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LOUIS DUMONT ON THE NATIONAL VARIANTS OF THE MODERN IDEOLOGY : I

Leonidas Donskis

J'ai ainsi contrasté le Français: <<Je suis homme par nature et français par accident>>, et l'Allemand: <<Je suis essentiellement un Allemand, et je suis un homme grâce à ma qualité d'Allemand [...].>> *

Louis Dumont

One of the most interesting and, to be sure, controversial cases in current civilizational sociology is that of Louis Dumont. Both his incisive analytical perspective and, at first sight, the quite unusual, even theoretically unconventional analysis of the rise of modern individualism conceived as the very basis of modern ideology deserve to be treated as one of the most profound and challenging theoretical phenomena at the end of the twentieth century. The latter, which acquires its special place in the modern history of humankind as the age of the rise and fall of the most militant and exclusive ideologies, in the case of both Dumont's civilizational paradigm and critique of modernity undoubtedly has found its most profound and fundamental criticism.

It is not necessary to describe in detail both Dumont's approach and research strategy. It has been done in a number of analytical reviews¹. In one of the most incisive interpretations of Dumont's theoretical construction, Vytautas Kavolis has placed his emphasis on the theoretical framework within which Dumont's conceptually impressive and theoretically elegant construction arose. He puts the origin of Dumont's approach as follows:

Louis Dumont's approach, in studies dating back to the 1950's, derives from Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss and is conceived within the French tradition of structuralism. It has, however, evolved since the shift in his research from the cognitive organization of the civilization of India to the intellectual history of the

* Louis Dumont, *Homo Aequalis, II: L'idéologie allemande. France-Allemagne et retour* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), p. 15.

West into a stance that can be described as 'historicized Durkheimian.' In his more detailed attention to historical processes of consciousness formation, Dumont has moved closer to Max Weber, from whom, however, he remains separated by his rejection of methodological individualism. Dumont is less concerned, in this later stage, with the ideological structures and their effects upon social organization than with a precise identification of changes within ideological structures, and (more speculatively) with the practical implications of these changes.²

The so-called "first wave" of cross-cultural studies basically represented by cultural morphology (Ruckert, Danilevsky, Frobenius, Spengler) and historico-cultural monadology (Toynbee) has come to employ the concepts and terms of one civilization - as a matter of fact, those of the modern West - in comparative studies of essentially different civilizations. The "second wave" has come to stress the crucial importance of strict distinguishing between ontologically and socioculturally diverse civilizations as well as between their basic (as Dumont would say, ideological) principles.

From this point of view, Dumont may be defined as a true representative of the "second wave." He seems far indeed from the numerous nomothetic prejudices about the alleged laws of history, its predestined course and its predictability. Dumont is the ideographic analyst *par excellence*. His extreme attentiveness to both the unique ideological principle and the empirical evidence of comparative civilizations makes him a distinctive theoretician not only in contemporary sociology and cross-cultural studies but also in current social philosophy and, generally speaking, the realm of social knowledge.

We should note the basic methodological and even epistemological differences among strategies of research as they are represented by theoreticians of the "second wave" in current cross-cultural studies. It is small wonder that Kavolis in his comparative analysis of Dumont's and Eisenstadt's civilizational sociologies notes that:

[...] when sociologists, in approaching any issue, take civilizations as the frame of analysis within which the issue is located, they may be concerned with that which makes particular civilizations what they are, or with civilizations as merely sources of information to be exploited for building general sociological theory. (*This is one way of describing the ideographic-nomothetic distinction* [italics mine].) The publication of examinations of the same issue - the rise of modern individualism - by two of the currently most active civilizational sociologists allows us a point of entry into a comparison of two modes of being of civilizational sociology.³

Dumont seems to have never been involved with the worship of theoretical fashions or methodological innovations. He manifests both his epistemic program and theoretical frame of analysis in the realm of holism in its

primary, authentic shape. The latter, to take it in a strict sense and as precisely as Dumont does, is a method of social knowledge frequently confused with, or contaminated by, its absolute opposite, nominalism, rather than merely a weak echo of the Western cognitive voice of the past completely rejected by contemporary social sciences, or even sacrificed in the name of the advantages of nominalism.¹ At this point, the role of Dumont consists in recovering the key concepts of social knowledge in their essentially primary meanings rather than in their conscious subverting. The value of Dumont's thinking lies in purifying a set of basic concepts, not in any alleged challenging of it.

