

PETRU BEJAN

ABOUT HOSPITALITY AND TOLERANCE IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

Petru Bejan

Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences,
“Al. I. Cuza” University, Iași, Romania.
Email: pbejan@gmail.com

Abstract: We almost can't find among the countries of the East one not to praise or to display as own virtues – particular or specific – hospitality and tolerance. In fact, to project such qualities in a privileged register of categories is a part of a quasi-generalized imagologic strategy meant to valorize the positive character of some traits – ethnic, national or belonging to a group. Each country needs a favorable mythology, luxuriant in fairytales, heroes, acts of bravery, one in which to be able to project its obsessions and nostalgias, composing a self image as good as possible. Is the fervor of idealization a sin? Certainly not, if the purposes are reasonable, and not subjected to some insidious ideological or propagandistic finalities.

Key Words: culture of hospitality, tolerance, ethos of identities, difference, intolerance, xenophobia, alienation, cosmopolitanism, transnational mobility and solidarity

Why *hospitality and tolerance*? Why together and not detached? Both terms challenge our relationship with *the stranger*, with our close *afar*, whom we would want or be willing to accept. The form of such an acceptance makes the difference between the two concepts. Relations of power and authority, but also conducts of a deep moral weight are structured around them.

A reflection upon hospitality today, Jacques Derrida believes, should regard, among others, “the possibility of a rigorous delimitation of the thresholds or frontiers between familial and non-familial, between stranger and non-stranger, between citizen and non-citizen, but first of all between private and public, between private law and public law¹”.

Such subjects are not eased of pragmatic implications. Eastern Europe, for example, has been engaged for centuries in migration processes, in mixtures, assimilations, but also separations of individuals or heterogeneous groups. Contextual mobilities, historical and political tensions exceeded regional or local geographies, diffusing sometimes at world level. The *ethos* of the collective identities often conflicted with the policies of managing diversity. From this point of view, we could say that the Balkans saw almost all the forms of dominance and obedience, tolerance and intolerance. Diversity has been accompanied rather of discord and divergence than concord and unity. Contiguities, far from having been friendly, motivated war afflatuses of the most ferocious.

The Balkans left the impression of an exhaustless source of tension, of “war of everyone against everyone”. Peace or conflict always depended on the nature of the reciprocal relations. How can we then explain rivalries, wars, betrayals, terror, forced exclusions from this space, described with passion and surprise by the foreigners who transited it? How can we explain massive migrations, justified by intolerance and poverty, to the Occident? Do we, Balkans, truly have an authentic culture of hospitality? Are we truly tolerant? Can we reconsider the concepts at issue so that they become for the East premises of some comprehensive approaches, established on the acknowledgement, acceptance and mutual cultivation of the difference, once with the respect and preservation of own identity? How would the two work in a cosmopolite order, centered on diversity and mobility, one in which limits only exist to be transgressed?

What is hospitality? Etymologically speaking, it derives from the Latin *hostis*, which designates both the friend, the guest, but also the stranger, seen as hostile. *Hostis* is also the *hostage* – the one taken as bond of fidelity or obtaining through radical violence of a profitable obedience. What does it mean being hospitable? To be open, generous, available, to greet the other with benevolence and respect, to offer without being asked for. Hospitality is assumed in the dialectics of the gift (giving), on which generosity and philanthropy are established. One can discuss about

hospitality in an absolute, unconditional acceptance, but also about the relative or conditional hospitality.

In *The Third Definitive Article Regarding Eternal Peace*, Kant establishes the cosmopolite law upon the “absolute hospitality”, the universal one. Hospitality represents “the right of a stranger of not being treated with hostility when arriving on another territory”², as long as he acts „civilized”. There is no right to hostility to „rationalize” philanthropy, but only a „visitor right” given to free citizens of the common possession of the extent of the Earth. The right offered to strangers cannot expand beyond the conditions imposed by the host. Inhospitality, Kant believes, opposes natural law, even if it is sometimes practiced by alleged civilized states. Therefore, hospitality is included in the virtues of civility, which call for respect and benevolence for the alike. On principal, it must avoid mercantile calculations and conditionings.

