AUGMENTED STATES OF CULTURE

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Abstract: The goal of the paper is to look at the so-called process of globalization, to envision an underpinning regularity in cultures, and to discuss an eschatological projection of the modernity. The paper will partially attempt to associate the phenomena of globalization with the Martin Heidegger's notion of 'Thrownness' by explaining how one can relate and overprint the other. The primary focus will be directed at the possibility to create a cohesive chart which opens an operative matrix of culture and schematically defines possibilities of culture's genesis, evolution, and a possible end. In this concise academic endeavor, the overarching principals will be laid out to see how a culture can operate, and possibly influence other cultures. The unique traits of a culture are not a chimerical notion but rather a unique constant that manifests itself through culture's semio-landscapes, and its actualization in the world. The specific elements of a culture can migrate, be taken, and forced upon other cultures. The dominant traits of cultures that cross the geopolitical borders are the 'values' and the 'perspectives' we will be able to examine some instances that speak of cultural traits. Finally, the paper will attempt to outline the dominant notes in the global eschatological vision by bringing essential elements that have shaped such perception.

Keywords: Culture, 'Thrownness,' Globalization, Eschatological perspective.

In the hope of finding the way into infinite space, quantitative democratization became the ruling metaphor used by the present civilization which attempts to bring everything to the masses, rationalize, structure, clarify, and oversimplify things for the sum circumrotation and general consumption. This mode of seeing and interpreting reality is logocentric at its core and highly specific to the civilization's way of dealing with the existence. The globalizing gene that civilization carry uses all means possible to pursue totalities and operate quantities in a singular strive to overcome and domesticate space, and to inject itself into further unknown. It program cultures to create an infinite amount of semiotic images and stories distributed through the hyper-speed pathways to map and navigate the reality. However, a map is never the territory but a mere simulacrum, never perfect it acts as a speaker for the reality. The text, similarly, twist and turn itself to position the signs in a particular order to capture the meaning, to impose order, and to fix pursued definition within its confines. Everything we, human beings, do leaves a trace of distinct features, the signs. The consequence of human gestures and 'being-in-present' (M. Heidegger) is a 'disclosure' (German: *Erschlossenheit*. M. Heidegger) and the dissemination of signs. The particularity of sign's arrangement in time and space is formative to a composition of the higher order, the particular form of intertwined and spun signs called 'culture.' While no one can kiss the culture, one can imagine a culture, agree to accept its presence, observe it and come with questions that perhaps can increase the resolution of the human reality within the existence. By following the signs, one could find a trail of traits liable for a general image of culture. Formed features are the base elements bind to a group of actualized in-present events that

attribute to a particular phase in civilization. The features are the outcomes of sign composition that dictates the further development of culture, for the most part, those features are predetermined, in-themselves and hardly can be influenced. Perhaps the only part that can be influenced is the speeds with which features change. Those 'bundles' of attributes are not unique to a specific civilization as they can be traced in every human endeavor. They are, the signs, molded into traits are present in every story and every journey, signifying the movements within the developmental phases of civilization, creating a somewhat elusive yet recurring image of the origin, evolution, and the end. The fact that we can recognize these three parts in virtually everything speaks for itself; it sets the entire course of our world perception in a certain way. This inherent and seemingly specific to humans perspective on the world and being in-the-world inhibits every story told, stretching its existence through millennia, and even fitting the fate of the entire cosmos into the same three images of the origin, evolution, and the cosmological/cosmogonical end.