This may be said, first of all, about the two basic concepts he has employed in his civilizational studies, those of hierarchy and equality. (In Dumont's theory, holism is derived from the former, nominalism, or individualism, from the latter.) They are in turn essentially connected to Dumont's general strategy of research. According to Kavolis,

Dumont's [strategy of research] is a two-stage, expanding strategy. He first, through an exhaustive investigation of the empirical evidence of a particular civilization, identifies the basic ideological principle from which its coherence derives. (In the case of India, it is the principle of hierarchy.) He then analyzes a second civilization by comparing its empirical evidence with the ideological principle of the civilization first considered. Through this comparison, he sharpens his understanding of the ideological principle of the second civilization (in the case of the West, it is equality), *and also recovers a grasp of that in the second civilization which it represses but which the first has more fully developed.*²

For Dumont, hierarchy as a method of organization of the social whole corresponds with holism as taking the social whole (society) rather than as a particular individual as the basic unit of social research; thus equality corresponds with nominalism, or individualism. Dumont, a holist *par excellence* by his theoretical skill and intellectual vocation, is thus able to uncover the real content of a number of notions that are taken for granted in the predominant type (obviously nominalistic) of modern Western theoretical discourse.

Let us start observing Dumont's concept of ideology as well as his conception of the national variants of the modern ideology. Both of these issues are hardly detachable from each other. Our emphasis will be placed on what the obvious and hidden theoretical implications of Dumont's discourse are referring to. A crucial question arising in the framework within which Dumont's conception of the rise and culmination of modern individualism, i.e. modern ideology itself, will be considered as follows: is his vision

applicable to analyses of other national variants of the modern ideology? We set aside his early works on the civilization of India as well as its caste system. We will be concerned with Dumont's contribution to the intellectual history of the West.

The Dumontian Notion of Modern Ideology: Its Origins, its Outline, and its Implications

In his studies of the symbolic organization of a particular civilization, Dumont takes ideology as the basic unit of civilizational approach. The last thing he would entertain is anxiety about the well-known pejorative meaning of this term. In Dumontian discourse, ideology naturally acquires its neutral scientific meaning uncovering the deepest structures of historical consciousness. It is considered as merely the basic principle of civilization determining its inner coherence.

Dumont seems to have never looked for how - and whether - ideological structures and designs contaminate the alleged purity and primary innocence of the axial ideas (to recall Jaspers' term) including theoretical concepts and philosophical constructions. For Dumont, the "extraordinary potency of the initial disposition" in establishing the ideological principle of a civilization is too serious a problem to reduce it to speculations about the fundamental priority of theoretical knowledge over human spontaneity, stances and self-consciousness.⁶ "I call ideology a system of ideas and values current in a given social milieu. [...] What is a predominant ideology? It is not exactly the ideology of a majority of the people nor something stable that would be seen to underline historical changes. *It is rather something that comes spontaneously to the mind of people living in the cultural milieu considered, something in terms of which those people speak and think, and which is best revealed by comparison with other cultures* [italics mine]."⁷

The theoretical background of this problem may shed light on why Dumont's notion of the modern ideology deserves to be considered as extremely important. Shall we go back to the above highly pejorative meaning the concept of ideology has acquired in modern theoretical discourse?

Ideology as such has been taken most critically by Marxism (in the case of neo-Marxism essentially represented by the Frankfurt School it has done so while simultaneously adopting a panideological framework) and positivism, especially the logical empiricism, or Vienna Circle, as its most advanced and latest branch. As it will be shown below, it is not a simple *coincidentia oppositorum*.

For Marxism ideology seemed to represent a "false" consciousness, or the world turned upside down, while for positivism it seemed to function in

the system of true, verifiable knowledge as a para-theory lacking strict, clear criteria of verification and therefore unable to be of epistemic value. The followers of these two ways of thinking (that is, of these two influential methodologies) still continue interpreting ideology in a negative sense, or placing the term in the negative context of meanings producing pejorative connotations.

