NOTE ȘI REFLECȚII

ABOUT SOUL COMMUNICATION.
A REVIEW OF THE MAIN POINTS
TOWARDS A SOCIOLOGY OF THE WHOLE

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"Man is not a cow to fatten, and for him love is more important than what he consumes. You cannot love a house that does not have a face and in which steps do not make sense."
(Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Citadelle*, or *The Wisdom of the Sands*)

Abstract. We hereby propose a cultural sociological approach, found at the intersection with the philosophy of beauty, of the issue of soul communication as the essence of *welfare* and *happiness*. If welfare is addressed today as quantifiable, happiness is a seemingly abandoned subject, timidly resurrected by the new political doctrine of the Big Society. We will address the issue, the possible concepts of this concern that targets the *whole*, with the help of Plato, Bernea, Noica, in a manner of essayistic sociology. What is the essence of the social relationship? What is, in turn, its meaning? What is it not? May we speak of a daily beginning of our own, of a "current" that we aim towards, of *an elementary social phenomenon*? What is the form of the elementary relationship? Soul communication is the communication set within the (inner) truth – the Truth which is distributed without being divided. From this perspective, family is the form of the elementary relationship – the increasing limitation – as Noica argues.

Keywords: soul communication, beauty, truth, happiness, wealth, family, the New Society.

The discussion frame. Communication and the crisis – a few starting points. Political rediscovery of happiness?

The crisis that arose in 2008, the so-called "derivatives' crisis" – that of speculative credit instruments, the deepest of the contemporary era, raised several issues and, implicitly, answers.

One of the most interesting aspects stands in regard with the foundations of the problem, namely the concept of *social responsibility*. The concept that was launched by the British administration is called "the Big Society", as opposed to the concern of the increasing advance of "the Big Government" – the increase of

the state to unprecedented levels. For instance, in the US in 2011, the federal government spent $ 13 billion more than the revenue earned (*The Economist*, January 11th 2014). Returning to the theoretical foundations, the idea of happiness is tightly attached to the one of social responsibility: if the communities are held accountable due to the diminishing role of the state, subjective welfare/individual happiness increases through the strengthening of the individual's primary frame of manifestation.

The idea that *happiness* is a better indicator when measuring the competitiveness of a society than GDP was assumed by the French government since 2008 – "Gross National Happiness". True, before being introduced in France, the indicator was first used in the little kingdom of Bhutan (*The Economist*, December 16th 2010).

The two major global trends that standardize the notion of happiness concern the "overall sense of welfare" and the "hedonistic or emotional" facets of well-being at the personal level (*The Economist*, December 16th 2010). However, generally speaking, happiness increases with age, perhaps together with *wisdom*. This is the point in which the contemporary science stops: there are no tools to define *wisdom* and therefore scientists step onto unknown territory that had been abandoned in the name of accuracy almost 100 years before – the problem of *soul*. That is because wisdom (also) refers to spiritual maturation.

The doctrine of "Big Society" was launched by Prime Minister Cameron around November 2010 (*The Economist*, December 16th 2010), but the only palpable targets of the "doctrine" are significant reduction of public expenditure which relates specifically to communities: education, social work, public safety, libraries. Basically, the state wants to abandon the responsibilities which justify its existence, passing these on to the communities. The doctrine of "Big Society" is therefore not about strengthening communities and therefore not about increasing individual happiness by its means, but simply an ideological artifice to drastically reduce public spending. Empowering communities actually means the disavowal of state, and therefore, the weakening of the society as a whole.

Things get even more interesting when China, the second largest economic power of the world, enters the stage. In 2011, China's Premier Wen Jiabao said that more important than Gross Domestic Product growth is "Happy China" (*The Economist*, March 17th 2011). At the time, the Chinese government still had the precisely operationalized concept of "Happy China", but British commentators argued that for 11% of the Chinese people happiness would mean "freedom of speech on the Internet" (*ibidem*). Local governments have set a target of five-year happiness. For instance, the Guangdong administration had set a five-year plan (2011–2015) which had the main goal of achieving a "Happy Guangdong" (*The Guardian*, February 22th 2011). Mainly, macro-level expressed happiness was operationalized by: domestic consumption, the share of innovation, employment, regional coordination, the green economy and "harmonious distribution" of resources (cf. *ibidem*). But China's approach is not to be mocked. China has the most important major contribution to alleviating poverty in the world in the last two decades of the 20th century. The poverty rate in rural China fell from 70% in 1978 to 5% in 2007 (World Bank data in *The*