The exigency of absolute hospitality is contradicted by Kant himself by assuming the principle of *veracity* at any price³. One must not lie in any circumstance, even though someone close is betrayed. The utopia of the pure moral, centered on a principle of sincerity without compromise, is superior to the subjective and contextual moral. The respect for the other excludes the lie – Kant thought. In this case, for example, the innocent stranger, brought at bay by criminals who chase him, must be denounced and not protected through inveracity. As long as the host is morally bound to denounce, to kill – even indirect – , by irrevocable telling the truth, he gets into conflict with the imperative of absolute, uncensored hospitality, inducing him to do the right.

To Kant, the relation between the host and the stranger is a judicial one, such as the one between the chased and the chaser or between the assassin and the judges. Even when is well received, the stranger always remains a stranger. We *virtually* owe hospitality, but this is conditioned by rules and laws. The “antinomy of hospitality” brings into insoluble conflict the law of unlimited hospitality and the current laws of hospitality, which stipulates rights, obligations and responsibilities both for the host and the stranger. The assumption in all circumstances of the unconditional Law represents the assumption and tolerance of the wrongdoing, of self-will, situation in which the stranger himself can impose his norm, even embarrassing, restrictive or repressive. Although it abandons the *principle* in favor of the *rule*, conditional hospitality seems to be the only functional one.

Situated in nietzschean tradition, the philosophic criticism of hospitality sees in it the symptom of an obsolete will for power or of a chronic lack of vitality. The barbarians, the nomads are active agents of change, promoters of the new, the dynamic blast of civilizing. The hospitable, in exchange, dissimulates in the apparent benevolence the fear of the other, the fear of being conquered and forfeited. His hospitality is resentful. The inability to compel (by force) leads to the artificial

simulation of benevolence and resent. Therefore, hospitality is offered by the weak to attenuate the virtual aggressiveness of the ones seen as powerful, it camouflages own frustrations and complexes. It is, perhaps, the reason why the “bold” countries, with imperial vocation, never flaunted their “hospitality”. Hospitable and tolerant are only the small peoples, Emil Cioran wrote in his juvenescence, the nations penurious of the voluptuousness of power and conquest, the only “virtues” to offer them superiority and historic destiny.

If the natural estate exhorts people to respond to violence with violence, the Christian ethics frames a censorship and a sublimation of instincts in favor of a benevolent heart, centered on the love for the neighbor (“Love your neighbor as yourself!”). Max Scheler upends the nietzschean arguments, showing that only human beings can respond to hate and aggressiveness with a different procedure (other than these). Its specificity is given and redoubted by humaneness, the virtue that confers him distinction among living beings. Hospitality does not derive from lack of power or will, but from a proper nurture of the habitude. It converts suspicion and violence into trust and generosity, becoming a *modus vivendi*, premise and constant of socialization.

Derrida considers that an act of hospitality can only be poetic; the true hospitality is unconditional. Utopian or metaphysical, such an attitude establishes the ideal semantic frame. Under compulsion or conditioned, hospitality turns into something derived. Tolerance can be a derived or adjusted form of hospitality.

Is though tolerance a form of hospitality? It recognizes the difference too, it accepts it, but rations and regularizes its functioning. Tolerance is acknowledged today as a reasonable form of compromise that allows the peaceful coexistence of different individuals or groups with heterogeneous ethnic, cultural, religious identities. The Latin *tolero*, *-are* sends to the capacity of standing, accepting, enduring the other’s presence. Philosophical dictionaries define tolerance as “the manner to act belonging to a person who endures a harm of its rights without protesting, even though it could have repressed it”; “the manner to act belonging to an authority who openly accepts, according to a habit, a certain waiver from the laws or regulations with which exercise it is charged with”; “frame of mind or conduct rule consisting in leaving for any others the freedom of expressing their opinions, even when you do not share them”.