No wonder that Karl Raimund Popper as a former representative of logical empiricism has "subtracted" all holistic, essentialistic phenomena, including metaphysics, ideologies and utopias, from the realm of scientifically, that is empirically, verifiable truth. One wonders how (and by what conceptual framework) Popper was able to construct his well-known concept of the third world identified with the world of ideas, or the world of culture (according to the later Popper), by eliminating all idea-making phenomena. (I set aside a principal question: how is it possible to constitute a theory of history based on methodological individualism, or nominalism, if taken in its pure and primary shape, i.e. not mixed with elements of holistic thinking? This problem deserves to be reflected on as the subject of a separate study. It will be discussed - at least, in some respects - below.)

On the other hand, it should be noted that a naive, superficial juxtaposition of the "open" society and the "closed" one (introduced by Henri Bergson) did play its significant role - and still continues doing so, particularly in the East-Central European countries - discrediting ideology.^{8,9} Ideology is no longer being explored in clear and neutral terms. This split between ideology and analytical discourse threatens to leave the former outside the zone of the analytical language because ideology, with minor exceptions, is no longer considered as a subject of neutral studies, or as a cultural system (except in such instances as Clifford Geertz's works on this subject).

In the post-war world ideology came to refer either to totalitarianism (or, at least, authoritarianism) or to the indoctrination of a particular social group or even of a whole society. This is to say, ideology is now placed within an ideological discourse. In other words, the prescriptive system is being locked up within itself, that is, within the same prescriptive system. (To use Dumont's terms, the hierarchical complementarity evidently drops out here: nominalism, completely separated from holism and left alone, is not able to explain itself. A question may arise: is holism able to do so? This issue will be examined below.) But as a matter of fact, ideology is unable to explicate itself.

In short, we are in the following paradoxical situation: discourse for discourse's sake, and ideology for ideology's sake. This *circulum vitiosus* or methodological tautology, is a widespread phenomenon and constitutes the second reason for the lack of rational light shed on modern ideology.

Let us go back to Dumont, His theoretical stance directed to the exploration of both ideology and its deepest structures, lurking in the philosophical layer of ideas as well as in the common sense, remains outside of various kinds of theoretical and analytical hypertrophy. The only thing from a Marxist interpretation of ideology he uses is the common aspect of ideological dissemination: "any ideology is a social set of representations." On the other hand, a strict distinction between ideology and "truth," as it has been offered by positivism, is absolutely unacceptable for Dumont.

In his *From Mandeville to Marx: The Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology* Dumont has presented a wide-scale explication of modern ideology including its global aspect as well as a specified one. He writes:

I define ideology as the totality of ideas and values - or 'representations' - common to a society or current in a given social group. [...] It is probably expected [...] that I should distinguish more or less substantially between ideology, on the one hand, and science, or rationality, or truth, or philosophy, on the other. To make such a distinction is the last thing I would do. The only aspect common to the present view and a widespread, more or less Marxist, usage is the social relativity: any ideology is a social set of representations - certainly a very complex affair. The fact that one particular representation in that set is judged as true or false, rational or traditional, scientific or not, is irrelevant to the social nature of the idea or value. For example: that the earth revolves around the sun is, I take it, a scientific statement, but it is admitted by most of our contemporaries without their being able to demonstrate it. Moreover, even for those who are able to do so, this statement is part of their world view, together with many other statements they cannot demonstrate. As such, it may legitimately be taken as an integral part of the ideology as a whole, that is, as entertaining certain relations with other components of it.¹⁰

One would think that the term *ideology* in Dumont's usage is nothing but a substitute for the commonly accepted concept of *Weltanschauung*. But this can hardly be true. The latter term, as we all know, derives from the rationalist approach as widespread in the German tradition of theoretical thought (it is purified from what in the history of mentalities is considered as mentality rather than as idea and value; it is not accidental that Dumont has come to stress the importance of value-ideas in both the symbolic organization and the basic ideological principle of a particular civilization.

