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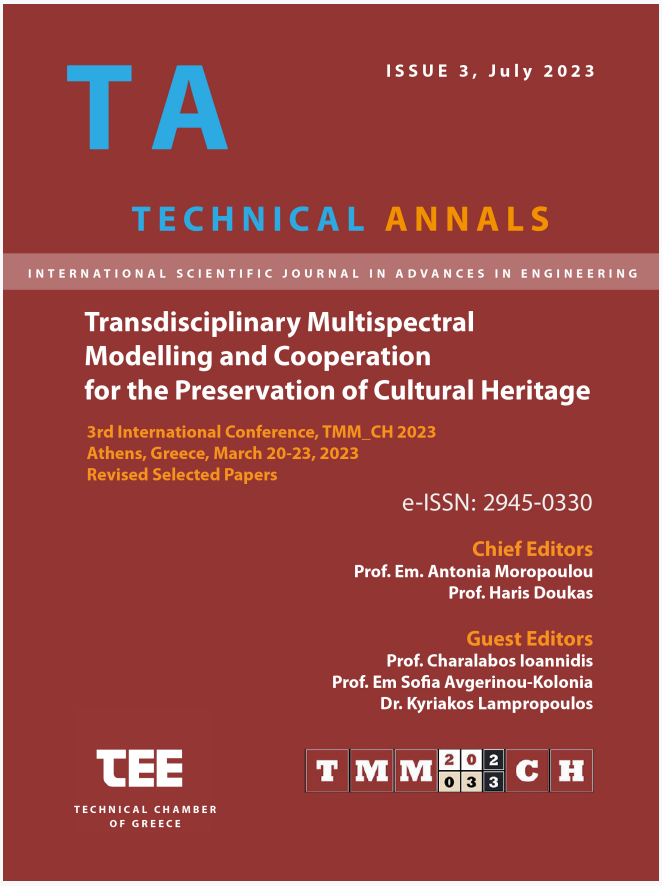

(Technological) Globalization and Anthropogenic Heritage

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(Technological) Globalization and Anthropogenic Heritage: Objects and the Distinct Nature of Culture

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Abstract. The concepts of culture and civilization have been directly linked to the process of social construction since the dawn of human history. A philosophy of civilization presupposes a history of human evolution that would seek to highlight humanity's achievements through which we have reached the modern age. Now, even more so after the middle of the 20th century, the relationship between material civilization and technology has also been emphasized in the context of the protection of a "global cultural heritage". In this article, we will initially focus on the influence of the anthropogenic object heritage on the evolution of societies, arguing that it determines our collective experience and social memory to an important extent. We believe that such an analysis could beneficially contribute to a more meaningful understanding of a crucial topic of our modern technological era, an era that combines the clash of civilizations with globalization. We propose that the vision of a culture as a common possession of all humanity presupposes the respect of each country's right to possess and care after its own cultural tokens.

Keywords: Heritage, Material Civilization, Globalization, Culture.

1 Introduction: "Heritage" as a diachronic concept

Everything that enters the human world, either by itself or by man's effort, becomes part of the human condition. The objectivity of the world, its being independent from human activity in general, and the human condition complement each other. Because human existence is a dependent existence, it would be impossible without things, and things would turn into a pile of unrelated objects, into a non-world, if the determining elements of human existence didn't exist (Arendt, 1986 [1958]: 22).

Everything that is left to us from the previous inhabitants of this earth, either made by themselves or simply identified by them (that is, they have found it and it now constitutes a "material" which plays a key role in our lived environment), is included in what we call heritage (or historical heritage). This handover is an event that, one could say, inevitably happens and will keep happening without the mediation of any guarantor or other interfering agent. Thus, we could emphasize, with no exaggeration, that this handover is clearly a passive, predetermined action. Also, as a general rule, all people

are, jointly, its recipients. We are not in a position to choose, in the first place, what we receive from the past as part of our inheritance nor can anybody conceal from his successors, and take with him in another world, the majority of the elements which constitute the facts of the material reality that surrounded them.