In our short and somewhat superficial endeavor, I would like to propose to look at culture through the similar frame, only with a possibly increased resolution to each state of culture's development. I can begin by saying that every culture or civilization, every ontologic and Theo-Political formation, finds its origin in or within an act of violence. It is hardly a surprise as every living, identifiable, and independent cultural substance must come out from something else, something more primordial, something with a lesser structure. The process of coming out is never a homogenous non-event stretched in nothingness, but an assertive, violent, puncturing and centralizing event within the presence. Often it becomes somewhat of a taboo, the 'unspoken center' within a culture. By indirectly narrating the taboo of the cultural origin, we propagate ourselves into unknown territories of existence further down the timeline. The act of violence that centralize being in presence is sacrificial; it is that 'unknown' that gets inflicted to superimpose the 'known.' Every meaningful beginning, in its essence, is marked by a thing that makes it possible to remember, by overcoming the regularity, by puncturing the presence with a momentary, yet transcendent event, that is capable of commanding the 'presence' (M. Heidegger) itself. Violence as such is often called irrational, yet one can always find the seriousness behind the act, the intentionality in choices that were made, and in the relation of a chosen victim as a surrogate to something beyond what we can sense or larger then victim's mere existence. It seems that most often the victim is the surrogate that is used in the act of violence as an image that substitute something else, something behind the physicality of the violent action. René Girard in his book *Violence and the Sacred* referenced to Joseph de Maistre work called *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices* on the topic of violence, pointing to something very indicative.

> "The sacrificial animals were always those most prized for their usefulness: the settles, most innocent creatures, whose habits and instincts brought the cleanest into harmony with man. From the animal, the realm was chosen as victims those who were, if we use a phrase, the most *human* in nature." (1977, pg.3)

The potentiality brought to the world by violence carry in its essence a duality of destructiveness and creation at the same time, yet it is only a human that can interpret and initiate the meaning. The elevation of meaning out of neutrality of 'presence' (M. Heidegger,) that is fundamentally indifferent to the human condition, is what places us in 'presence,' and what ultimately creates a 'count-down' moment before culture could arise. I argue that it is violence cloaked in a sacrifice serves as the moment of a cultural beginning. Let us refer to a few examples such as the origins of Christianity, founding semiotic-grounds of the American national identity, and instances in the natural

world as the examples that could exhibit the point. In Onto-Theo-Political traditions of Christianity, it is the central moment of Christ's death that serves as a milestone to the creation of the paradigm that governs the essential notion behind the Christian story; it is the sacrifice of 'one' that redeems the 'whole.' Importantly, the act of involuntary death centralize the meaning of the whole structure and counterbalance the beginning, the birth of Christ (similarly crucial to the Onto-Theo-Political traditions of Christianity.) The story will not be the same if the protagonist is simply wheeling his existence, going day-to-day without an event that could serve 'him' and above all the 'others' a lesson, the event that transforms 'him' and the 'world.' The death of the hero makes a tradition being rooted in the cultural plane, loading it with a purpose and the metaphysical meaning that can be transcended, retold, reenacted in time. Without an act of death, the sacrificial killing of the most vulnerable, most humane (such as the attributes defined in the Judeo-Christian narrative) it would never have enough velocity to penetrate the culture and create a center toward which other signifiers could be attached and anchored in time.

This vehement center acts as the frame that has the duality of being capable creating new (forming the ongoing culture) by attaching the new meanings and new signifiers and breaking down (dismantling, reinterpreting, re-utilizing) the old signifiers and forgetting the old meanings. Another example that one could look at, something close to the more modern cultural development, is the formation of American identity. As a quick look back we can trace many particular instances in American history that used death as a signified through acts of violence as signifiers which gave a centralizing point in time and space to the whole American identity. The King Philip's War (1675–1678) I argue, is that first moment of the formation of American identity, fruited in a sequence of other sacred to the American nation events such as the War for Independence, signing the American Declaration of Independence and the Civil War. All those acts reinforced and created the central localities in time, space, and culture that produced the uniqueness and specificity of the cultural character, something we call 'Americanness' of the United States of America. Another example is the changes in seasons, a year moving from the spring to summer, to the winter signifies the same pattern of the beginning, natural apex, and the end of the life's cycle. This motive, as well as the motive of the growing tree that begins its journey as the seed, root itself in the world baring fruits and ultimately ending its cycle, are the recognizable patterns humans perceive and take as nature's unfolding cycle of life. This natural 'rhythm' in fact influence and sets our perception by blue-printing itself onto our psychic, setting the stage for the evolution of our cultures, and civilizations in a similar way.

