

EUROPEAN VALUES AND GEORGIA (IN THE LIGHT OF MERAB MAMARDASHVILI'S VIEW)

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Abstract

The spectrum of the problems analyzed in the following article is based on the works by Merab Mamardashvili (1930-1990) dedicated to the theme of Europe, talks given in Paris and Barcelona, articles and interviews published in various French newspapers or journals. Mamardashvili clearly realized that the establishment of democratic regime in the society emerging on the ruins of a totalitarian state could create the most complicated problem to the state and culture; that the indigenous peoples of the former Soviet Union (including Georgians) who before October Revolution could not follow the time, modernity, would find themselves in a difficult situation in the process of formation of civil society and its members as citizens. The aspiration toward modernizing the individuals poses many difficulties to the politicians and citizens because we are simultaneously being transformed into free and independent nation, and the members of civil society. The situation is complicated by the fact that this process passes through the fog of post-totalitarian society. Merab Mamardashvili's critical analysis is due to a desire for better future of Georgia, the desire that in the era of globalization Georgian thinking could adequately respond to the challenges of time. In the process of desovietization of thinking and formation of civil society, the views developed by the philosopher Merab Mamardashvili about the relationships between the individual and society are still valuable and relevant.

Keywords: Globalization, modernity, post-totalitarian society, process of formation, civil society, democratic regime, cultural reflection, rational element, personal dignity, critical analysis

Introduction

In recent history of Georgia signing the Association Agreement with the European Union, one of the most positive steps made by Georgian republic is a difficult and honorable challenge for Georgian people being removed from the European efforts. The EU Member States (among which thirteen by territories, nine by the population is much smaller than our country) by their values and mentality embodied in their life are highly advanced, exemplary countries. This situation gives new impulse to Georgians' aspiration to establish their decent place in the bosom of the community of European countries.

Georgia with its religion, cultural origins and developmental trends mainly belonged to the West than to the East. This reality is clearly demonstrated by a brief historical review of Georgians' aspirations to the Western culture and values: during eight centuries (IV-XII) variety of creations (religious, philosophical, historical, artistic) translated into Georgian in the cultural centers within and beyond the borders of Georgia; in XVIII-XIX centuries known among us as "Voltaireism" the interest of religious and secular people wishing to implement "Europeism" about the actual social issues expressing the spirit of the epoch, which was clearly reflected in their educational-translational work; in the beginning of XX century the progressive Georgian thinkers educated by the great thinkers and artists of

Western Europe, on the basis of knowledge and experience gained in Europe gave to the innovative developments the national shade and established them in Georgian culture. This efficient and urgent initiative soon after was ended by the Bolshevik leaders. According to the absolutely correct view developed by Prof. Iremadze, “that is the effort from which Georgians were removed by implementing Russian mentality and spreading the Soviet men’s consciousness! They were departed as from the legal values of Greco-Roman world, as well as from the highest ideals of the Gospel!”²¹.

So, foolishness in spite of thinking, honesty, and dignity was established in Georgia (like the other republics of the Soviet Union) from the beginning of the 20s of XX century. The laws and rhythm of life characteristic to the life in totalitarian states for dozens of years complicated and aggravated “the process of modernizing which was being set up in the West during the 400 years”.²² Under such circumstances, defending the proper orientation of life and true human ideals needed genuine morality and great spiritual strength.

The concept of “modernity” was established in Europe after completion of the process of formation of national states. These are the states which met new demands of epoch with completely new nature and different rhythm with solved national problems; and the formation of “Modern” human was performed according to the doctrine of the Enlightenment. To promote the reasonable relationships among the members of the community the greatest importance was given to the education of not only the younger generation, but the whole mass of people, the development of good natural human instincts, the propaganda of democratic, humane ideas, spreading knowledge among the people. Currently, these states are those industrialized democracies where the society based on the phenomenon of independent and free individual, efficiently conducted process of rationalization and technological transformations accelerated the growth and development in all spheres of society.

In the above mentioned context certain aspects of Merab Mamardashili’s views which echo the contemporary epoch are expressed with a new strength. He was almost the only one in the former Soviet Union who always openly and directly expressed the truth to the interlocutor as well as to the broad mass of audience by thinking over and discussing the baneful mechanisms of totalitarian regime. Obviously, as the top goal to escape from the stereotypes of the Soviet regime, Mamardashvili considered defeating the Soviet regime and gaining national freedom about which he specially mentions: “The civil society being in the grip of the totalitarian regime whose life was like death, is the main enemy of the same regime; it had to defeat it and so it did”²³.