The presence, in the here and now, of the material elements of the past is the undeniable fact of their diachronicity and, in contrast to historical references to past events and to subjective interpretations and views, which constitute the history of a place, stands also for the possibility of their recognition as "living" evidence of eras past.

But what truly drives us towards dealing, to a lesser or larger extent, with the remnants of the past (supposing we have agreed we have the right to)? What makes our heritage stand out and take its place as such, within the context of our present situation? In times which have been characterized as postmodern, in an era of great changes and of frantic pace, the technological phenomenon tends to change, even as a working hypothesis, the basic characteristics of our way of life.

And yet, how is it possible to understand older creations today and evaluate the works of people we do not know? Do we have to do it, acting critically and, thus, selectively, or are we obligated to respect their life cycle by simply acting as impartial witnesses who observe, without intervening, their gradual degeneration?

These questions are not unequivocally defined, nor can they possibly be answered in a definitive and absolute way. They can only help us articulate our inquiry and perhaps lead us to clearly defined loci of discourse. For they are connected to crucial concepts which have been interpreted in various ways, through the lens of things such as history, the past, memory, tradition, progress and the built environment. These interpretations clearly co-shape the identity of a period of human history by explaining as well as justifying, to some extent, a series of human actions and behaviours.

2 Natural and Anthropogenic Heritage

The proposition that "heritage" is as old as humanity itself (Lowenthal, 1998: 1) should not be considered an overstatement. Even prehistoric humans have left us evidence of their lives. We have indications, at the very least, of the way they used to find their food, processed natural objects to make tools, carved a piece of stone and placed it in a spot on the ground to honour a lost companion, or for any other reason we cannot exactly comprehend. Dealing with heritage inevitably concerns us all. Whether we are interested in its protection or are ultimately indifferent to it, no one can overlook the fact that, at one point in time, we have all dealt with the material version of times past. This, however, does not mean that everyone has the same assumed representations of the elements of the past, nor do they benefit from and consider everything they perceive in the same way (Kokkinos, 2016).

We have already deliberately limited the scope of heritage. And, so far, we have only hinted to its two major categories. The term "heritage" consists of natural and anthropogenic heritage. Natural heritage, which is directly connected to the wider ecological issues, will not concern us here as it is a special, distinctly separate, field of research. Of course, this does not mean that the two fields have no common characteristics, that,

in many cases, they do not require common examination tools or that they do not fit into relatively similar ways of interpretation, or even evaluation, and that they are not connected and interdependent, interacting with each other. It is also a given that knowledge in the field of natural heritage has a lot to offer to those who attempt to approach the other component of heritage.

By making this distinction, we have basically pointed to one of the main parameters of human nature, one that uniquely characterizes the human species and separates it not only from the natural environment but also from all other organic forms. We have pointed out to its ability to decisively shape and, by using its intellect and memory, process the natural space in which it lives, to a degree not only quantitatively greater but also qualitatively more complicated than anything the other members of the animal kingdom can do. By separating natural and anthropogenic heritage, we have also denoted man's natural ability to not only construct but also create. Humanity and construction are two intertwining concepts; without constant creative intervention in the external environment, it would have been impossible for us to reach the present social arrangements. These creations, which over time accumulate in the, basically elementary, human "toolkit", as a result of human manufacturing skills and the craftsmanship to transform the matter that Homo Sapiens firstly encountered two billion years ago, comprise what we call the anthropogenic (manmade) environment. Precisely this anthropogenic environment constitutes a part of what every generation inherits and what every generation bequeaths to the next, having added or removed a part, this process being the result of human innovation and the application of new inventions, and is essentially a product of humanity's handling of the state of things it inherited (Kokkinos, 2013a; 2013b).