Let us move on and look at the phases of culture. Perhaps after its nominal 'beginning' a culture become centered, thus open to the appropriation of values. The ambiguity of the word 'values' cannot be underestimated, its illusiveness as the ability to change is somewhat similar to the human ability to survive by being able to transform, and adapt. Values are there for us to be invoked, thought of, found and used, however idealistic, hard to describe, and unattainable regarding real worth they may be. The transcendence of values, the capacity to overcome time and cultural terrain in presence, is what makes them 'valuable,' that is why we cling to the old values and create the new ones as we move along in existence. The human reality is underpinned by values, such as the values of human life, the values of freedom, the pursuit of truth, the search for individual actualization, values of being, existence and so on. Centered by the originating event and stabilized by the values culture defines us as beings and ultimately will shape our end as a distinct type of beings. Culture in its journey through presence, in the genesis of semio-scapes, become open to something else. The continuous operation of beings dictated by the necessities and values creates something else;—it creates the 'worth.' It is the outcome of values,

the outcome and the byproduct created by humans in their recognition and pursuit of values creates the worth which is something attainable, measurable, present-in-the world. Moreover, while values are being yarned by humans something else appears as a byproduct of worth making;—the 'mastery.'

By following specific patterns created in the pursuit of certain valuable paragons, we find ourselves doing, thinking, actualizing certain things better than others, that in its essence is the mastery. The 'worth' and the 'mastery' in culture could manifest in endless ways. The most title owned and evident in present civilization is the economy, the technology, and the toolmaking, as well as the ability to create and to resolve conflicts (diplomacy), plus the hyper-ability to dialogue (internet era interconnectedness, planetary reachability, symbol transmitting.) The markings by which we transport the meanings of values, express our worth and sharpen the mastery, is done by an intrusive and unavoidable potentiality of a 'sign' which is an operational unit that stables the meaning (values, worth, mastery) in 'present' (M. Heidegger.)

Jacques Derrida famously wrote; "There is nothing outside the text." Nothing can escape contextualization thus always fall into the system of the sign, or better to will be dragged into 'present' by the intrusive potentiality of 'sign.' Moreover, as it seems, the 'sign' can and perhaps always is an augmentation of 'presence' (M.Heidegger) as such. Whatever we do become augmented and superimposed over the 'presence' (M.Heidegger,) perhaps culture is a generalized augmentation of 'presence' (M.Heidegger) as such.

Slowly spinning the wheel of globalizing theme round after the round let us ask ourselves if in the best tradition of the metaphysics we can confront the positive with the negative, to seek the 'Other' in the culture. One's guess could be, the values, worth and mastery of culture always face the opposite; 'fear' and 'shame.' Generating dualities and differences is another augmentation to which a culture opens itself to when it becomes centralized and stabilized in presence. When values cannot accommodate the culture by becoming outdated, they convert into another form of a judgment of the presence that finds its place within the living culture, thus reiterating itself into new values. If the transformation of values does not find its place in the present, the old values get discarded. Alternatively, while transforming themselves, values can turn into destructive determinants by which a human in-the-world reality, as malevolent it can naturally be, turned into a rapture destroying other values, suppressing other values, evoking new meanings, suppressing the meanings, creating new signs, and replacing old signs. I would point out that when values rapture in presence by meeting an event a point which challenge the sign of value tipping it toward something that cannot be placed under a sign of living, life, continuation, and interconnectedness, then it becomes a malevolent, appropriated by an augmented state of 'fear.' The augmented state of 'fear' ripple through culture's semio-scapes distorting uniformed normality of human reality, pushing and pulling other signs. Positively, it is somewhat an overarching term 'fear,' as it is incapable of describing all process in a culture that could speak of such fear, yet it is as an outcome of not pursuing the opening 'clearing' (M.Heidegger) of the culture's full potentiality.