Economist, December 11th 2008). But poverty reduction policies were made at the expense of genuine self-consumption: pollution has become unbearable. Premier Wen Jibao said that the model of economic growth that was used until 2010 – i.e. the one that made possible the dramatic fall in poverty and shot China into the second place among world's most powerful national economies, had become "unbalanced and unsustainable" (*The Economist*, March 17th 2011). In addition, with decreasing poverty, not just in China but all over the world except Latin America, social inequality has increased: in the USA with 30% from 1980, in China by 50% and in countries like Sweden by 25 % during the same period (Gini coefficient – *The Economist*, October 13th 2012). An economy that is centered on growth is hereby proving to be profoundly unsustainable and ultimately producing "unhappiness".

The United Nations faced the same problem, by the 65/309 Resolution from July 19th 2011. Here, the UN admits that happiness is an ingredient for "a holistic approach to the issue of development", "being a fundamental human purpose", while the "GDP does not reflect the happiness and well-being of people in a country". The context recognized by the UN on this occasion refers to "a model of production and [mass] consumption that is unsustainable", "unfair". The UN Resolution does not define happiness, leaving us to infer that it is that "something" that makes possible the sustainable development through a holistic approach to economic phenomena that must somehow change the current pattern of consumption and mass production. Is this resolution an invitation to waive the obsessive use of the term "economic growth"? We do not know. However, the only alternative known throughout history to growth-based economy and society is the peasant economy, based on consumption and production accordingly to needs. Peasant farming, in turn, is closely related to ancient economy encoded by Plato (*Laws*): "commerce is a kind of harmonizing catalyst between *chaotic abundance of goods and natural needs of the people*. In other words, trade is the natural link that harmonizes human needs and goods of all kinds. […] Therefore, trade must closely follow without any deviation the roads of Being" (Pantelimon, p. 27).

Moreover, it seems the problem of happiness is not exactly tidily addressed. Bernea shows that here, in the temporal dimension, one has access only to joy, happiness being part of the transcendent. "As a concept, joy rather belongs to the field of morale, while happiness is a rather metaphysical notion. As a reality, joy is linked to our life history, is the very essence of [it] […] However, happiness is related to the belief in an afterlife, a stable world, the world of the permanency, and that it can be lived in another life cycle. In this way […] while joy has a temporal dimension, happiness resides outside of time, in eternity" (Bernea, 2008, p. 10).

But joy has its source and resource in: awareness of the "presence in the world" ("the happiness of being"), knowledge, and creation (Bernea, 2008, pp. 12–40). In all three stages, man is not alone. The happiness of being, knowledge, and creation are all types of *soul communication*. At a simple review of the phrase, one easily notices the connection between soul communication and the three steps Bernea

listed: knowledge is also communication, but happiness and creation entail spiritual participation[1].

The social function of the whole

The *whole*, as Noica demonstrates, is synonymous with *the general*, the only *form* that can be distributed without division, "even if it's nowhere identifiable as such" (Noica, 1998, p. 459).

Why talking about Noica here? For the sake of utility. Because Noica completely maps the reality from the perspective of philosophy (as it is sociologically approached by Gusti's theory of frames and manifestations) by dividing the reality in general, individual and determinations. The tension that is present in the reality is permanent and it refers to the relationship between the *general*, *individual*, and *determinations* (manifestations that connect the individual with the general beneath which it rests).

Soul communication is the phenomenon by which man holds together the three components of his being: the individual, the general and determinations. Moreover, soul communication allows the appearance of linkages between people (beings), in the broader frame of *being*. In sociological terms, one can approximate the act of *being* with the quality (necessary and mandatory) to be social beings. The somewhat equivalent term of *being* is the one of *sociality* – the human capacity to be a social being (to be together with).

Soul communication is the link between the components of the being, and between beings. As a cognitive category, the concept is trans-disciplinary, constituting the link between sociology (communication understood as transmission of information[2]) and philosophy (the idea of being–to be).

The imperative of the whole

The spiritual communication has the social function of *communicating wholes.* We will see that **there are a couple of important vehicles of the soul communication: tradition and culture.** To the extent that technics does not relate to soul communication (it is not integrated within the ensemble of the human need for liberty, and it does not fit into one's will and consciousness), it is a factor of consumption of the being.