3 Categories of Anthropogenic Heritage

We have decided to focus our interest to what has remained in the world in which we live and whose cause of existence is man. Given that matter is perishable and that every material entity has a limited life span, the fact that such constructions have *remained* means two things: either that their life limit –after which they cannot continue to exist as structured constructions that manifest even their original form– has not yet expired, or, on the other hand, that we were interested in some of them and have decided to protect them and extend that limit for a number of reasons. In this way, we choose to protect certain constructions of the past while we are not pay the same attention to others, and so we are creating categories. In our time, we have already seen several examples of this, and we are informed daily of even more cases that schematically describe this situation. Elements of the past are not given any consideration while the preservation of others is a matter of national or even global priority.

We have already mentioned prehistoric man and the tangible, material evidence he has left us, which we are trying to preserve by initially considering their intrinsic value as material objects. However, their material properties are not the only ones we have to appreciate and report. In the same context, we have to ask ourselves the same question when we face a cave drawing or the characteristic images carved on a stone by

prehistoric people in their attempt to portray situations of their times and their world. In the first case we are dealing with what remains of the past as an object, along with all the meanings it may suggest. In the second case we also have the handing down, by means of visualization, of an idea that is much more difficult to decipher and understand as such. These are two categories of heritage that, despite the fact that they both originate from man, the first belongs to the heritage of objects while the second refers to that of ideas. These categories define two separate worlds: the real, tangible world of objects, and the immaterial world of ideas. The anthropogenic heritage has been, in this way, divided into the heritage of objects and the heritage of ideas (Faulkner, 1978; Kokkinos, 2004).

This general reference to objects leads us to the next classification. There are objects that date back several centuries and their archaeological value as historical evidence is, in most cases, undeniable. They have real value as sources of first-hand interpretation for the approach of periods of human history, as evidence to support already known information or even refute existing theories. There are also those objects that are considered works of art, even if no one can irrefutably claim that such a characterization can withstand the test of time and remain safe from criticism. However, over time, some works have been registered in the cultural inventory of a region, a country or a state, or even recognized as parts of a universal cultural heritage (which constitutes one of the arguments employed by the governments of countries that insist on keeping parts of other countries' heritage, many times illegally, far from their original environment). Finally, various material constructions have captured man's interest because they are specimens that are capable to communicate and transfer to next generations the skills and techniques of people from the past. They are important signs of different times that actively project their presence in the here and now and demand, in a sense, the continuation of their existence.

Perhaps a central problem now becomes apparent; that is, what can be included in the previous categories of anthropogenic heritage (see Table 1) is not known in advance as it does not depend on a predetermined process. What is of value to one man as a work of art can be totally worthless to another and, according to this man's opinion, not really worthy of protection. On the other hand, this signifying process plays an important role in the development of every social formation (Kokkinos, 2012).

Table 1. Heritage

HERITAGE		
NATURAL	ANTHROPOGENIC	
	HERITAGE OF OBJECTS	HERITAGE OF IDEAS
	1. CLASSICAL WORKS OF ART 2. HISTORICAL EVIDENCE 3. SKILLS-TECHNIQUES EVIDENCE	1. CULTURE (CUSTOMS-CODES OF COMMUNICATION) 2. PHILOSOPHY 3. SCIENCE-TECHNOLOGY-ENGINEERING

4 The "imprinted experience" and the "external world"

The world in which we nowadays live is more of an anthropogenic, artificial (manmade), world than a natural world. By this we mean that human intervention has been definitely drastic and crucial and is constantly intensified. This "external world", which changes constantly, affects and determines, to a larger or smaller extent, human behaviour through man's tendency to behave as an adaptive system. People's goals, on various levels, define the contact between their internal and external environment. Man's relationship with the environment changed radically with the great upheaval following the "industrial revolution". With the population's confluence in large urban centres, the artificial environment was overwhelmingly enlarged against nature. Technological progress led societies into a dense network of new media and complex processes which altered not only the way of life, but also the very psyche of their members (Kontaratos [ed.], 1971; Koulermos [ed.], 1971).