In a way being stuck, horrified of a new, refusing the 'Other,' unable to move on, find, and confront the perils, adapt and create new signs, and so on locks, the potentiality, prohibits the movement toward the 'clearing' and actualization of being. Thus we say paralyzed by fear, stopped, and so on. I suspect a culture can fall into the state of 'Fear' if values, worth, and mastery are undermined. There are plenty of examples when extensions of a culture such as the economy, politics, and religion, are in a state of a dead stop, incapable of evolution and creation of new meanings, precisely because there is a point in cultural continuation that prohibits beings to accept the uncharted, and the unknown. Plainly speaking, it brings us to a dead stop when we confront the unknown, the chaos. It does not seem

to be the case to call 'globalization' an antidote to the fear of 'Other,' but more of an inevitable slide into the mode which dictates living with the 'Other.' This mode of living is not negative, nor positive but merely a condition of human actualization within the limitedness of the world insured by the technogenic nature of present civilization, its outlook on the world dictates its own rules which do not tolerate secrets, enclosure, 'caving,' being on one's own. The present mode of being-in-the-world will drag beings into a world of 'large numbers,' democratization of outcomes, publicizing and extravert mysteries, something that traditionally reserved for beings as a personal way of experiencing the world. This personal way never meant to be copied and propagated to masses, but to be a unique journey through the world by a 'hero.' Even 'Fear' became a point in the theological-political discourse, an ideal mechanism of nationalizing-state propaganda by which specific goals are meant to be achieved. 'Fear' employed by the hyper-modernity became a tool of influencing and creating agenda's, especially the fear of the 'Other,' the fear of loss of identity, the fear of being too traditional or too avant-garde within the cultural frame. However the genuine 'fear' as a stage that culture must overcome is entirely different, it originates from the confrontation with the infinitude of unknown and chaotic, the opposite of culture.

'Shame' on the other hand could be the way to a reconciliation, finding a new way to worth, mastery, and new cultural values. Rethinking, and repositioning of the self toward the other, finding a new position. None of this possible if a culture cannot bring to the beings an opening in which an act of 'shame' for what was unjust, untrue, and wrong could be acted out, brought to human beings as a self-reflective moment in time. One can insist on calling 'shame' as a defining sign. It is 'shame' that either can elevate or ruin a culture. To face either a "decay' and a state of 'forgetness' or to be able to forge a vision and master a 'path.'

Culture is slow and mostly blind and introverted. Those traditions the bare results and contribute to the survival are the gains that human beings 'scratched' which whatever power they got from the surface of life as such. So we cling to what we know and what we understand, we fear and cautious about the new, uncharted, untried.

In the present, the unknown, that 'beyond,' from what was already cultured and left behind is only a thing we got to be inspired by, to look forward to overcoming. The space 'beyond the walls' is the only space ahead, while the present is the known, contained within the 'walls' of the dome of culture, that is why culture is always retrospective, incased, and caved. That is also why I began by saying the culture is blind. When the formative potentiality of values, 'invites' phenomena whether it is human or non-human it 'brings' the phenomena into a field that enact the totality of 'captured' phenomena in a certain way, forming a unidirectional perspective, or a way may call 'vision.'

Our hacking through presence by using the 'worth,' the 'values' and the 'mastery' is the formation of a 'path' that culture makes while allowing augmented state of a 'vision' to appear on the horizon of the human existence. That has been going on since the beginning; phenomena, place under signs will form a system of new values, and the new values will form new conditions for new visions to appear. Without much of an apparent purpose the appropriation cycle of phenomena by culture, and whatever internally it undergoes to convert the phenomena into signs, values, paths makes our scattering on the surface of presence to continue. Round after the round culture internalize new phenomena that enter its walls from the unknown. When the visions that culture projected onto the existence run out of signs to speak for themselves, and signs become entangled with lost meanings, the dance of signs slows down and stops. The interpretations of signs no longer make sense that augmented state is the state of 'forgetness,' a stage in which culture runs its course and sets itself for the slumber, a precipice of a decay.