Mamardashvili clearly realized that the establishment of democratic regime in the society emerging on the ruins of a totalitarian state could cause the most complicated problem to the state and culture; that the indigenous peoples of the former Soviet Union (including Georgians) who before October Revolution could not follow the time, modernity, in the process of formation of civil society and its members as citizens would find themselves in a difficult situation.

The aspiration toward modernizing the individuals poses many difficulties to the politicians and citizens because we are simultaneously being transformed into free and independent nation, and the members of civil society. The situation is complicated by the fact that this process passes through the fog of post-totalitarian society where “as if abolished and blocked totalitarian structures” still exist in social and mental space. “We, having spent the

²¹Iremadze T., “Philosophy at the Crossroad of Epochsand Cultures”, “Nekeri”, Tbilisi, 2013. p. 128.

²² See: “Being a Philosopher is Really a Destiny”, translated from French by Dodo Labuchidze-Khoperia, See: “Renewed Iveria”, N18, November 1 (Tbilisi, 2001), p. 14.

²³See: Merab Mamardashvili, “Democracy Could not Rely on National Slogans” (Interview), Translated from French by Dodo Labuchidze-Khoperia, See: “Arili”, October 12 (Tbilisi, 2000), p.5.

energy, have lost the sense of politics; we do not know anymore how to live in a complex society. Like the whole unity of the Soviet people, we dozed so long that we have to re-learn to distinguish life from death, dreams from reality”²⁴.

For implementation of this Mamardashvili believed that terms of the reform should aim the following: to return the individual’s honesty as the reference for the society which at the same time means returning to the culture and civilization; giving rigid and hierarchical institutional norms for human creative activities; taking into account by Georgian society such elements and forms of modern society that are not accepted by it. In a word, the terms of the reform should aim the one that is meant by the access to European values. Here it is important the attempt of the state to dialogue with the society, the partnership of the state with real and autonomous forces of the society assuming that by this way it would be possible to build civil society, or “the organization composed of those different elements that contribute to its functioning as a whole”²⁵.

Mamardashvili considered as the part of the same attempt the dialogue with the West, Europe and the world where people can see well that the means to live, possibility of human existence is the history. European effort with its historical form is the attempt of self-realization of a human. In this view, the Renaissance (a phenomenon that is marked by the capital letters in Indo-European languages) is the basis of modernity for Georgian thinkers, “history as a means of life. It can revive and on this basis create civil society”²⁶.

According to Mamardashili, continuity of Renaissance consists of re-born irreversible two elements of its [Renaissance] own period: “The first element is the Greco-Roman world, social or civil idea [...] The second element is the Gospel; it is in the person like the idea, that one which is called an inner voice or word”²⁷. Therefore, those who do not have a history of perfect system of civil society, must have “the courage and stamina for those efforts”, by the solidity and importance of which are marked European activities - the tireless efforts to implement the perfect, the best.

The style of life and thinking imposed by the regime in the Soviet society inflicted a deep wound on personal dignity of humans; the element of education, cultural reflection, element of rational initiative was exactly the one that was more and more oppressed by the authorities, circumvented it; that is why it could not manage that rational element persistent in the society followed its own development, “but this element existed, as life goes on and as long as life exists no one can kill it: they still will sing the song, write poetry, philosophize, think”²⁸. The philosopher Mamardashvili considered as the most important moment the recovery of dignity in the person formed as “Homo Sovieticus” in order to free it from anti social chimeras for on the way of fight for independence everyone, including Georgians, could understand that they need “desoviate” their own thinking and language. “He had in mind to overcome the perverted thinking of “Soviet people“, principal overcome and difficult process of establishment of European civil consciousness”²⁹.

²⁴See: Merab Mamardashvili, “Living in Accordance with Time”, Translated from French by Dodo Labuchidze-Khoperia, See: “Arili”, September 16, (Tbilisi, 1995), p. 2.

²⁵See: Merab Mamardashvili, “European Responsibility”, Translated from French by Dodo Labuchidze-Khoperia, collection: The proceedings of International Scientific Conference dedicated to Merab Mamardashili’s 80th Anniversary, Editor-compiler: T. Iremadze, Tbilisi, “Nekeri”. 2011. p. 210.