Tolerance means compliance, acceptance, assent, approval of the difference even beyond or above own preferences and options. Tolerance is obtained by commonly managing civic rights and freedoms obtained according to own social status. The discourse of tolerance dissimulates in fact the tension of the power relations hierarchically structured; it’s the discourse of the father, of the autocrat, of a majority relating to the sons,

the compliant, the minority; it's the discourse of the powerful relating to the discourse of the weak.

The American Michael Waltzer identifies more forms of tolerance: acceptance of the difference for the sake of peace; passive benign indifference in regard to the other's difference; the virtual acknowledgement of the other's rights, even though they are not sincerely approved, opening to the others, accompanied by curiosity and respect; the enthusiastic approval of the difference seen as a form of exposure of creation, of moral and cultural enrichment⁴. Pluralism, diversity are more and more present in large, open communities, in democratically structured regimes. The spirit of tolerance makes the cohabitation of heterogeneous groups, the mercifulness regarding the stranger possible; intolerance, in exchange, is a predictable source of conflict.

Who is the stranger? What is a stranger like? In Derrida's opinion, "it's not only the one who lives abroad, outside society, family, citadel. And not the other, the one completely different from us, that we expulse in an "outside" that is absolute and wild, barbarian, pre-cultural and pre-judicial, outside and beyond the borders of family, community, citadel, nation or state"⁵. Even since Antiquity, the relations with the strangers are judicially regulated. The Greeks were connecting *xenos* (the stranger) to a pact (*xenia*) certifying the reciprocal rights and responsibilities. The Christian Decalogue mentions the terms of acceptance and recognition inside the community, terms relating to which all the others are treated as strangers. In our times, *laws of hospitality* are being invoked, such as the ones enunciated by Klossowski⁶, prescribing the frames of the other's acceptance. Such rules fall into caducity and inefficiency if the terms of the "contract" are broken through unilateral extension, either by the host (state, leader, master of the house, owner, "head" of the family) or the stranger (immigrant, exiled, nomad, belonging to a minority). The excess of restrictions endangers freedom, facilitating repressive solutions; their absence encourages the wrongdoing, subversion and violence. *Xenophobia* is the consequence of such abusive interpretations.

The matter of the stranger is the one of the disputed place, either is it named territory, public or private space. "*Home*" (*country, ancestry, homeland*) becomes the alibi of a mythology of demands, meant to certify or justify the right or the primacy of occupation and domination. The host becomes "master", the guest – hostile, enemy; undesirable, clandestine, parasitic presence. The "law of the land" or of the "blood" legitimize priority and possession. Remote and precarious, the place of birth becomes for the stranger the reason of a peripheral position. The immigrant is a sojourner, the eternal stranger, nostalgically attached to other places and laws. The "out of place persons", Derrida considers, the exiled, the deportees, the expelled, the unrooted, the nomads, they all have in common two nostalgias: the dead and the mother tongue.⁷

„Home” is the settled place of graves, the defunct ancestors, the parents, the blood roots. The mother tongue is the place of the deep homeland, our stable “body”, but also “mobile home”, constantly carried. The alliances are span on the inside; the exclusions – on the outside. Unknown and unapprehended, the language of the stranger becomes a serious obstacle relating to the temporary host. The host’s language is the “official” one, the language of the laws that codify hospitality and in which reciprocal rights are certified. The assertion of the language can be a new form of violence and intolerance. The linguistic “imperialism” assumes coercive ways of assimilating a language spoken on the outside. It always accompanied colonial practices, sometimes forcing the conquered communities to acknowledge and use the dominator’s language.

The language is not reduced to the lexical idiom that we generally exploit. It is “the entirety of culture, values, norms and meanings. To speak the same language is not just a simple linguistic operation. The *ethos* in general is involved”⁸. The invitation, the receiving, asylum, lodging, they all pass through language or approaching the other. One can “speak the same language” with a stranger who understands him or whom he understands beyond temporary and conjunctural linguistic barriers. The essence of mutual comprehension resides in communication, reciprocal availability, therefore not suspicion and exclusion.