If our endeavor is anywhere, it is at its end. Let us look at two things; the 'thrownness,' and the 'forgetness,' each plays its role in the collection of images we observe as the text moves along. Martine Heidegger wrote on 'thrownness' telling us that we are being thrown into the existence and thrown out of existence when we depart with our lives "as such." The 'throwing in' and 'throwing out' is not something we can truly control, for the most part, we have no say in this, especially when it comes to 'be thrown into life.' One can hardly disagree, and I would want to add to what Martin Heidegger already stated by proposing a modest addition to his thought. What if our 'thrownness' does not stop at life's beginning or life's end, what if the whole existence of a being-in-presence is the 'thrownness?' Whatever we do whatever comes in our consciousness, whatever appears to us, the sum of our thoughts, gestures, impressions, intentions, projections, all that is one giant looping leap fragmented into countless smaller loops and leaps, attracted by the existence. To exist is to go through the 'throwing' into life, being 'thrown' into being, becoming one who will be 'thrown' to death. Culture as a collective totality of 'thrownness' of beings into 'presence' (M.Heidegger.) The actualization of the collective potentiality about Being (*Dasein*.) being 'thrown' into a culture. I conclude, beings have no choice but to throw themselves into the existence.

As we move along, through the pictures of augmented states we, must discuss what is the 'forgetness.' For the end scene of culture, its decay, a quality that manifests the decline and dissipation into the entropy, the state of 'forgetness' is precisely what catalyst the process. What can one mean by saying 'forgetness' in culture?

The signs, the markings, the symbols, the signals will always have the potentiality to become open or to stand open, scribed 'on,' be visible to us; it is the essence of the sign, to appear, to relate, to disclose. Markings occupy a fix position in presence to capture and to attempt to stabilize the meaning, while the meaning will always attempt to escape the signification turning and twisting any signaling in time. The transcendental quality of meaning could only be reserved to absence precisely because of meanings essence; to be un-fixed, to be-in-presence, existing-in-presence. Thus any meaning will try to untie itself from any transcendence, hiding in time, hiding in symbols, the unspoken symbols. The 'forgetness' in culture is a loss of capacity to 'catch' and to 'reproduce' in time, meanings tied to specific signaling, distinct signs. When culture forgets the relation between meanings and symbols, it sets itself, slowly and inevitably for a state of 'decay.' The augmented state of cultural 'forgetness' ripples itself into the 'forgetness' of values, worth, mastery, and vision; it is the end of all relational processes that is in culture. The 'presence' (M.Heidegger) does not lose its proper core elements; the continuity nor its interconnectedness in the state of 'forgetness,' it is purely a state of human reality.

The sign contaminates all things beings do. The gestures, the symbols, the signals, the expressions, and the impressions are contaminated by the 'sign,' as the 'sign' is the movement, the relation of beings to the truths of Being (*Dasein*.) Jean-Paul Sartre meant to say that there that there is no intrinsic meaning to whatever being does in his existence. However, one could point out that; it is not the meaning that the 'presence' (M.Heidegger) lacks, but the indifference that the presence has. No matter what the being does, 'presence' will remain indifferent to it. Nothing, literally, nothing, no sign, not a gesture, not a being can make 'presence' become something that is not: thus it remains what it is, continuous, and interconnected. We fundamentally are incapable of creating an event or a relation that could change or influence 'presence.' So if one ought to speculate, the event that could change the relationship between being and 'presence' would be in producing 'nothingness,' and we cannot produce, create, or enact 'nothingness.' That is why the picture of fundamental lack of meaning appears, the presence has no intrinsic relation to us, thus leaving us scattering on its surface, yet.