To the extent that man is effectively adaptive, his behaviour reflects mainly the characteristics of the external environment (illuminated by his goals) and reveals only a few limiting properties of his "internal environment", the normal mechanism that makes a person capable of thought. The "adaptation" of thoughts into the form of environmental problems is limited by only a few "inherent" characteristics of thinking people. Everything else involved in thought behaviour and problem-solving behaviour is artificial: it is taught and improved through devising improved plans and storing them into memory (Simon, 1999 [1981]: 90-91). Therefore, we should consider the world of objects as a crucial component of human continuity as well as being a defining feature for the shaping of our perception for our entire lives. A material product is undoubtedly standing before us. It combines, on one hand, the current perception formed by common taste as well as by the needs, authentic or inauthentic, of social dynamics, while, on the other hand, offers an outlet to people's concentrated desire to contribute to the developing

situation, by externalizing amorphous ideas and assumptions about it (Kokkinos, 2006). Furthermore, it allows man to "converse" with social reality, even though a conversation with every one of his fellow men would be impossible. Man, as a creator, aims, through his tangible constructions, to stop the perpetual flow of time, to underline existence-defining moments and pass on to next generations the elements that, according to his views, should not be forgotten. By imprinting his experience on matter, he wants to express his own perception of reality, perhaps even match the mental component of his own microcosm with the general social reference in a context, which is characterized strongly by the factors of multiculturalism and globalization.

5 Towards a Global (?) Cultural Heritage

Multiculturalism, as a descriptive term, suggests the existence of more than one, culturally heterogeneous, social formations or groups. As a modern problem, the term "multiculturalism" refers to the nexus of practical problems and judicial-political dilemmas posed by the fact of the coexistence of culturally diversified social groups, when manifested in the context of an organizationally unified political structure, in which a group that expresses a single cultural version is prominent (Paparrigopoulos, 1999: 2-3). If the members of each group publicly identify with the predominant characteristics, practices and values of an "official" social practice, then there is a risk that partial structures (racial, cultural, etc.) will gain the predominance against the universal human identity. On the other hand, a part of the individuals' uniqueness stems from the ways in which they integrate, reflect and modify their cultural heritage (Gutmann [ed.], 1997 [1994]: 43-44) as well as that of those with whom they come into contact.

"Recognition" and "identity" are two concepts whose signification within the social sphere is attributed to the age of modernity. We refer to the recognition of every man's difference from any other and to the respect of his identity, regardless of all kinds of discrimination (racial, national, religious, etc.). In the premodern era, contact with an extra-human source was sufficient enough to fulfil one's existence and led to a, certainly relative, distinction of the ego. From the 18th century onwards, the established social situation is put under examination. A first development was the questioning of the various hereditary titles and offices. Thus, the changes in the qualitative search of personal autonomy became apparent, within a certain social setting.

So, the term "multiculturalism", which encompasses and highlights the concepts of recognition and identity as well as related issues, was included in the vocabulary of those societies whose population was either born from migration or colonization, and consists of citizens of various nationalities, religious and racial backgrounds etc. (the example of the U.S.A. being the most iconic). We come across it for the first time in the revised edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, as late as in 1989. Of course, the first mentions of the term appear already in the 1970s, in books published in Canada and Australia. The aim of this dynamic is the creation of a political and social movement for the equal recognition of all collective identities within the context of a democratic rule of law. This claim does not primarily aim towards the levelling of the social life conditions but towards the protection of the integrity of the forms of life and

traditions to which these groups belong (Habermas, 1994: 50-51). And it is no coincidence that this kind of actions are linked to what has been happening over the last decades: waves of migration, civil conflicts and state partitioning.

