

CULTURAL FREEDOM CANNOT BE REDUCED TO FOLKLORE...



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ABSTRACT

When “culture,” meaning all those ways of being communicated through internal (thoughts) and external actions (languages and various “codes” personified in attitudes) within given “groups” (ethnic groups, nations “grouping” them together in a more or less conflictual manner) is not reduced to folklore (such as decorative art) or social engineering (management of the “flow” of signs within it) this implies that each of these actions (internal and external) *is* necessarily political in the broad sense: not only personified by an explicit sovereign power (*Polis* or State), but also implicitly bound together by a shared internal and external *reality* (*Politeia* or “nation”).

However, while this distinction (which is not a separation) between *Polis* (sovereignty of choices within a nation-state) and *Politeia* (culture of sense of belonging in the strong sense of civilization) and their confrontation (there are “nations” without “state” without “*Polis*”) seems universal, it is also partly invisible. It is, in a way, “the code of codes,” translated, for example, albeit partially, in international relations through diplomacy or the “trade” of intelligent and “soft” power acting through civilizational influence rather than through the mere demonstration of force.

And this code of codes operates in part in the interstices, in the unsaid, the implicit, in order to live and act “on the edge,” that is, sometimes in a disruptive transgression within the social stratification, revealing certain flaws;

which means that while knowledge of this code of codes does indeed make it possible to preserve and even extend acquired positions, its *recognition* can also put us in danger.

For it can shed light on its gray areas; this is, for example, what the war in Ukraine reveals today as the clash between *Polis* and *Politeia*, personified by certain ways of preserving oneself that are quite close to the negative refinement embodied by the selfishness and sectarianism of certain individuals, personified in particular by the arrest and detention for more than a year and a half of an eminent researcher in the field of depth psychology, more precisely the study of the interstices between explicit and implicit codes: Oleg Maltsev. How does this arrest serve as a mirror revealing the invisible side of these codes that animate the tacit and implicit life of this link between *Polis* and *Politeia*?

Keywords

culture, code, polis, politeia, invisible, universal, Ukraine, Maltsev

INTRODUCTION

It is therefore important to note that this ambivalent and conflicting definition of culture (**Polis** or sovereignty of a nation-state *and* **Politeia** or common internal and external reality) can also bring together, in a permanent *praxis* (and therefore not only in the historical past), individuals

of more or less diverse ethnic origins whose sometimes persistent conflicts express precisely that culture is not just folklore (Arendt, 1958; Geertz, 1973); even if they continue to share a common language as *well* as customs, tales, legends, and skills that bring them together internally and externally (Bourdieu, 1991; Anderson, 1983). This implies a fundamental opposition between plural/multi/cultural societies: “plural” indicating a prioritization of common culture over singular cultures, while “multi” remains synonymous with friction, with the “polis” seeking to dominate the “Politeia” (Mouffe, 2005; Barry, 2001)...

Just as every “group” “ (individual, ethnic group, nation, empire, group, company, institution, etc.) technically (*Technè*) weaves a whole collective imagination (*Psyche*) of inner reality (Castoriadis, 1987), which is then politically united into an outer reality by ethical principles and norms that give it linguistic and legal values that conflict if Polis and Politeia are not linked (or Nation-State precisely); these are what could also be called civilizational entities that can always continue to clash as *Polis*, even if they interact as *Politeia*, whereas one might have thought that after two world wars, the idea that implicit universality could be institutionalized with all these development programs; but this remained a pipe dream because the most powerful did not accept that a global *Polis* could emerge as “global governance” when it was suspected, despite its good intentions, of surreptitiously paving the way for the standardization of all *Politeia* under a single “nomadic” business-minded and hygienist sphere (and controlled by three giants: Digital, Pharmaceutical, Military); which gradually dilutes all national characteristics and individual singularities into undifferentiated “mixtures,” into multimodal “moles,” biotech neurons “intelligently” placed under the “label” of “Care” awaiting arrangement with “autonomous” machines which, armed with the “precautionary principle,” will know how to protect “us” through regressive rather than progressive osmosis as the shares of humanity and citizenship recede (Agamben, 2005; Esposito, 2011; Amore, 2013)...