The distinction of crucial importance for adequate understanding of the Dumontian notion of modern ideology is that between sociological thought and economic one. For Dumont, the latter arises as a pure expression of nominalism, while the former, by its nature and definition, is a phenomenon of holism. By employing his sharp terms and then by liberating himself from

the widespread opinions concerning the initially holistic origin of Marxian thinking, Dumont allows us to observe the rise of economic ideology conceived by him as the last and the most influential historical transformation (as Dumont would say, "through a historical choice") of modern individualism. He formulates one of his crucial questions and then explicitly answers it:

Is Marx, in our terms, individualist or holist? At first sight, the collectivist or communist aspect of his thought appears to put the stress on the social whole so much that, if we ask our contemporaries, they will classify him spontaneously as holist. I contend that this is only an appearance, reinforced perhaps through the fact that the person who asks the question perceives Marx as more holist than himself. For instance, this would seem to be the case for a student in the United States. My thesis, which I propose to test here, is that Marx is essentially individualist. This insight emerged a few years ago in connection with studies in the social history of India. As I wished to draw a sharp distinction between sociological thought (in my view, essentially holistic) and economic thought (essentially individualistic), I was led to doubt the accepted view that Marx was one of the founders of sociology and to conclude that he is not an economic sociologist, but a sociological economist [...].¹¹

Dumont seems to have never employed his analytical discourse to uncover and then clarify the role and place of social philosophy and its branches, or rather its applied disciplines (political philosophy, philosophy of law, etc.), in the "historical choices" and, in general, in the historic process of the rise of modern ideology. His implications concerning the German philosophies of history and culture are extremely interesting and far-reaching. His observations on Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, and Locke are of great theoretical importance even for academic philosophy, not to speak of the history of ideas or civilizational sociology.

They remind us of a well-done set of ideas exceptionally useful for Dumont in exemplifying both his highly sophisticated, elegant theoretical construction and undoubtedly profound, paradoxical argument but, at the same time, they are loosely bound with the modern social philosophy *per se*. It goes without saying that the great economic and sociological theories are not social philosophy-free (it may also be said about Dumont himself). It would be really a magnificent step forward of contemporary social knowledge if someone were to apply Dumont's own method in defining the role and place of social philosophy in the emergence and culmination of modern ideology. But this kind of analysis still remains to be done.

As noted above, the essence of modern ideology, according to Dumont, lies in individualism. A couple of questions may arise; how about nationalism which seems to be the very nucleus of modern ideology? Is individualism so easily compatible with the search for collective identity that took the

place of individualism - particularly during the last two centuries? One wonders how it is possible to consider individualism as the axis of modern ideology when the individual in the twentieth century has been frequently sacrificed in the name of such collective bodies of history as a state, a nation, to say nothing about a number of messianic projects?

But Dumont easily destroys this illusion of the weakness of his theoretical construction. First, empirical evidence is a dubious argument against Dumont: the incisiveness of his analytical perspective as well as his attentiveness to historical fact may destroy any empirical counter-argument. In his theory, both the former and the latter correspond to each other almost perfectly. (The only sign of weakness in his theoretical design we will be discussing below is rather a certain arbitrariness in the collecting of the facts exemplifying his axial thesis.) Second, it should never be forgotten that Dumont may be criticized only by using the sociological discourse, not an ordinary one consisting mainly of accepted opinions and prejudices. The above inadequacy of these discourses to each other has been successfully demonstrated by Dumont in his *Essays on Individualism: Modern Ideology in Anthropological Perspective*. He notes:

Let us take an example to show the difference between ordinary discourse and the sociological discourse we have in mind. Without explanation, someone contrasts individualism to nationalism. He probably means that nationalism evokes a group sentiment that is generally contrasted to 'individualistic' sentiment. The basic sociological fact, however, is that *nation, in the precise modern sense of the term, and nationalism, as distinct from mere patriotism, are historically conjoined with individualism as a value. The nation is precisely the type of global society which corresponds to the paramountcy of the individual as value.* Not only does the one historically accompany the other, but the interdependence between them is clear, so that we may say that the nation is a global society composed of people who think of themselves as individuals [italics mine] [...].¹²

The so-called ordinary discourse seems not always to have been theory-free. It would be quite enough to recall that, for instance, Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* and *The Poverty of Historicism* have evoked enormously critical assessments of both holism and methodological essentialism (in Popper's view, responsible for the emergence of totalitarianism - at this point, Popper and Dumont seem to be absolute opposites, the two incompatible poles between whom a creative dialogue is hardly possible; Dumont's *Essays on Individualism* as well as his *Homo Aequalis, II: L'idéologie allemande* may be called *The Anti-Popper*.) Such terms as "historicism," "holism," "nominalism" have even entered the political dis-

course.¹³ This is why the uncovering of the real place of both holism and individualism in exercising power still remains to be achieved. Dumont might have been concerned with the complicated and many-sided interaction between theoretical discourse and ordinary one. Is the increasing of one's power the main link between them? As a matter of fact, Dumont's method, to the contrary of nominalism, would allow him to do this. The structural historian of ideas, for whom the realm of ideas appears as the autonomous reality, would be able to point out the relations between discourses, not only between ideas that vary from text to text, from discourse to discourse.

