EDITORIAL:
Between Religious Localism and Global Communication

At the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century, in the moment when the well known philosopher and historian of religion of Romanian origin, Mircea Eliade, foretold a return of the religious, his was a fairly lonely voice. Certainly, representatives of different religions and churches have consistently expressed a similar hope. This hope, however, was more of a theological virtue than a theoretical foresight. One aspect of Eliade's foresight could possibly be enforced by an even more general hope related to the one which was more often expressed by Malraux's quotation concerning the return of a spirituality that should balance the moral materialism and the mass consumption of Western society. Eliade goes further: he expects the return of the religious as a social and political ideology. A contemporary of the period of de colonization, he seems to have understood that religions and local religious practices were to become the new national ideologies. The entrance upon the stage of history of new peoples and populations that until that time were excluded from it, has also returned the religious onto the stage of history. No less interesting is the return of the religious in that part of the European world in which had settled, with apparent permanence, the de-sacralization of "scientific atheism": the countries of the Warsaw Pact, the countries of "authentic socialism". There is an amusing story in history which tells us that Stalin may have asked the ones warning him about the political influence of the Vatican, "How many divisions has the Pope?" There is an equal irony of history in the conversion of the election of a Polish pope into one of the starting points for the social movements in Poland, which ultimately ended in a government whose prime minister was never a communist, governing in the very capital which gave its name to the treaty of one of the two military blocs that divided the planet. The fall of the Berlin wall, and the political overthrow of the former communist governments, has shaped a reality out of the return of the religious, of churches and of religions. Throughout the

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world, local religious traditions have most frequently returned in the manner of "weak ideologies," yet this does not prevented them from backing up rather strong conflicts even military ones. Most recently, the terrorist attack on the WTC has once again highlighted the ideological role of fundamentalist religions, which seems to confirm Huntington's scenarios, which although rather rudimentary, warn against a depthless multiculturalism.

The second expectation of M. Eliade has not materialized. Certainly no one can make a total and complete prediction of the intricate motion of history, which inevitably surpasses any reasoning, even dialectical reasoning. Indeed, Eliade expected a rebirth similar to the Italian Renaissance to begin in the second half of the 20th century. More precisely, he expected, alongside a hope nourished by the hippy movement and the spreading of Zen Buddhism, a fusion between the development of Western civilization (interested in the outer dimension of humanity) and the Asian civilizations (which favors humanity's inner dimension). The expectation remains far from being realized. Here one of Eliade's closest disciples, Ioan Petru Culianu, seems to have been correct: what happened was not a return to the historical traditions, but rather an extension of those existing. Instead of a new return we are dealing with globalization.

Surely that which Eliade, as most people educated in the spirit of the classical European tradition, could not predict, was the decisive role played by the communication sciences and the great importance of the means of mass-communication. It was in the dialectical spirit of the great German philosophy to anticipate and to await the negation of negation and the return of the reverse, or rather of the repressed. But, faithful to rationalist individualism and to the prevalent theory of knowledge, that is, to history and to tradition, Eliade was unable to foresee the role of communication and of the masses. He leaves us to observe a return of the religious in the context of a gradually developing globalization, to research the paradoxical return of individual religious experience of archaic character within a framework which bears the vastness of the entire planet; the return of individual, rather exotic localism within the official frames which techno-science has developed and brought to its heights. The true paradox is the confrontation between individual symbolisms, local semantics, and the stage of global communication, or in other words, the confrontation between the formal, boundless reason of communication and the significances engendered by events minutely determined in space and time. This is the paradox that the Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies embodies: a journal having its location in the virtual reality of communication and its site on the Internet, yet having as its academic interest the most concrete forms of spirituality religions and ideologies. In fact, the Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies represents the virtual projection on the Internet of the activities of this group of researchers and its coordinator, Dr. Sandu Frunza. The journal holds the same principles as the Seminar for the Interdisciplinary Research of Religions and Ideologies (S.C.I.R.I., from it's Romanian name,

Seminar de cercetare interdisciplinara a religiilor si ideologiilor), namely: religious liberty and religious pluralism; the promotion of inter-religious and inter-confessional dialogue; free expression of personal opinions; and ideological unaffiliation. The approach of the research, sustained by religious dialogue, is inter-religious, engaging the following domains: philosophy of religion and politics, humanities fields such as the study of religions, the political sciences, sociology, and anthropology, and to a large extent theories of communication. Committed, like S.C.I.R.I., to promoting highlevel research and addressing the university environment, young researchers, and graduate students, the Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies wishes to connect itself with the international research going on in this field and to build a favorable environment for communication, an academic community founded on a frank exchange of ideas. With the richness of their activities which have already taken place, I am sure of their success!

Translated by Ana-Elena Ilinca