

The New Space for the Inter-Cultural Dialogue within BRICS

I wrote previously that the globalization process as it had been practiced in the recent past, did not only come to a standstill but also became a threat to the very human existence.

Globalization as it was understood and practiced included several components. First, expansion of the contemporary market economy to all the regions of the world, accompanied by origination of transnational corporations that do not take into consideration the existing national and state borders. Second, universal penetration of modern communicative technologies into all the countries of the world: television, the Internet, mobile communications, digitalization and use of the Artificial Intelligence systems. Both generate global mass culture that, as the theoreticians of globalization thought, should push out traditional culture developing within nation-states. However, it was clear that the project of globalization understood in such a way was really nothing but the plan of Westernization or even “Americanization” as it was acknowledged by the well-known American political scientist Henry Kissinger.

Really, the globalization process as it was carried out was a threat not only for the existing nation-states but for the human as such. Globalization does not only destroy inter-state borders but also the human life world, not only an individual of this or that culture but humans in general as well. The growing inclusion of humans into the global information and communication network is not only an opportunity to establish contacts with other people and cultures but also the growing network of dependencies. The opportunities for manipulations with the mind, people management, large-scale production of disinformation are expanding.

We can only oppose the dehumanization of humans and culture in case if we manage to preserve the traditional human values and at the same time adapt them to the today's realities, including challenges created by the development of science and technologies. And the traditional values exist and transmit from one generation to the other within the framework of the existing national cultures. These cultures differ from one another. The understanding of the world and humans differs in them. But all of us have some common ideas that are questioned today by global challenges. The variety of traditional cultures is not a flaw or a shortcoming but a condition for survival and further development of mankind.

Today, the existing cultures have to react to the challenges of globalization and adapt to them by self-development. It may turn out that the resources for such an adaptation will be different in case of different cultures. The beyond-pragmatic values cultivated in Russian culture may play a positive role when searching the exit from the dead-end of contemporary "cognitive capitalism".

Today, the protection of humans means preservation and development of traditional culture, and the latter supposes protection of national identity, consequently, national interests, including protection of economy, science, art, education.

However, it is important to keep in mind that cultures cannot successfully develop when isolated. As M. M. Bakhtin underlined, "culture exists on the border". Fruitful development of culture supposes its interaction with other cultures within the framework of inter-cultural dialogue.

I'd like to attract attention to some special features of such a dialogue.

Cultures as a whole cannot have a dialogue. "Dialogue of Cultures" is a kind of metaphor. Only individuals, groups of people, communities, social institutions may join a dialogue of this kind.

There is no fruitful dialogue as to the systems of fundamental values of this or that culture or worldview mindsets. As the latter ones refer to cultural identity in the basis of individual identity. The real dialogue between cultures is possible only in case if we are speaking about the solution of certain practical issues, and when the understanding of the issues themselves and possible ways of dealing with them supposes various approaches related to different cultural optics. Cultures offer different perspectives for viewing the same issues. Comparison of the said perspectives may be fruitful. In the course of such a dialogue, different cultures do not lose their identity but develop it.

It should be said that the inter-cultural dialogue of Russia with the countries of Western Europe has been fruitful for its participants during the recent 300 years. We are speaking about science, and fiction, and music, and painting. At the same time, the cultural identity of our country was not diluted in Western culture, on the contrary, it acquired the real individuality and originality. German professors were the first members of the Russian Academy of Sciences. And in the 20th century, it was impossible to imagine the world science without the Russian scientists' contribution. As it is impossible to imagine the world literature without Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, and the world music without Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky, Rakhmaninov.

Today, new opportunities are opening up for the inter-cultural dialogue. The bloc called BRICS including countries from the East and the South has come into being. These countries including Russia have common economic and geopolitical interests, common intention to oppose attempts of Western countries to place them under their influence, break their cultural identity. BRICS is a new center of economic, technological and scientific development, with which prospects for transformation of the whole global geopolitical space are tied. Not only interaction in economy and technologies is fruitful within BRICS. Inter-cultural dialogue may be no less fruitful. For example, such a dialogue has been successfully going on with China over the recent 20 years.

I am a participant of this dialogue. My students fruitfully interact with Chinese philosophers. Some of them live and work in China. Russian philosophers and experts in cognitive sciences take part in conferences dedicated to the issues of mind arranged in recent years in India by the Dalai Lama. It should be said that the understanding of mind in the Buddhist philosophy opens up new ways for research of this greatest mystery of philosophy and science as it is acknowledged by participants of these events.

The new stage of inter-cultural cooperation is coming. The circle of participants of the inter-cultural dialogue has greatly expanded after BRICS origination and development. And that means a new stage in the development of culture as a whole, i.e. a new stage in the human development that is impossible outside culture.