From this point of view, the spiritual communication is part of the "imperative of the whole": "The imperative of the whole refers to the fact that man is a latent entity which is constantly submitted to erosion, therefore to the distancing from self and others.

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[1] The soul relates to the individual's ability to have shared experiences with the Other – generic community. "'The man with a soul' or 'of soul' is such a 'man of character,' that not only claims to do something, but he is indeed able to do something (the thing)" (Bădescu, 2001, p. 144).
[2] Communication is the psychosocial process by which individuals exchange information in a common symbolic framework of reference.

[…] At the same time, the imperative of the whole shows that, in order to understand reality, it is necessary to understand the symbolic context" (Baltasiu, Sisestean, p. 12).

The whole is the prototypical totality, as Ilie Bădescu shows. We constantly reach this totality through celebration/holiday, refreshing our cohabitation norms, our personal state of mind etc. through occasioned joy: "The man, as a latent entity, has always opposed embodiments, which bring him the diminution of his prototypical substance, strategies of reunion, which all are spiritual feelings, all updated latent abilities in spiritual or noological frames, such as the ritual, the prayer, the exemplarity, the paradigmatic. *The man always completes the pragmatic act with the ritual, the concrete thinking with the symbolic one or with the mythical-symbolic one, the fact with the legend, the performance with the prayer etc. precisely for regaining the forever threatened and always lost **unity***". (Bădescu, 2001, p. 711). "[…] everything that happens with us and around us, no matter how unimportant, wears *the whole's stigma*, even when, in the composition of a certain fact, the whole is present through the *crisis* that the *absent* parts are maintaining in the concrete field of manifestation of that circumstantially fact" (Bădescu, 2001, p. 523).

Returning to Noica, he shows that the whole means, for mankind, *the becoming of the individual starting from the general, through determinations.* The general, as Noica argues, represents the *identity* and *chaining*: "However, is not only the identity that represents the aspect of generality, in the thing that gained the quality of being, but also the *chaining*. What it is can very easy seem like a simple ensemble of events; but after all, it is a system of connections" (Noica, 1998, p. 252). The determinations, in turn, represent the manifestations of the being – from reality, for example, under the form of: storytelling, theory, craft and art, all kinds of technical applications, etc. (Noica, 1998, p. 305). The individual is a reality with a double limitation, as Noica shows: which is always standing under the tension of a double unity – interior and exterior. The individuality assumes the ability of having its own internal tension, imposed by its own will, in the context of a few external conditionings (tensions) (cf. Noica, 1998, p. 262).

The mutual determination of these three parts of the being (as noun and verb) makes possible the becoming (Noica, 1998, p. 368) – the condition of normality of the being (of a person). Translating into sociological terms, the notion of becoming (the passing of the external environment within the internal one of the being), we say that the connection between these is the *soul communication.* Moreover, the last step of the becoming, the becoming *within* being, represents "the privileged position that one has and can communicate with everything that 'is'" (Noica, 1998, p. 168). We have here a total opening, other types of becomings (which are not into being) are characterized by various difficulties, negations, which do not permit *the dialogue with everything that is.* So here, we understand that the spiritual communication belongs to this last field of the liberty of the being: the becoming *within* being. It is the moment in which the man is exceeding his own self and social group, reaching a humanity *particularly determined* in every piece of the reality.

For Mircea Vulcănescu, the axis of the whole oscillates between two forms of the Word: "Logos and Eros" (see the homonymous book). In relation to this axis, the

tension of life becomes: "in other words, the cardinal question if, with all these ways of exceeding that are at hand, we are doomed to stay closed in ourselves or to fulfill ourselves in the other?" (Vulcănescu, 1991, p. 16).

The (dwelling) place – part of the imperative of the whole

The condition for the soul communication to take place is *the locus.* Space and time are defined by *locus*/*place*. On the other hand, the **meaning of things** depends on a large extent upon the *place. Place* is the element that allows not only to emit a message, but mostly offers its decryption key. The *place* itself is part of "anthropos". This defining place for humanity is called *oikos* – the family ecology, the family household.

Place, in turn, is encoded – transmitted across generations through tradition. Tradition, in this view, is the great leap made in the Neolithic revolution, if not earlier, when the man managed to place useful information for a long and very long period of time, encapsulating it in *feeling* – as a celebration/holiday. Hereby **the culture** became possible and with it, the new economy based on accumulation, called **agriculture.**

"Thus men destroy their most precious possession, the meaning of things. On holidays they cover themselves in glory, by standing out against old customs, betraying their traditions, and honoring their enemy" (Saint-Exupéry, 1977, p. 17).

