Civilization, and imitates it without control, it progressively ends up being an imitation, usually a bad imitation, with pseudomorphisms and deformations. In general, *healthy Civilizations synthesize by adapting and weak Civilizations decompose by imitating*.

Finally, I would like to confess that I consider justified the argument that many of the observations above, if not all, can be overcome by the dynamic of our times, which tends to demolish all self-evident principles of our lives and the traditional borders, and as a result the borders of Civilizations. Globalization and its consequences can provoke a ripple effect, covering the whole world without leaving any Civilization "pure", untouched, impregnable. The imposition of a common way of life does not seem to be any longer just a theoretical nightmare of an unbearable uniformity, a uniformity which will apply to external characteristics but not to the equal distribution of material and spiritual goods, and in general will not make uniform the quality of life. Such a development will result in terrifying destitution for mankind!

In this circumstance, where many people feel an obvious threat, we recognize that this causes many factors: xenophobia, racism, anxiety of alienation and the search for cultural identity, which can offer self-consciousness to the people and to whole Civilizations with the same characteristics, the same faith as far as the Religion is concerned, and if applicable, with the same blood and language.

¹⁸ *A Study of History III*, 139-147.

*Such kind of fears can lead to impoundment and make people ready for confrontation*¹⁹.

I would like to finish my speech with an optimistic perspective, concerning the dark horizon of the religious and cultural conflicts which can provoke great confrontation if they are not anticipated. With this kind of dangerous perspective, it is evident and urgent that we open a preliminary *dialogue between Religions and Civilizations*.

It is clear enough, I think, that we can talk about such a "dialogue" only theoretically. Such a dialogue cannot be realized between the impersonal concepts of Civilization and Religion, it can be realized only by their representatives. For this reason, the most important thing is not a dialogue between Religions and Civilizations, but a *Culture of dialogue!*

¹⁹ ALEXANDROS K. PAPADEROS, The challenge of Racism. Some Aspects of Orthodox Belief and Experience, in: *Catalysing Hope for Justice, WCC, in Association with Christian Conference of Asia Singapore* (Geneva 1987), 33-42. See also: ALEXANDROS K. PAPADEROS, Religions and Civilizations. Convergence, Conflict, Dialogue, in: *The Orthodox and sacred abbey Koutloumousiou* (Mount Athos 1997), 199-207.