The only two options that are left for us to take at this point, culturally speaking; is a) either to form ourselves to 'remember' or b) to dissipate and 'forget.' If culture is not fooling us, we should direct ourselves at the option that speaks for our continuation. Meaning, to form ourselves by using all means available, be it a creating and using signs, forcing the fixture of meaning on the surfaces (from papyrus to the digital screens,) re-enacting symbolic events, acting out our presence within the existence and so on. In other words, producing culture might be the very tool to 'remember' and to relate to 'presence' and the existence, or at least to create an image of our relation to the existence. Not being lost in existence, but to map ourselves relative to the truths of existence is already meaningful. Who can tell, maybe by knowing the essence of existence, in the next civilizational cycle we can manage to become the 'shepherds' of Being (*Dasein.*)

Let us rotate the wheel one more time and think of what is to come, what possibly awaits us. The eschatological vision, the culture's image of the end, that has been unfolding in front of us has changed over time. It has mainly changed from a religious notion of salvation, and our quest to influence God's will to attain a position in blissful heaven, to a social contract between beings that officially refuted the religion to create a paradise here, within a nationalizing-state body by equalizing everyone's outcomes and making each being maximum productive. The latest version demands accepted uniformity, and the ideological frame within the walls of the nationalizing-state ought to be reverent an uphold as a holy grail of the social justice. In the process of realizing utopias (I am pointing at the Eastern parts of Europe here,) many were murdered and perished without a trace. That passed order has been undergoing a rapid transformation by a developing technological field, starting with the industrial revolution, till present day hyper-modern mass productions, mass circulations, and large numbers. No wonder 'Google' became a globalizing signifier, as far as the name and the semiotic relevance to the hyper-modernity goes, most things became super-sized, speeded-up, and grew in quantity to its Google-like potentiality.

What has ended one thing typically is a start to the other, until that too is removed and replaced by something else. The Western world is continuously trying to fix meanings in signs and objects by binding them with time and space as if attempting to attach its identity to the realm of 'presence' thus, actualizing the 'self' identity. While the other parts of the world, as if counterbalancing the 'other,' derived from more fluid identity, an identity unbound to, and by, time and space. This perception of the 'self' within the world did before and will again influence the eschatological projection of each part, the globalizing western and the traditional, slow, fluid, eastern. As it exerts its western 'self' onto the world, it shapes the global civilization. Its evolution seemingly has all traits of being predetermined by the very notion/motion it has to enact, moving from local to planetary, as generally, every other civilization did. The North-Western civilization did not stop at the 'walls,' and it does not regard the spacial limitations as something to be bound by. It moved in a visible pattern; from the urban to the cosmopolitan, to the spherical, to cloud-like, to and into the outer orbital space, pressing itself to the infinity of space. While it propagates itself into the cosmos it creates an overcomes self-imposed boundaries, thus creates its identity. The 'outer boundaries,' going beyond 'walls' into the infinite space is a trait, reinforces by the innumerous signs and signifiers that creates the image of the western civilization, and, ultimately lives by the self-imposed image. At its core, western civilization is driven by the ability and the will to traverse the infinite space. It historically amps itself to use the technology as the means to the space conquest. Moreover, up to a point which allows it to create the necessary technology, it will do so until it runs out of means. This process, of going beyond the 'walls,' globalizing the perspective on existence is not something new, it has been the prime motivation since,

perhaps the Socrates, only gaining the unparalleled intensity by migrating to the 'New World' and adding, combining the potential energies with the power of industrialization.

What the globalizing motion of the civilization has created is a new technosphere empowered by the technogenic nature of devices faith of which we no longer control, that means we are not the ones who control the operation of the devices, but the sphere of the produced devises controls our behavior. This separate, technogenic entity encased in culture, has spawned out of control, and in a certain way directs the civilization as it acts by its own rules. Our 'throwness' into the culture, and later produced by the culture technogenic reality engulfed and dissolves culture as such from within. It shaped the beginning and principally shaped 'out' the faith for this civilization's cycle of human presence, and our being-in-the-world. We can go as far as to envision the technogenic, anthropocentric, and globalizing elements being irreversible and interconnected motions, the sort of thoroughgoing gestures of a civilizational movement. At this point of the civilizational cycle, we must try to think about how to be responsible for ourselves as a type. Mistakes and carelessness will unfold the events we will no longer be able to control. As far as the eschatological projection, a shape for human reality and its present technogenic sphere goes; we are in for a ride in an amusement park, and our only option is to ride it through till the end.

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