Nominalism, in fact, is just another name for individualism, or rather one of its facets. What we propose is to analyze it, but it refuses to be analyzed: in this sense there is no way out of the disagreement. Nominalism will know only John, Peter, and Paul. But John, Peter, and Paul are men only by virtue of the relations that exist between them. So, to go back to our own problem: in a given text, or in such-and-such an author, there are ideas linked by certain relations, and without these relations to obliterate the ideas will not exist. In every case the relations form a configuration, and these configurations vary from text to text, from author to author, from one milieu to another, but they do not vary as chalk does from cheese, and we can try to see what they have in common at each level of generalization.¹⁴

However, one of the crucial questions still remains unanswered: if nominalism, according to Dumont, is not able to explain or reflect itself, how about holism? Is it able to do so? We should keep in mind that any holistic construction may not be explained in depth, if separated from the experience of the theoretician himself. This experience always remains individual and unique. The history of consciousness is hardly able to write itself using individuals as subordinated, insignificant historic actors in accord and with some *Zeitgeist*. Such a Hegelian notion would be far away from Dumont's own vision of the history of consciousness.

In Dumont's view, methodology inevitably corresponds to ideology and vice versa. In my view, it implies the well-known phenomenological statement (in a different theoretical context it may well be identified as the existentialist stance) pointing out that behind even the most sophisticated rationality something irrational always stands. The Dumontian notion of modern ideology allows us to believe that the hidden relations between ideas, but not ideas themselves, are the very basis of the symbolic configuration of every ideology. It is not clear if such an implication would be acceptable to Dumont himself but it leads us to the working hypothesis that the search for hierarchical complementarity is the only way to reconcile even, one would

think, the contrasting, incompatible opposites, lurking in every ideological configuration, to each other.

The next implication I would like to demonstrate would be that of relationship between individualism and nationalism. As shown above, nationalism is considered by Dumont as merely the hypostasized individualism. Does it not mean that the most rigid and militant forms of nationalism usually are being exercised in those countries (to use Dumont's own terms, in those national variants of modern ideology, or in those subcultures of European culture) that have never experienced Western individualism in its primary, authentic shape?¹⁵ In other words, does it not mean that a phenomenon of historical tardiness (namely, in the East-Central European countries) is being left outside of Dumont's sight?¹⁶ An implication of the Dumontian notion of modern ideology would be of great significance in interpreting the above configurations that "vary from text to text, from author to author, from one milieu to another."

The weakness of the Dumontian concept of modern ideology paradoxically may be found at the same point where he is the strongest contemporary civilizational analyst - in his analytical language. It would be quite enough to replace one or two of Dumont's key terms to undermine the viability of his elegant and subtle construction.

Let us take an example to show the interdependence between Dumont's vision of the modern Western civilization and his terms employed to identify its basic ideological principle. The passage to be quoted may well be called the fundamental theoretical framework within which Dumont's studies of modern ideology are being organized.

[...] it is argued that we cannot in practice grasp an object that is as complex and vague as the configuration of ideas and values we are envisioning, that such a configuration does not really exist and is nothing but an arbitrary construct of the mind. Just as there is really no such thing as a people's mind, or spirit, it will be said, so there can be no such things as a common configuration of ideas and values beyond all the differences between individuals, social milieux, epochs, schools of thought, different languages, and distinct national cultures. Experience, however, teaches us to the contrary, since on the one hand there has been and there is historical continuity and intercommunication, and on the other - as Mauss and especially Karl Polanyi have ascertained - *modern civilization differs radically from other civilizations and cultures. The truth is that our culture is permeated by nominalism, which grants real existence only to individuals and not to relations, to elements and not to sets of elements.* [italics mine].¹⁷

One wonders how (and, as Foucault would say, for what purposes) Dumont did manage without the concept of freedom in identifying the basic

ideological principle of modern civilization. It is not hard to take a guess that he would identify freedom as merely an aspect of both individualism and equality. Freedom, however, unavoidably implies relations between individuals, not only a recognition of completely atomized individuals. I am free insofar as I recognize the other's freedom - this classical liberal notion of freedom obviously implies not only the principle of equality but also the principle of one's responsibility to preserve freedom as a common value. Nothing but freedom is able to associate individuals into communities and then make a society coherent and therefore possible.