How do we then justify voluntary enclaving, the separatism on the inside, arbitrary isolationism, dictated by the will to impose own identity upon the host? Or when the latter gets into divergence with political and administrative solutions of managing diversity? Diversity means complexity, while identity – simplicity. Opposed to conjunctural *alienation*, identity can be an illusion. The philosophical project of cosmopolitanism challenges its excessive affirmance, arguing that it’s here where we find the source of all recent conflicts, of political totalitarianisms, of massive deportations and bloody massacres.

By doing an “encomium” to cosmopolitanism (universal that is “de-localized” or “de-territorialized” by tearing the individual), the French Guy Scarpeta speaks about a deeper and deeper “identity crisis”⁹. Permanently in a legitimization crisis, communities of all kinds need compensatory formulas, either by exalting local traditions and mythologies, or by hypostasizing the evil, stigmatizing it and excluding it with a virulence that is hard to imagine. The stranger is the most common scapegoat. The intolerance regarding it is strategically assumed, like René Girard had shown, becoming sometimes a real mission of patriotism and identity.

After the world wars of a sad memory, intellectuals fought against political and cultural “centralisms”, against oppression and uniformity; in the same time minorities of all kinds, outsiders and exploited have appeared. The ‘90s, together with the defeat of the communist

dictatorships, establish new forms of freedom in Europe, including the East. Then, but also later, the discourse of legitimization exalts apparently forgotten topics: the one of “roots”, “fields”, “ancestor origins” or “ancestor land”, accompanied by archaist, provincialist, anti-Occidental temptations. The retreat in own community or in more and more isolated groups, subversive ones or which are contesting the state (seen as oppressive), created new forms of intolerance and chauvinism.

Nationalism, racism and xenophobia, Scarpeta believes, are generated straight by resorting to those myths of being “inveterate”. They are born from “the connection that each individual maintains with its language and culture and everything beyond them”¹⁰. The obsolete archaism is born when society risks not being cotemporary with its own culture anymore. The “antagonism” to the *stranger* or the *new*, the narrowness of horizons, the isolation in the codes of the entirety to whom we *belong*, the rejection of whatever could disrupt or relativize the codes – all these contain in germs other intolerances, other rejections, other exclusions”... The solution? Building up a new identity, transversal and mobile, irreducible to territorial inveterations and the defining of the subject in terms of *collectivity* or *affiliation*. It’s not only an ethical punt, but also an aesthetic one at stake. The cosmopolite bet is best illustrated by modern art. It paradigmatically sketches the “trans-culture”, “free movement”, not only of “humans and ideas”, but also shapes and languages. The obsession of affiliation, of the roots, is subrogated by another, of migration, traveling and dispersal (in a wide, cultural meaning).

The cosmopolitanism described by Guy Scarpeta does not privilege nomadism, dis-location, the “de-territorial” as alternatives to the anamneses of identity, to the ideas of unity, language, law or affiliation. On the contrary, all of these are assumed, potentiating mobility, the game of repeated departures and translocations. Cosmopolitanism “is not a simple drift, a pure meaningless wandering, but multiplying the meaning on calculated tracks”¹¹. It’s not just vagabondage, but a premeditated move to pre-established limits that can be transgressed by effort and perseverance, towards a *Universal-singular* like the one refused by politics, but experienced sometimes by literature and art. It becomes a decisive experience of the recent human, basing an ethics of emancipation from local temptations, together with projecting *transnational mobility and solidarity* as *style* and *modus vivendi*. The paradox of identity is subrogated by another, of non-alienating difference. The project of globalization assumes a de-localization of a radical kind, one in which each other’s “home” is in movement, always floating or itinerant on the whole surface of Terra.