The opposing force to the demand for multicultural societies, together with all their implications, is, in a way, the well-known debate about "globalism" and the "clash of civilizations" that should come in order to clear the universal landscape[1]. The triumph of the West, which was ceremoniously "announced" in 1989[2], and the unification of the world around a global market (which will be regulated by certain western countries) and the omnipotence of a small group of leaders is the predominant characteristic of our era. A few years earlier, Samuel P. Huntington placed at the heart of his thought the concept of civilization in order to highlight the fact that the boundaries of nation states had already been compromised. The theory of the clash of civilizations, the division of the world into opposing cultural camps,[3] overestimates the cultural factor in politics, in an era when ways of life have approached each other, on a global scale, and cultural differences are diminishing, in an unprecedented degree, even though they remain important. This overestimation intends to redefine the appropriate opposing poles and the formation of spheres of influence.

6 Addendum

Globalization means, in a general sense, that we are all co-dependent (Bauman, 2001). In our times, several situations, that would otherwise develop separately, are connected and interact and this is a condition that defines them from the beginning and throughout their course. It is an essential characteristic of the economy, culture, politics, and therefore our entire social life. Nowadays, it is a historical fact (Castells, 1999), as it is backed by the major changes in the scientific and technological field and especially in the field of computers and communications (Vergopoulos, 1999; Harvey, 1996). Therefore, globalization decisively influences our notions of culture and civilization (Held, 1995; Wiredu, 1995; Hebdige, 1990; King, 1990). What is of interest to us here is that it provides arguments to those who support the perpetuation of the stay of important monuments away from the place in which they were originally created. The term "global cultural heritage", when combined with the views we saw formally expressed, as part of state policy, suggests a great threat to actions taken in the name of

[1]We associate the "clash of civilizations" with "globalization" because we believe they essentially aim for the same thing: the ideological-politicaldominanceofagroupofcountriesattheexpenseoftherestofthe world, in the first case by utilizing national-cultural characteristics while in the second by acting on the basis of economic-technological superiority.

[2]For Fukuyama, *History has ended* and the dialectic that fueled its wars and revolution sceasedto exist, as the western "democratic model" triumphed and there is now no rival. This simplistic position was originally introduced in 1989. See, Fukuyama, 1993 [1992].

[3]See, Huntington, 1998 [1996]. Huntington's book, published in 1996, was based on his original article ("The Class of Civilizations?") published in the summer of 1993 in *Foreign Affairs*. This theory has also been strongly criticized, while the recent war in Afghanistan resulted in its resurfacing in the spotlight. See, for example, Huntington et al, 1998.

recognition and respect of identity, in the context of autonomous societies. It seems that it is not at all unlikely that issues which concern, or should concern, the internal affairs of individual countries, have been raised to the sphere of central political decisions and the overall planning of global governance by a group of powerful governments.

7 Conclusions

Artifacts play an important role in determining the cultural content of each era. This a posteriori claim places modern societies against their present and proclaims them as configurative forces of History. At the same time, it commits them, in a way, to the duration, the development and the continuity of their own civilization. This issue emerges not only when we examine personal activity, the attitude of each citizen of each country, but also when we see the collective practices, the universal politics, through various ways and forms. Thus, it is connected with decisions and conditions that are formulated on the institutional level and which each of us must fulfill or oppose. We believe that the beginning and the development of the function of memory are interwoven with the material environment. Discourse over objects becomes a means by which people exchange evaluations and views concerning the notions of time, memory, history, progress and human solidarity. The promotion or concealment of previous eras, which correspond to material testimonies, are interconnected with the process of memory and indeed not with quantitative performance, i.e. with numbers and statistics that leave no room for different interpretations, but with a qualitative status, i.e. judgments that have to do with ideological/political interpretations. This is so because the various constructions of human connect, in a unique, unidentified and irrelevant to positivist views way, the senses with material substance. If material substance is to be processed and consumed immediately, there would be neither semiotics nor memory.

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