Freedom may not be reduced only to its external, i.e. social, representations. It undoubtedly has its internal, i.e. metaphysical, dimension without which it would be impossible to explain either how human consciousness enters the transcendence, or the absolute dimension of the supreme being, or how human conscience (in the case of secular liberalism) reflects itself in taking responsibility for one's individual stance in the ensemble of social relations.

It seems to me that it would not be necessary to insist upon the religious origin of individualism (that throughout the Christian history of the West it has been transformed from the ideology of an outwardly individual into that of an inwardly individual). Since it seems to be a *conditio sine qua non* of Dumont's conception, it would be quite enough to recall the Christian notion of the individuality of both human sin and his/her responsibility that lie at the very basis of the Christian theology and ontology.

Does it mean that freedom and hierarchy completely deny each other and therefore are incompatible in principle? A presence of the beginnings of individualism - and respectively of freedom - in the Chinese and Japanese civilizations (traditionally based on the powerful legacy of hierarchy) does not allow us to be so quick in insisting upon the incompatibility of these basic ideological principles.¹⁸ A danger appears in trying to ignore or confuse sociocultural levels within which both principles are functioning. Dumont's "theoretical" and "practical" levels in hierarchical complementarity make such an implication quite possible.

As we have seen, there is no place for a fundamental concept of freedom in the realm of Dumont's holistic thinking. Our question - how is it possible to detach the problem of freedom from that of individualism and equality? - deserves to be considered in a separate study on this issue. It is obvious that a structural historian of ideas should not be outside of the crucial philosophical questions. I guess that Dumont's response would be as follows: "[...] the sociologist would tend to give prominence to religion as against philosophy, because religion encompasses the whole of society and relates immediately to action. Max Weber did this."¹⁹

Does it mean that sociology - at least, in both the Durkheimian and the Dumontian sense - is being left outside of freedom as an ontological nucleus of the human being-in-the-world? I do not think so. The point perhaps is that Dumont's conceptual arrangement seems to exist as long as it is designed by a specifically Dumontian set of concepts and terms; by employing even one element of analytical discourse alien to that of Dumont his elegant and sophisticated theoretical construction would be demolished as a house of cards. *Its strength springs up from the closed analytical discourse.* From this point of view, a Dumontian holism should be defined as holism *sensu stricto*.

As shown above, the will-to-transcendence conceived as the metaphysical basis of freedom remains a concept without content without taking freedom as an immanent quality of creative mind. "There is no doubt about the fundamental conception of man that flowed from the teaching of Christ: as Troeltsch said, man is an *individual-in-relation-to-God*: for our purposes this means that man is in essence an outworldly individual."²⁰ Later Dumont explicates Troeltsch's presupposition:

The subject matter is familiar, and I shall only isolate schematically a few critical features. It follows from Christ's and then Paul's teaching that the Christian is an "individual-in-relation-to-God." There is, Troeltsch says, "absolute individualism and absolute universalism" in relation to God. The individual soul receives eternal value from its filial relationship to God, in which relationship is also grounded human fellowship: Christians meet in Christ, whose members they are. This tremendous affirmation takes place *in a level that transcends the world of man and of social institutions, although these are also from God.* The infinite worth of the individual is at the same time the disparagement, the negation in terms of value, of the world as it is: a dualism is posited, a tension is established that is constitutive of Christianity and will endure throughout history [italics mine].²¹

One of the most interesting distinctions Dumont offers is that between philosophical individualism and religious one. "It is commonly admitted that the transition in philosophical thought from Plato [alas, we cannot find any word of Dumont's assessment of Plato's model of hierarchy based on the combination of elements extracted from the ancient Egyptian and Spartan social order, as it is depicted in Plato's *Republic*] and Aristotle to the new schools of the Hellenistic period shows a discontinuity, a great gap - the surge of individualism [...]. Self-sufficiency, which Plato and Aristotle regarded as an attribute of the *polis*, becomes an attribute of the individual [...] that is either assumed as a fact or posited as an ideal by Epicureans, Cynics, and Stoics."²²