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Nevertheless, what interests us most here is not to understand this (permanent) conflict between Polis and Politeia, nor to analyze what unites *and* distinguishes all these cultural codes that translate human passions and moods into expres-

sions (symbols, representations, imaginaries, etc.). What interests us here is to determine whether it is also possible to discover *something else* within them that makes them universally “vibrate” like an implicit “unspoken” element that runs through all these codes, like a *code of codes*, and which, by energizing them, becomes a vehicle for change (Bourdieu, 1991; Taylor, 2004)...

So, what is encoded and decoded beyond the signs, symbols, skin colors, and eye shapes? What brings them together, but this time not in international institutions and their uniform official documents and speeches, but in the interstices of the invisible realm, that of the imagination enveloping each individual, ethnic group, people, nation, group, or company, adding, gathering, and synthesizing a whole invisible “life” that can nevertheless be perceived in the blink of an eye, a smile, a common attitude towards a particular phenomenon or shared experience, even if it is just a piece of music when a Japanese band plays a jazz classic or a jazz musician incorporates an Indian melody, or when a Chinese computer scientist codes in a Californian laboratory...

There is therefore, *between* cultural codes, in the very interstices of behavior (approaches, gestures, and breathing), in the exchange of glances, words, laughter, anger, and love, in the exchange of gifts and counter-gifts, a universal *savoir-faire* of the order of sympathy and antipathy, attraction and repulsion; and all of this, namely this set of bodily signs and their external symbols (languages, witty remarks related or unrelated to the spirit of the times, permanent or new allegories of flags and statues, the emergence and persistence of mottos and their iconography) all these signs and symbols thus allow each action or “reality” to emerge, first internally in the form of “thought,” then externally in the form of “signs” that are expressed as what is requested or offered in each face-to-face or remote interaction experienced as “real” (or this mixture of constraints within internal and external imaginaries); and all this forms a kind of constant “swell” (inflated by rumor and opinion) within the human “sea,” a whole *politeia* of *politeia* (a code of codes) that the *polis* (institutions) nevertheless attempt to regulate in private (companies) and public (nation-states) “ports.”

The “swell” thus intertwines “currents” of thought, fanning their tensions, passions, and internal conations (or preferences) “specific” to each individual, as well as their external

interfaces that solicit them, linked to multi-ethnic nations or not, bound or not by power relations condensed into the "State." by catalyzing them, unifying them in objects whose forms will confront, measure, and exchange each other, including by clashing with opposites that attract each other. And all this swelling of internal and external signs and symbols in constant competition then expresses a kind of code of underlying codes, always assembling their bodily signs and symbols but expressing them precisely in an evasive manner through this code of codes, like this invisible sympathetic writing on a parchment which, in the light of a flame, reveals what is written there as a path; hence the importance of that major tool that is intuition (that "absolute knowledge" said Hegel, that "categorical intuition" in Husserl reading Descartes) in grasping them.

Finally, it should be noted that this code of codes *is* universal: it organizes the interstices of the life of signs and symbols that weave a culture at a given moment, also intensifying it thanks to this tool that intertwines dreams and hopes in each imaginary encounter that is the urban phenomenon (which is why the city is not only made up of hamlets); this "code of codes" is undoubtedly what is also called the spirit of the times (*Zeitgeist*), allowing both the persistence and the brilliance of human life in "posture" within each political singularity (Politeia) that a Polis will nevertheless want to domesticate...



METHOD

The objective of the research here will therefore be to first determine whether this "transcode" approach is not only plausible but also of interest for the global analysis of human worlds. Can they be deciphered in this way "beyond" their common space, which is "the Politics (politeia), and that "the" politics (Polis) claims to constrain their internal and external realities (or actions).

Next, we will observe whether it is possible to achieve this by seeking and accepting the truth of the facts, that is, by analyzing all areas, including in times of war, the universality of this code of codes, even if this is not subjectively pleasant because it may obstruct the idea of equidistant or isotopic binary opposition, in the sense, for example, that there would only be "good guys" on one side and "bad guys" on the other, even if this may be the case in certain circumstances; in any case, at least in our approach here, which is a "neutral" one, this requires the suspension (*epoché*) of not modifying this truth or concealing it to serve interests contrary to the will of humanity and of each citizen and individual, because no one, not even a liar, can live outside of it...

But how can this be achieved? By attempting to define tools that enable us to identify anthropological "invariants," i.e., to analyze permanent criteria that are also dynamic factors (or "functors") in the sense that they can also be used as points of reference for analyzing how internal and/or external reality functions.

