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BOSNIAN IDENTITY AS A PROBLEM

WHAT IS BOSNIA? This question can be formulated in two ways, with two essentially different emphases, one on WHAT, the other on IS. When we insist on WHAT, we enter the area of socio-historical reality – putting ourselves in a position to supplement, upgrade and extend the emphasised WHAT by an EVERYTHING: it is hard to find anywhere else on this planet a place decorated with so much diversity, where so many ethnic groups, cultures, civilisations, ideologies, political and geopolitical interests meet, confront, amalgamate and mix. Even the nature in this small region (i.e. relief, climate, flora, fauna, minerals) produces gifts so abundant, colourful and rich, like few other regions do ...

However, if we emphasise the word IS, then we enter the area of 'philosophical hair-splitting' – inevitably placing ourselves in a position to supplement the word IS with a REALLY: within all the EVERYTHING that Bosnia is, and EVERYTHING concerning the term Bosnia, is there something that REALLY IS, to such a degree that will give Bosnia, as an entity, real meaningfulness and full realisation, thus making its identity...? The question of the identity of Bosnia must begin with emphasising – the really part, emphasising the realisation-fulfilment-meaningfulness of that-something that makes Bosnia what it is.

In this case, it can be said that, as a rule, every spiritual, cultural, national, ideological and political entity or model in this area has always begun to take hold and develop as 'borderline extreme', experimental or functionally-defensive, while being in the middle of the knotty problem of the everlasting struggle of the big powers for expanding and safeguarding the area of their control and influence. If the term culture itself refers, above all, to the rootedness in a certain time and space that stretches to the skies, covering the Secret, wisdom and metaphysical foundation of Life, reaching and materialising the selfhood of a figure of

Spirit, a constellation or form of self-awareness and self-organisation of Being – then the primeval, genuine spirit of Bosnia and Herzegovina could be defined primarily as the demon of prehistoric dreaming or as the misfortune of ungrown plants whose living space has constantly been questioned and seized. To be one's own man in one's own home – has, alone, always been the bigger problem here than anywhere else in Europe: even the roads, leading from the earth to the skies, and from human hands to the Sun, have seemed to be more passable than those that have been threaded by people through Bosnian land...! Every scream and whisper has always been heard better and clearer through time – than through the highland-wooded horizontal line, through the wrinkled, crumpled, and bristling relief of our territory and our historical reality...

Speaking of things that are all water under the bridge, the Bosnian cultural identity, our way of self-restoration and self-development of Being, as well as the inheritance of the independent and assigned forms of spiritual and existential affirmation - were all marked by the resistance to the turbulent and hostile historical and social environment, marked by the surviving-and-remaining-despite-everything that had often highly aggressively threatened and questioned the 'bare existence' in this area. Openness, comparability and metabolic unity of all contents and figures of the Spirit /regardless of the epoch, area or time of their origin/ make an important element within the term culture itself – but one needs to distinguish openness, comparability and metabolic unity of the Spirit's self-assembling through encountering, confronting and fusing ripe cultures from the dull, prehistoric (or non-historic) amalgamating of spiritual, cultural and civilisational contents and forms that takes place (amalgamating, namely) on the very surface of survival, on the dark and existential surface of biological, economic and geopolitical controversiality and dubiousness of life...

The latter process itself has always been present throughout the whole history of Bosnia and Herzegovina: to be that something, of that kind and from that place has always meant becoming, relatively quickly /and absolutely incomparably!/, something else, different, and no one-knows-whose, looking unlike the conceived self, even being incompatible with oneself – as predestined to be...In other words, the force forming the Spirit has always been mostly used for bare existence, within the arranged and unchangeable setting where the opposed and

discordant entities have been clashing and colliding – where even the possibility of coexistence has represented the sublimated, transcendental, metaphysical essence of the entire effort of a man to face the Secret of his own world and life...! Gifts of the very existence, realised through coexistence of such and so many diversities, are the greatest values of our culture: Bosnian Bogumiles and the Franciscans, Christian subjects under the Turkish rule, the untamed Bosnian-Muslim nobility, Bosnian Sephardic Jews and the tragic spirits-leaders in the process of arousing ethnic consciousness in this area late in the 19th and in the early part of the 20th century – all of them, never changing and staying where they belong, had almost become tributes, victims of authenticity-and-nonrealisation of a cultural-civilisational model that has never been predestined to establish and impose itself here in the environment where it naturally belongs, regardless of the fact that it has been present here for almost a thousand years.

Both the negative definition of the Bosnian cultural identity, and the peculiar 'endemism' in historical-social and cultural-civilisational terms – link all the ethnic groups of this region, along with everything that makes them different from 'the world' i.e. from the culture and civilisation of the West, where we should belong in terms of space and time. It would, therefore, be quite justified to discuss the Bosnian-Herzegovinian cultural identity strictly in a heuristic or 'random' manner

– as something that is yet to be self-established and self-comprehended. Reasons for taking such approaches are found everywhere – in the past, the present and the future time. Ideologically distorted historical interpretations, which always sway to this or that side in understanding and interpreting the spirit and culture of this area (and they all usually miss the point), only prevent us from the productive self-awareness of our own historical place. An emphasis should be put on finding a strategy for reaching cultural identity – and this strategy should be based on a 'Copernican revolution' regarding the previously arranged order of things and terms...

Namely, civilisation is supposed to be the apex or the final stage of development of a culture. In our case, however, the apex is the very setting of civilisation, as the offered model of production and organisation of life which already seeks to attain its global fulfilment and from which we certainly cannot "escape" – even if we wanted to! (we have yet to revive and experience something that we might call our culture), if we had only had the conditions to 'work it out' and fully implement it...! To put it simply, both our knowledge and production must become global – so as not to remain none: the products of our intellect must be used in the world; our literature must be read in world languages; our people must act and create, they must learn and improve their knowledge by world standards – so that they may reach the level where they could acknowledge themselves and fully comprehend-and-express that something called the Bosnian-Herzegovinian spirit and Bosnian-Herzegovinian culture...! Even though the cultural model made up of the coexistence of diversities and the productive complementing of opposites, which, owing to historical circumstances, could not be implemented here – it will be that precise model that will be affirmed in the future of humanity (if we are predestined to live long enough to see it!), as the only adequate and efficient one, being able to express and having to express the global spirit...

That way, everything that has been started by the Bogumiles, constantly interrupted for a thousand years, again reborn and crushed 'with bloodshed and rage, will, as the gentle-hallucinatory presence of the Spirit and Culture of this area, remain the Global reality (with or without us in it: it is up to us!)..

Translated by Mirza Džanić

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