We could say that our whole world is in motion, and that we’re actually nomads in always new directions. The nomad is the metaphor of

the postmodern man, Zygmunt Bauman thinks. The nomadism “treaties”, such as the one written by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatari, the “nomadology” reviews confirm such an assumption. Bauman distinguishes two postmodern human types: the vagabond and the tourist¹². The tourist and the vagabond circulate as *strangers* in spaces populated by others. The vagabond is a pilgrim without a destination, a nomad without a pre-established track. The space that he crosses is unpredictable, non-structural. The logic of going further is random and capricious. The tourist, in exchange, does the experience of a rationalized space, which he premeditatedly, strategically traverses. He has on his side everything needed for the traveling. Eased of the stakes of winning and surviving, the purpose of the journey can be purely cognitive or aesthetic. The tourist converts hospitality in a functional concept, subjected to a logic of partnership, reciprocally profitable. Tourists pay in advance the pointed hospitality. Its price is proportional to the value of the investment. By contrast, the vagabond steals, begs, frauds, therefore bothers; always undesirable, he will be isolated or rejected towards subterranean, nocturnal or peripheral tracks.

Bauman’s distinction serves explaining hospitality and tolerance. The tourist moves on pre-established tracks, of visiting. The place of stoppages or objectives is as transparent as possible. Public space temporarily allocated to him is systemized in detail, to make his stay enjoyable and relaxing. Entering the particularly organized “network”, he offers money, common sense and respect, and receives in exchange attention and hospitality. He can choose from what’s common and usual in the visited worlds just as much as he can prefer the singular, the unique, what is specific in *culture* (books, museums, galleries, shows...), in *scenery* (mountain, seaside, lagoon, island, delta), in the place’s cuisine. “Ideally, you need to be tourist anywhere and everyday. Physically close, spiritually afar”. In a cosmopolite structuring, the centers are diffused, and the periphery is everywhere. Anywhere, each one is the other’s “stranger”, without this to mean isolation or disagreement.

There also exists a *cultural meaning* of mobility, somehow different from the commercial or touristic one. The citizens of Europe are also the citizens of the world. Modern technologies of transport and communication radically attenuate the *feeling* of distance. *Physically afar, spiritually close*. The circulation in a cultural sense can exclude movement. There is also a static, immobile nomadism, the one that Deleuze and Guatari were referring to. You can be in Europe *from outside* it, as you can be *outside* it from the inside, through own isolation or refuse of its established and approved values. The issues of synchronization or integration assume the engagement of “immobile” mobilities somehow similar. You can circulate in a physical meaning on the nominal tracks of the exchange of competencies (study, documentaries, specialization) or of their validation (editorial presence, colloquies, symposiums, conferences).

Synchronization with the values of occidental culture can be done this way through dislocation in a spatial sense.

Among the Romanians established on the outside, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Eugen Ionescu chose the cosmopolite bet, looking to raise their own creations at a universal range. But you can be both Romanian and European, Balkan and European – if the reference to Europe is not provincial itself – without invariable overflying the great distances. To Adrian Marino, a Romanian intellectual remained “at home”, the solution of the cultural “de-provincialization” and the European synchronism must be looked for beyond nationalism and euro-centrism: to bring Europe home, to enter Europe through an effort of personality and originality¹³. Eliminating vagabondage and subversivity, we can „officially” travel, in cultural and professional organized networks. Conditioned by the existence of the conditions for each to be able to become, even temporary, veritable „tourists”.

“The spirit of Europe was born in the Balkans”, Hermann Keyserling noted in his traveling journal¹⁴. Europe itself would be the reflected image of the modern Balkans, because the spirit of the Balkans is the one of eternal disunion. Aren’t the Balkans the traditional “powder keg of Europe”, the source of some of the most terrible conflicts of the twentieth century? Disunion, xenophobia and corruption are unfortunate “brands” of the Balkan spirit. “The history of the twentieth century comes from the Balkans. Here people have been isolated by poverty and ethnical rivalries, being damned to hate”¹⁵. The Balkans sometimes brutally rejected strangers, some other times they assimilated them. To the Romanians, for example, Jews and gypsies have been when object of sympathy, when targets of the most severe despisal. Hungarians, Turks, Russians, Bulgarians, Greeks, Macedonians, Ukrainians had a similar treatment. Fascination led to formulas of contagion and assimilation, despisal – to extremist solutions. The stranger has sometimes been the rescuing alternative. The consolidation of the unitary Romanian state, for example, has been the work of a foreign prince (Carol I of Hohenzollern). The delusion of the prosperous foreigner or prosperous space on the outside, seen as ideal haven, place of satisfaction and fruition – hasn’t fade away yet.