To the contrary of Toynbee for whom the withdrawal-and-return as an exceptional existential rhythm of creative minorities seemed to be applicable to every civilization, Dumont finds the Stoic quite different from the Indian renouncer of the world. We may see that even if the former "has returned to the world in a manner foreign to the Indian renouncer, it represents for him only a secondary accommodation while at bottom he still defines himself as a stranger to the world."²³

How can we understand the genesis of this philosophical individualism? Individualism is so taken for granted that in this instance it is commonly seen without more ado as a consequence of the ruin of the Greek *polis* and of the unification of the world - Greeks and foreigners of barbarians confounded - under Alexander. Now this tremendous historical event can explain many traits, but not, to me at least, the emergence of the individual as a value, as a creation *ex nihilo*. We should look first of all to philosophy itself. Not only have Hellenistic teachers occasionally lifted out of the Presocratics elements for their own use, not only are they heirs to the Sophists and other currents of thought that appear to us as submerged in the classical period, *but philosophical activity, the sustained exercise of rational inquiry carried out by generations of thinkers, must by itself have fostered individualism, because reason, universal in principle, is in practice at work through the particular person who exercises it, and takes precedence, at least implicitly, over everything else* [italics mine].²⁴

Dumont's presuppositions thus would lead us to an implication that philosophy as such is a sign of modernity and therefore may not be considered as a typical case in the development of humanity. It in turn encourages us to accept an even more radical implication of the Dumontian notion of modern ideology: the emancipation of individual consciousness conceived by him as the rise of individualism is but a chronological limits-free, universal tendency of both human consciousness and his/her being-in-the-world. This is why modernity as a phenomenon *sui generis* may hardly be locked up only within the modern West. Dumont's method seems to be sufficiently flexible to employ it in studies of the rise of modernity both in various historical epochs and in diverse civilizational contexts.

As the Dumontian notion of modern ideology manifests itself as a mirror of his analytical discourse (as noted above, for Dumont, methodology and ideology are complementary phenomena rather than incompatible opposites), his choosing of themes for analytical articulation is not ideology-free.²⁵ It seems to be the main reason why Dumont consciously remains outside of the realm of Western utopian thought. It is not difficult to observe how far Dumont is from the Christian idea of "changing the world."

According to him, "in a comparative perspective the idea of 'changing the world' looks so absurd that we come to realize that it could appear only in a civilization which had for long implacably maintained the absolute distinction between the life promised to man and the one he actually lives. This modern folly has its roots in what has been called the absurdity of the cross."²⁶

In other words, Dumont arose as a very special Dumontian case. Both his notion of ideology and criticism of modernity reflect an awareness by a contemporary theoretician of threats and dangers that sprang from an enormous increase of power as well as from an exercising of power for power's sake. As a causal explanation seems to be hopelessly inadequate to understanding what happened in the history of the modern world, an ideographic consideration remains the only way for uncovering the inner, hidden logic of history. "As for us, let us leave aside all considerations of cause and effect and consider only configurations of ideas and values, ideological networks, to try and reach the basic relations on which they are built."²⁷

Dumont's notion of ideology is double-sided: his notion remains paradoxically close to the Marxian by stressing the social relativity of any ideology (there cannot be any dichotomy of truth and value); on the other side, it arises as a specifically Dumontian (with some neo-Kantian methodological implications) phenomenon by stressing the uniqueness and individuality of every subculture or national variant. The latter is to be discussed next.

(Part 2 of this article will appear in a 1995 issue of the journal).

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NOTES

1. See Owen M. Lynch, "Method and Theory in the Sociology of Louis Dumont: A Reply," in Kenneth David, ed., *On New Wind: Changing Identities in South Asia* (The Hague: Mouton, 1977); Steve Barnett, Lina Fruzzetti, Akos Ostor, "Hierarchy Purified: Notes on Dumont and His Critics," in *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.35, No.4 (August 1976); Vincent Descombes, "Pour elle un Francais doit mourir," in *Français critique*, 366 (November 1977).

2. Vytautas Kavolis, "Civilizational Paradigms in Current Sociology: Dumont vs. Eisenstadt," in *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, Vol. 7 (1986), p. 126.