²⁶See: Merab Mamardashvili, “European Responsibility”, Translated from French by Dodo Labuchidze-Khoperia, collection: The proceedings of International Scientific Conference dedicated to Merab Mamardashili’s 80th Anniversary, Editor-compiler: T. Iremadze, Tbilisi, “Nekeri”. 2011. p. 209.

²⁷See: *ibid*, p. 208-209.

²⁸See: Merab Mamardashvili, “Status of Thinking and Intellectuals”, Translated from French by Dodo Labuchidze-Khoperia, Book: “Topology of Consciousness”, Tbilisi, Georgian Biographical Centre, 2011, p. 203.

²⁹Iremadze T., “Philosophy at the Crossroad of Epochsand Cultures”, “Nekeri”, Tbilisi, 2013, p. 127.

Exactly the European culture was the answer for him to the important question: whether it is possible to change the world, whether it is possible that the human being handcuffed, presented and developed chained, could relief from such a situation, could develop, improve, and exercise the infinity – the human ideal - in the imperfect forms of exercise. According to Mamardashili, “The human being is that creature who always is in the position of self-creation and the whole history is the history of the attempt of becoming the human being. The human does not exist, he is being created”³⁰. In this light M. Mamardashvili focuses on the rationality of modern thinking. In the beginning of Modern society the knowledge always was defined as power by which is meant that the subject is able to create all of the issues facing the subject; new knowledge as a power, as the non-verbal existence of a person, which is not an abstraction or an idea, but it is the existence, active existence when neither point “is a part of any other whole”. According to Mamardashili’s interpretation, such a definition of knowledge does not make sense that it is utilitarian or owner’s view toward the nature. In fact, by this is meant the following: “Knowledge is what itself contains the power in self or realization as the actual state in rational subject, in the world, [...] the possibility, which in itself contains the self-realization, the power for realization for its own possibilities”³¹.

In this context he refers to Kantian definition of the Enlightenment: “The Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-imposed nonage“ i.e. - this is a real ability, the real power of thought itself, endurance without having the outer authorities, the power to move without crutches, without help from others, based on your own legs; the ability that we would no longer need someone stood next to us to lead us, that others did not govern on us [...] and adds: “We are not in this condition of nonage, our existence mainly is similar to the childhood [...] We have never tasted “The Enlightenment” when you have the inner ability to conduct your own self”³².

Gaining everything needs learning. At this point Mamardashvili sets the main goal in this way: “Georgians need to work on themselves, expel the ignorance and historical gloom that is accumulated in their character, activities, and knowledge”³³ [...] Our country needs scientists who would be busy with their own less important work as bees and the scientist needs a big courage to become a thinker”³⁴. As the essential condition for accomplishing this, Mamardashvili considered the development of the consciousness of responsibility in humans from the early childhood, his establishment as an independent person and acquiring the noblest ability - inner freedom- inspired by the spirituality of his own soul.

Conclusion

Merab Mamardashili’s cute, critical analysis without any esteems is due to a desire for the better future of Georgia, the desire that in the era of globalization Georgian thinking could adequately respond to the challenges of time, that by self-critical attitude could see “what is good and what is bad in us, what was right and what was wrong on the way we passed and in our history. It will be a big step made toward civilization, civil government, to the

³⁰See: Merab Mamardashvili, “European Responsibility”, Translated from French by Dodo Labuchidze-Khoperia, collection: The proceedings of International Scientific Conference dedicated to Merab Mamardashili’s 80th Anniversary, Editor-compiler: T. Iremadze, Tbilisi, “Nekeri”. 2011. P.211.

³¹See: Merab Mamardashvili, “Status of Thinking and Intellectuals”, Translated from French by Dodo Labuzhidze-Khoperia, Book: “Topology of Consciousness”, Tbilisi, Georgian Biographical Centre, 2011, p. 206.

³²See: *ibid*, p. 204; 191.

³³See: Merab Mamardashvili, “Living in Accordance with Time”, Translated from French by Dodo Labuchidze-Khoperia, See: “Arili”, October 12, (Tbilisi, 2000), p. 2.

³⁴See: *ibid*.

development [...] Let us be sensitive to the invisible threads that connect us with the world's fate. Our destiny is to come exactly from there.”³⁵

In the process of modernizing, desovietization of thinking and formation of civil society, the views developed by the philosopher Merab Mamardashili about the relationship between the individual and society are still valuable and relevant. Today Georgian readers can still find many important views in them.

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³⁵See: *ibid*, p. 9.