Exclusivist prejudices, but also affinities have always been conditioned by an unpredictable logic of alliances and retreat. Respect for the laws has always been relative, unlike the one for the *Law* (religious belief). Corruption can be considered a Balkan invention historically motivated; the benevolence of the imperial powers was often bought with forced assignation or payment of a tribute. There are still tolerated traditional forms of corruption (bribe), seen as illegal, but efficient strategies of winning benevolence. Hierarchies assume submissive relations, the inferiors are “careful” with the superiors and the reciprocal is applied too.

Tolerance works as a form of subversive complicity related to law. By tolerating the fraud upon law, the civil servant becomes the accomplice of the wrongdoing. "Corruption (for Romanians), Keyserling observed, is the normal expression (or at least primitive) of the circumstance that civility, something purely humane, personal, is more important than some objective considerations, like laws" ¹⁶. The very relaxed interpretation of law "humanizes" judicial relations, translating them to the form of an advantageous complicity.

The political and ideological archetype of hospitality is based on tolerance; it regulates hierarchies and their roles. Systemized into permissive rules, based on respect and responsibility, hospitality and tolerance can offer functional solutions in the Balkans. Eased of prejudices and resentments, they can open gates of collaboration between people and institutions, subjected to some common purposes – integration, synchronization, performance –, through reciprocal comprehension and communication. "To speak the same language" means, more than linguistic consonance, to acknowledge the other's *ethos*, to find the optimum speech for welcoming. Because language, Levinas used to say, is "the home of hospitality and friendship".

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Notes

¹ Jacques Derrida, *Despre ospitalitate. De vorbă cu Anne Dufourmantelle*, Translated by Mihai Ungurean, (Iași: Editura Polirom, Iași, 1999), 75.

² Immanuel Kant, „Spre pacea eternă – un proiect filosofic”, in Im. Kant, *Scrieri moral-politice*, Translated by Rodica Croitoru, (București: Editura Științifică, 1991), 402-405.

³ Kant, 269-272.

⁴ Michael Waltzer, *Despre tolerare*, Translated by Areta Voroniuc, (Iași: Editura Institutul European, 2002), 11-12

⁵ Derrida, 51.

⁶ Pierre Klossowski, *Les lois de l'hospitalité*, (Paris; Gallimard, 1995).

⁷ Derrida, 89

⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 136-137

⁹ Guy Scarpeta, *Elogiul cosmopolitismului*, Translated by Petruța Spânu, (Iași: Editura Polirom, 1997), 81 sq. Cf. and Calude Dubar, *La crise des identités. L'interprétation d'une mutation*, (Paris: PUF, 2000)

¹⁰ Scarpeta, 258-259.

¹¹ Scarpeta, 266.

¹² Zigmunt Bauman, *Etica postmodernă*, Translated by Doina Lică, (Timișoara: Editura Amarcord, 2000), 261 sq.

¹³ Adrian Marino, *Pentru Europa. Integrarea României. Aspecte ideologice și culturale*, (Iași: Editura Polirom, 1995).

¹⁴ Cf. Hermann Keyserling, *Analiza spectrală a Europei*, Translated by Victor Durnea, (Iași: Editura Institutul European, 1993), 272-295.

¹⁵ Robert D. Kaplan, *Fantomele Balcanilor. O călătorie în istorie*, Translated by Diana Grad, (București: Editura Antet, 1998), 18.

¹⁶ Kaplan, 281.