3. *Ibidem*.

4. In modern philosophy, a critique of holism seems to have been exercised as the hidden form of criticism directed toward the so-called radical historicism (identified, as a rule, with Hegelism and Marxism). On this issue, see Karl Raimund Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).

It is interesting to note that Popper takes Marxism as the paradigmatical instance of holism (or of essentialism), while Dumont following Pribram's definition has come to see Marxism as merely a *pseudo-holism* (in Pribram's own terms, a *pseudo-universalism*). See Louis Dumont, *Essays on Individualism: Modern Ideology in*

Anthropological Perspective (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press), p. 156.

5. Kavolis, "Civilizational Paradigms," *op. cit.*, p. 127

6. Louis Dumont, "A Modified View of Our Origins: The Christian Beginnings of Modern Individualism," *Religion*, 12 (1982), p. 7.

7. Louis Dumont, "Left versus Right in French Political Ideology: A Comparative Approach," in John A. Hall and I.C. Jannie, eds., *Transition to Modernity: Essays on Power, Wealth and Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 259.

8. A number of the strict critics of ideology (identified, as a rule, with Communist ideology) from the East-Central European countries might have been enormously influenced by Popper's two pontifical works - those of *The Open Society and Its Enemies* and *The Poverty of Historicism*. In Lithuania, even the titles of Popper's books have recently been transformed into devices of the West-oriented intellectuals. Instead of critically studying and, consequently, conceptually criticizing both Hegelian and Marxian thought, they "gave notice to quit" permanently repeating Popper's statements - by the way, obviously simplified, - as if they were *magister dixit*-type formulae. By a great paradox, Popper seems to take the former place of Marx within the academic life of these countries.

9. In East-Central European countries, even the term of ideology is not favored. Moreover, it is dubiously being juxtaposed to that of *Weltanschauung*. The latter is taken, more or less, in a neutral sense, i.e. as the totality of world views, while the former is conceived as a repressive phenomenon of consciousness.

10. Louis Dumont, *From Mandeville to Marx: The Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 17.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

12. Dumont, *Essays on Individualism*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

13. The point probably is that these terms seem to lose their originally neutral theoretical meanings by employing them in a political discourse directed against Marxism (taken as a source of inexorable historic laws) and Communism. It is basically a problem of the post-Communist countries where the traditions of both critical social thought and sociology are extremely weak.

14. Dumont, *Essays on Individualism*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

15. My working hypothesis would be that the most rigid and militant forms of nationalism emerge as the sociocultural compensation of the absence of individualism in its primary and authentic shape rather than as hypostasized individualism. The idea of national independence and liberty, by a historical paradox, is being enormously valorized in those (sub)cultures where the idea of individual independence and freedom is neglected. The former may be perceived as nothing but an inversion of the latter.

16. Dumont, *Essays on Individualism*, *op. cit.*, p. 120, writes on Herder: "In German thought, Herder is at the origin of one of the two currents or lineages of thought, the more distinctly romantic one; but his thought also spills into and influences the other, more universalistic current. *Outside Germany he has deeply influenced the acculturation and nationalism of peoples later exposed to the full impact of modern values,*

especially the Slavic-speaking peoples of central and eastern Europe [italics mine]."

Instead of "acculturation," Dumont might have been concerned with what shape Herder's ideas have acquired after being accepted by those countries.

17. Dumont, *Essays on Individualism, op. cit.*, p. 11.

18. On the tradition of freedom and anarchy in Chinese civilization (particularly on the tradition of *tzu-yu*, i.e. "self-initiating"), see Wolfgang Bauer, *China and the Search for Happiness: Recurring Themes in Four Thousand Years of Chinese Cultural History* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), pp. 131-153.

19. Dumont, *Essays on Individualism, op. cit.*, p. 24.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 27

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30

22. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

24. *Ibidem.*

25. Dumont's critique of modernity as well as his critical emphasis on the enormous increasing of one's power (the latter being conceived of as the social effect of the dangerously released individualism and, consequently, of the neglect of hierarchy conceived of as the stabilizing framework and the basic principle for the whole society) perhaps springs up from the Catholic cultural-ideological background. His interpretation of the German Reformation might prove this hypothesis.

26. Dumont, *Essays on Individualism, op. cit.*, p. 30.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 24.