This will finally allow us to apply them to a few examples, in particular to the situation in Ukraine and the analysis of certain arbitrary arrests such as that of Oleg Maltsev in Odessa.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I. Two Transcendental Codes are Universally Identifiable

Thus, human "plastics," the "Self"¹, and their "cosmologies"—these ways of "feeling" being (in) the world – are two sides of the same coin (Oulahbib, 2019). "Body and soul" are distinct (which does not mean separate in an oppositional

¹ "How can human action be assessed in terms of sustainable development of the Self? Contribution based on the work of Pierre Janet", in <https://hal.science/hal-03488377>

sense) in their interface with the world, and their interactions in tension – constantly traversed by power struggles arising from the Politeia and the Polis in conflict – form these “cultural” codes. These codes encompass all ways of being in and of the world, both explicit (first Code) and implicit (second Code). The latter is particularly studied here, for example in the idea of “understanding each other with half a word,” sharing a “half smile” after a “sympathetic” glance in a crowded, bombarded alleyway, when a contract is first legitimized by a word or a handshake before being formalized.

There are therefore two types of codes that transcend positions and their physical manifestations in the sense that they structure them universally (ontologically) and surreptitiously in all the interstices of human and social life; both are found everywhere in the slightest gesture, glance, and breath.

- **The first code**, culturally explicit, attempts to bring together certain distinctive signs (languages, jargon, tics and gestures, traditions, tales and legends, arts and techniques...) that allow people to externalize their inner reality and its various actions in order to interact with each other and bring in modifying elements that also create new traditions.
- **The second code**, which is implicit, indicates to a certain extent that it is not enough to be educated in the first code, but that one must also identify its intelligence, that is, the spirit (or the code of codes, so to speak) that inspires the way one behaves within it. It is therefore a question of knowing how to be both an insider and an outsider, not only to reproduce the first code, but also to innovate within it, because one is most familiar with all the codes necessary to propose original solutions which, if successful, attract attention and seduce even the most experienced and original individuals; This increases their share of power, authority, and recognition of their own skills, three elements of Power according to Tradition (in Machiavelli and Weber), but which can precisely

disturb those in power and therefore do everything they can to negatively preserve their prerogatives, imprison their opponents, or simply those whose original methods and results overshadow them.

This dialectic between the first and second codes (the first mechanical and conventional, the second dynamic and original) is present within each Self (individual, group) and therefore measures, on the one hand, the ability to preserve the established order but also, on the other hand, recognizes that the domination of the first code over the second can be counterproductive, particularly in certain circumstances because sometimes, and especially in times of crisis, these require a certain originality when the usual solutions struggle to resolve the problems at hand, even if one possesses all the signs of power; This means that if a person turns out to be somewhat disruptive but proudly displays original ideas (a bit like Dr. Oleg Maltsev, currently in prison in Ukraine², see also below), they can become a kind of pioneer, positively refining methods and solutions, even if that person, because they demonstrate that their solutions are better, is arrested against their will (Oleg Maltsev (psychologist), n.d.).

So, in a way, and contrary to those who think that this only happens in exceptional circumstances, it seems that we have always been in a situation shaped by these two types of “codes,” one conventional, the other disruptive, sometimes triggering a “war” between those who want to believe only what powerful people say on one side and those on the other side who think that we cannot continuously apply solutions that do not work while hoping each time that there will be a positive result (here we recognize Einstein’s definition of insanity (Quote Investigator, 2017)).

This is why, even at the global level, situations can arise in which the dialectic between the first and second orders seem to disturb certain powers that prefer the negative preservation of the conventional by opting for the negative dissolution of all originality. This can consist of seeking to negatively dominate the second order, that of implicit interactions, the breeding ground for innovation, by imposing on it, for example, the control

² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oleg_Maltsev_\(psychologist\)#Arrest_and_Detention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oleg_Maltsev_(psychologist)#Arrest_and_Detention)

of the "third order," the order of Simulacra (analyzed by Jean Baudrillard)³ that is, the substitution of internal and external reality by increasingly "intelligent" modeling...

But this influence, which is not new, while amplified by this "precession of simulacra" claiming to master the dialectic of signs and symbols between the first and second orders (between explicit conventions and implicit interactions), has not prevented the emergence of new "leaders," new precursors, prophets, scholars, and their popularizers, now called "influencers," who are increasingly spreading throughout the current global order of social networks that organize our perception, which is both singularly particular and universal.