We see that for Exupéry man begins with holidays, traditions, and home. These represent *the citadel* of humanity in all of us – that *inner courtyard*, without which the world collapses. The *place is* where all the meanings arise from, and hence the world. Without meanings, man remains unsettled, is unworldly, homeless. *The Citadel* and the meaning of things all come together with a flourish. Knowledge, which makes possible the integration of man in the world through concreteness (Noica's determinations), begins with… the home. *The place* is home, in which we dwell. Exupéry beautifully comprises the philosophical perspective of time, defined by the *place* where all things begin. And everything begins with home, the place of origin for the soul communication.

"For I have lit on a great truth: to wit, that all men *dwell,* and life's meaning changes for them with the meaning of the home. […] The rites are for time as home is for space. For it is good if passing time does not seem to wear us down and lose us, like a handful of sand, but to fulfil us" (Saint-Exupéry, 1977, p. 15).

"I command a heart of home to be built, so that one can get close to or get away from, something that has a way in, out and back. Otherwise, you are nowhere. And being nowhere is not being free" (Saint-Exupéry, 1977, p. 16). "Man's dwelling place, who could found you on reasoning, or build your walls with logic? You exist, and you exist not. You are, and are not. True, you are made out of diverse materials, but for your discovery an inventive mind was needed. Thus, if a man pulled his house to pieces, with the design of understanding it, all he would have before him would be heaps of bricks and stones and tiles, he would not be able to discover therein the silence, the shadows and the privacy they bestowed. Nor would he see what service this mass of bricks, stones and tiles could render him, now that they lacked the heart and soul of the architect, the inventive mind which dominated them. For in mere stone the heart and soul have no place.

But since reasoning can deal with only such material things as bricks and stones and tiles, and there is no reasoning about the heart and soul that dominate them and thus transform them into silence – inasmuch as the heart and soul have no concern with the rules of logic or the science of numbers – this is where I step in and impose my will. […] I mold that clay, which is the raw material, into the likeness of the creative vision that comes to me from God; and not through any faculty of reason.

And if I would build my home large enough to give meaning even to the stars, they would thank the Lord for how good they can lead their ships… And if I build it so it could last enough through time to embrase life in all its length, they will go from feast to feast, like from one room to another, knowing towards what they are heading to and discovering, past the miscellaneous life, the divine picture. Citadel! I have built you like a ship" (Saint-Exupéry, 1977, p. 21).

Bernea also brings together the beginning of man with the *place*. Time and space, the two coordinates through which the world has a meaning, define, in fact, the *place*. And the *place* is known through tradition, specifically through *folklore,* customary law, techniques of integration in the real. The function of tradition, as Bernea shows, is the integration of man in the "built world", the only objective given. Space and time, before being measured, before being the geographical marks and the marks of our doings, they are the inclusive frame. For the peasant, the time is not simply passing, it is even less displaying its own agenda, but in fact it is integration within the built world.

The spiritual communication represents the integration in the universal rhythm – "the cosmic orderliness". The integration means that the man has the privilege of being an attendee in the creation process. For the peasant, sociality and sociability exceed "one's need of integrating into society". The condition of integration in the society – what meets the eye, and is beyond the man, is the "orderliness".

"The way the Romanian people choose to represent the cosmos is vivid and complex. Here are a few of the fundamental traits:
(a) nature is miscellaneous, various and well ordered; the cosmic ordering is a prime characteristic of the world;
(b) this kind of order is in a sustained progress and harmony in a *rhythmical* way; all the things are moving after a certain rhythm;
(c) nature, our entire world is more than movement; it is a continuing *generation,* which means creation;
(d) the Romanian cosmos knows a certain kind of harmony, which brings down to beauty, an active beauty at full potential" (Bernea, 2005, p.96-97)."

From this perspective, history is another form of soul communication, being a connecting factor between people.

The issue of soul communication can be further developed taking into account several analysis paths: **1.** The logic of "within" (a Romanian contribution to philosophy); **2.** Soul communication as impartment, transfiguration and founding dialogue; **3.** The spiritual initiative; **4.** The kinaesthetic image, character and type of society; **5.** Soul communication seen as fuel for economic growth; and, in the end; **6.** Light dimming.

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