These "disruptors" are not just merchants of signs, but bring unique points of view and solutions that can frighten certain states because they can challenge the dominance of certain groups whose preservation and refinement become negative in the sense of selfishly preserving interests while indulging in the most ostentatious sophistry, preferring instead to keep their populations bound by outdated codes of cultural apprehension that stifle thoughts, gestures, and attitudes, as we see in totalitarian regimes.

The temptation is then great to try to ban the second order by imposing the third order in order to preserve the first order, that of convention; which will encourage a desire to negatively regulate social networks, to hunt down and imprison anyone who comes up with original solutions and, worse still, to accuse this group (networks and disruptive elements) of manufacturing "fake news" within the first order. It is therefore time to propose four key tools for analyzing how we can measure the extent to which a given action strengthens or weakens this dialectic between the first and second cultural orders, which articulate conventionality and originality.

II. Four Angles or "Tools" Can Be Used to Understand These Two Codes

Each action, whether internal or external, seeks to be strong enough to preserve the coherence of its emergence; the notion of "preservation" is therefore important; it is the first tool or angle

of the emergence of the Self to be and not just to exist; it can be positive if it strengthens the Self in question, but negative if it weakens it; for example, by containing it only in the first order, that of convention. However, in order to refine this preservation in a positive way, a second angle or tool is needed, that of refining the Self to be what it *wants* to be (and not just exist; let us repeat: the stone exists, it is not...); this requires action above all in the second cultural order, that of originality; how? By triggering the third tool, that of positive diversification acting within both orders in order to organize and build action on several levels in several materials within internal and external realities, whereas negative diversification will disperse its efforts, forgetting the overall idea of preserving and positively refining the Self (individual, group...).

This is why a fourth tool is necessary: it serves to prioritize and thus dissolve what is not necessary to preserve for positive refinement, like an old tradition replaced by a new one that does not necessarily eliminate but transcends (Hegelian *Aufhebung* (Hegel.net, n.d.)) towards the "better," that of refinement, thus rejecting negative dissolution, which uses the "Negative" as the sole tool of destruction (nihilism). The former acts with a view to preservation and refinement of being. Thus, even if the transformation of marble into a statue negatively alters its original nature — that of the first-order convention — its nature nevertheless persists within the second order through the originality of its emergence as a work of art. One can object that, from the point of view of the marble, its transformation, its transcendence, was imposed on it. But the same can be said of all domestication, even all socialization, when the natural human being wants to act as a "political animal." It must universally and objectively measure its mode of appearance and being within the first and second orders of Culture, which precisely seeks to give the most refined form possible to the passions of Self.

Thus, each "Self" preserves its own presence through refinement, attempts to diversify access through infinite combinations, requiring prioritization and therefore the dissolution of the superfluous in order to achieve the sublime, the joy of reaching the goal, these four angles

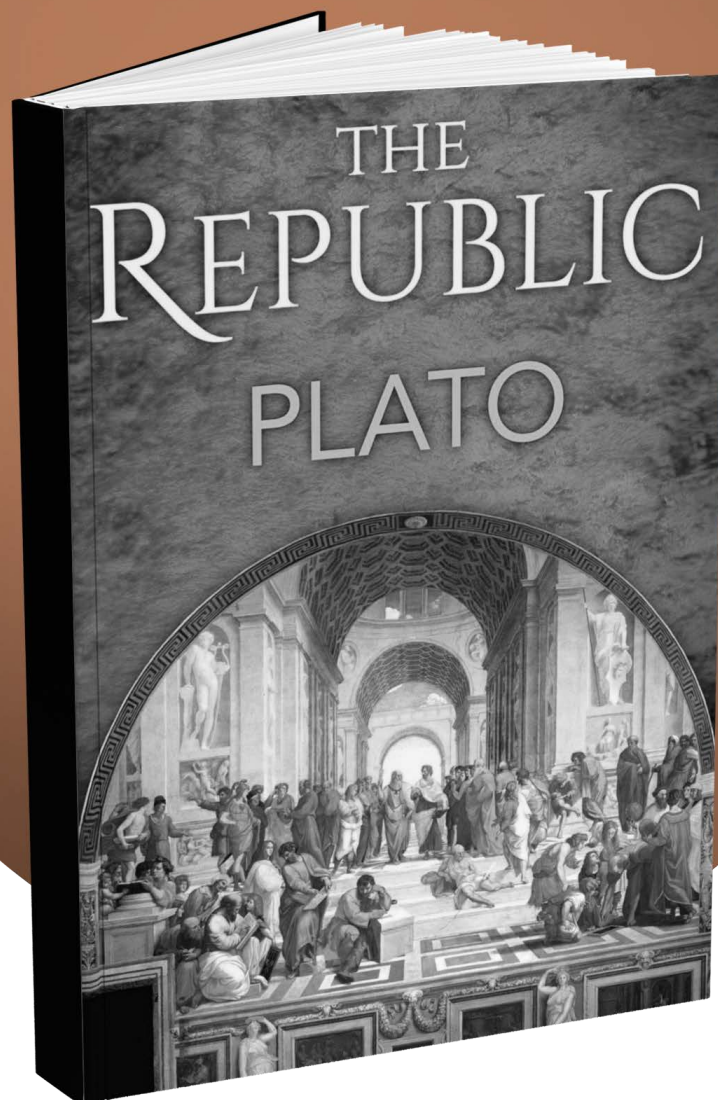
³ <https://culturalstudiesnow.blogspot.com/2012/10/jean-baudrillard-precession-of.html>

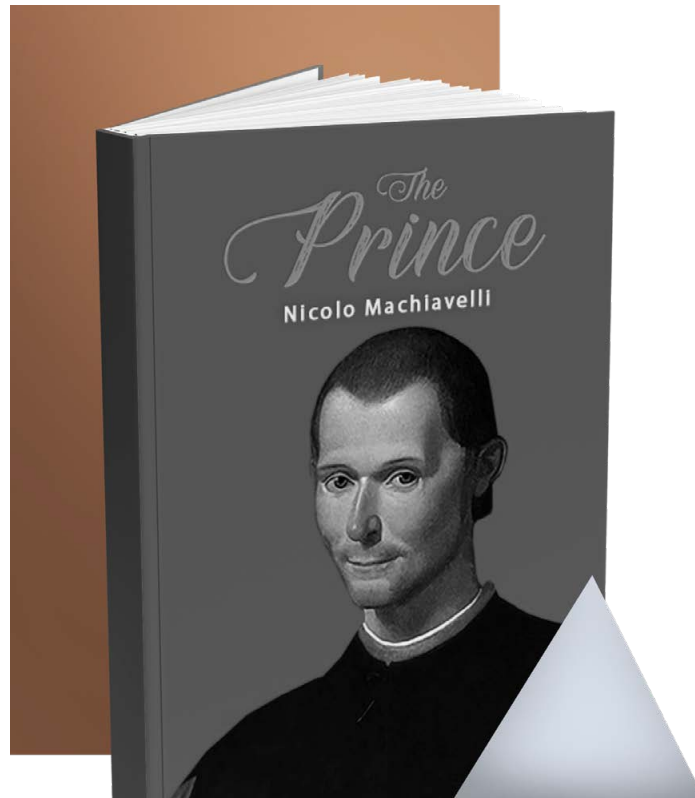
or tools being positive, acting towards objective well-being within the two orders, those of convention and originality, or becoming negative, aiming at their destruction in favor of a third order, that of Simulacrum, seeking, as Plato also indicates in *The Republic*, to prevent each Self from reaching and, above all, from being afraid to know the “truth,” that is, not only the accuracy of what is, but also its ethical or universal meaning, so that the preservation of “self” is achieved through positive refinement and not through its opposite, the sophistry of selfishness, for example, a Polis that wants to see only its own isotropy in each extensive homothety of its Self-acting in the world of Politeia...

This means that such a “Self” proclaiming itself “polis,” including among the Polis (e.g., mafias, corrupt groups) may want to negatively dissolve all persons and groups that disagree

with it in order to preserve or even refine, but negatively, its power, to the point of considering that the negative diversification of their suffering is not enough, that it will therefore be necessary to dissolve them negatively, i.e., eliminate them... On the other hand, a Polis may want to preserve itself positively by specifically removing any politeia seeking to become a Polis, for example by dissolving any desire of non-citizens to constitute themselves as such in the first and second orders, imposing its language, its conventions, even its imagination and the codes for accessing it...

And to verify once again the effectiveness of this analysis with its four tools or angles testing the permanence of a Self of a Culture to be and not just to exist as folklore, we will now analyze the current war situation between Ukraine and Russia.





III. How to Put These Four Angles or Tools into Practice

We can see that each “Self” certainly wants to positively preserve its position, but this can be perceived negatively by the other party...

In this case, no universal or objective positivity can be achieved. How can we proceed? Let’s take the situation in the Donbass. The prohibition or negative isotopic dissolution of the Russian language — or any other language (negative preservation and refinement)—cannot be universally positive. Even from the Ukrainian point of view, positive refinement cannot be fully achieved. As a result, the conflict begins and continues until the current secession, regardless of the fact that this situation can be exploited negatively by certain groups on both sides.

The situation is therefore not positive for either side if the cultural conflict between these two Selves turns into armed conflict. On the contrary, we are witnessing negative dispersion and dissolution rather than positive preservation and reinforcement of each country. War is accompanied not only by military actions but also by a cultural conflict around language: Kyiv attempts to promote the Ukrainian language while limiting the use of Russian, which has sparked debates about whether such measures exacerbate societal division and tension (The Times, 2025).

Beyond military actions, there is an “existential cultural struggle” for identity. This includes the dismantling of monuments and disputes over the role of Russian culture and language, reflecting a deeper societal rift (Le Monde, 2025).

Furthermore, if each Self implicitly projects that its primary objective is to destroy the other and therefore chooses negative dissolution above all else, then the positivity achieved becomes relative in the sense that reinforcement is based solely on the destruction of the other and not on mutual benefit.

Admittedly, a certain type of negative “pleasure,” a cruel joy, can be achieved when destruction is the main objective. This always provides the satisfaction of accomplishing an action (or Kant’s principle of negative greatness) (Fugate, 2016), and thus of building both a certain recognition of being someone in one’s own eyes and also of attracting a certain audience. It allows one to build a kind of spiritual power worldwide, particularly in the third order, that of Simulacrum, even if we did not want to. Even if someone told us, “we must destroy the stick of power and not just take it,” destruction itself provides a certain pleasure and admiration for the gesture, and therefore for the victor (as it was said in the famous book *The Prince* by Machiavelli (1532/2008)), even if he did not want it. Hence the idea that, in any case, the positive



preservation of the Self — and its refinement — cannot be achieved, leading instead to negative dispersion and dissolution, and therefore to the inability to truly *be*, contenting oneself only with existing, with subsisting.

It is therefore interesting to note that even in this situation, the four tools for analyzing the development of self-esteem are effective, because we can see that even the criminal mind wants to preserve itself and is very enthusiastic about this idea.

This is why it is necessary to be in the field, as Oleg Maltsev was before he was arrested by certain people who, on the one hand, do not understand the scientific approach combining confidential studies in the field among all groups (Maltsev, 2020; Maltsev & Lopatiuk, 2023). On the other hand, these people are unsure of what they are doing, seeing in Oleg Maltsev's work a reflection of their own incomprehension, and his arrest a mirror of their anxiety, the scapegoat for their inability to be rather than merely exist in negative preservation and refinement.

It is as if they had noticed that something was wrong in this war, not only against Russian aggression, but also against the dialectic of the two cultural codes that constitute it. This explains why they arrested this researcher, thinking they were acting positively to reinforce their own preservation. In reality, they made a monumental mistake by “paranoiding” and thus moving toward a destructive position that was both negative refinement (stubbornness), negative diversity (accusations of everything and its opposite), and, finally, negative dissolution (arrest without trial), a premonitory prelude to their own disappearance as a positive subject of Universal History.

CONCLUSION

Human history shows that it is impossible to eradicate the dialectic of cultural codes (conventionality and originality, explicit and implicit, officially listed by constitutionally recognized structures...) through repression and murder, especially if it is still shared by many people; unless we kill them all in a kind of perpetual war until the last survivor, since codes are composed of and carried by various customs, ranging from politeness and good manners to the behavioral models of yesterday (fairy tales and legends) and today (soap operas, series, personal development).

Therefore, if preservation and positive refinement are the primary goals, it is necessary to work, in and for each Self, to organize as best as possible a diversity of first and second orders or cultural codes that are combined rather than opposed, because it is indeed the dialectic of conventionality *and* originality that allows *Polis* and *Politeia* to continue to enrich each other anthropologically, rather than confronting each other in a perpetual war, that of “all against all,” which can only lead to disappearance, similar to all those displaced peoples...

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