"The style of this opening is revealed by the fact that ecumenical relations took shape in dialogue. Dialogue, at least methodologically and temporarily, means the equality of the partners in the spirit of common revision of memory, shared responsibility and endeavour, which aims to overcome obstacles originated in divisions.

"In other words, dialogue restores time. This common intention aims at establishing the future together and making it speak; at the same time probing into the past of language, in favour of discernment and banishment of evil hidden in it.

"In the course of ecumenical dialogue, there is a new emphasis on participants themselves: dialogue implies the mutual recognition of the partners; therefore—at least partly—they give up the standpoint of exclusionary unity and self-defence. This was a characteristic of the Roman Catholic church in the subsequent period of the Council of Trent [i.e. after 1545-63].

"Finally, dialogue raises the question: who is speaking? On behalf of whom? Dialogue touches the essence of the ecclesiology of ecumenical partners—especially of the Roman Catholic church."

Forty years after the Second Vatican Council, in Central Europe where there are many hindrances coming from political and historical circumstances, Roman Catholics should apply the ecumenical results of this Council.

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Religious Neoromanticism

as Substrate for Monocultures

Religious neoromanticism is characterised by mistrust towards the present moment. It fears the "temporary, escaping, accidental" (Charles Baudelaire) and drowns in fantasies of the future, legends of the past, and the security of dream-worlds.

*It tends to mythologise the past and daydream about the future, often in exciting apocalyptic terms. To continue with Charles Baudelaire's terms—*flânerie* is considered by the neoromantic paradigm to be the only counter-alternative to neoromanticism.*

Escape from the Present Moment as Serum Against Immediacy

Flânerie and its sacralisation of the escaping molecules of time is a powerful referential tool, from which neoromanticism draws its negative identity. It perceives the reckless *sans-souci* mentality of *flânerie* as the embodiment of levity par excellence and attempts to counter it with its serious, rigid and romantic life-attitude.

Religious neoromanticism sees its raison d'être in pointing out to believers the danger of living in immediacy. It recognizes the thinness of the veneer of immediacy and draws the conclusion that the arbitrary and unpredictable nature of the present moment requires sound defense mechanisms.

The believer is therefore called to become rooted in the events of the past in order to be prepared for the events to come, which implicitly means becoming rooted in a specific blend of a retrograde-eschatological mentality.

The timeless aspirations of a human individual are not meant to come into direct touch with immediate reality, but rather to approach it armed with a system of mystifications that induces a specific vision of the world and uses a characteristic language.

Mystifications

Religious neoromanticism feeds on strength-infusing mystifications. Mystification in this case is a systematic usage of a filter or prism that helps to interpret reality in a way that fits a certain logic and infuses the chosen identity with strength.

Such a prism becomes a pattern of interpretation and communication and helps to create an ideological tradition that twists historical reality in a desired way. Self-deception of this kind requires a certain degree of ignorance and naïveté that are acclaimed as virtues and important defense mechanisms against evil that enters the human via the critical mind.

Neoromantic religious mystifications are directed at the masses, but as a rule are fabricated and codified by individuals who are in a certain sense detached from the crowd; although every single individual is responsible for her or his own lack of 'courage to know,' as Immanuel KANT pointed out in his essay *Was ist Aufklärung?*.

This lack is largely contextually conditioned and constitutes the field where mystifications are sown. They are sown by the chief bearers of the neoromantic paradigm, whose characteristics will be sketched out later.

For the purpose of this study it is sufficient to outline just a few of the most common mystifications occurring on the agenda of religious neoromanticism in order to enable the reader to find a reference in her or his own experience.

Historiographic Mystifications

In the neoromantic vision there appear to be glorious and dark periods in the history of humankind—and more specifically, in the history of Christianity. It shall be noted right at the beginning that drawing a map of the mutual interdependence of historical realities is seen in neoromantic logic as an attempt to make history confusing and untransparent.

Normally the period of early Christianity is idealised, as are

periods of Christianisation, significant mission activity or spiritual (eg. mystic, pietist and illuminist) revival. Also the period of the constitution of a concrete neoromantic identity receives the stamp of an enlightened age.

In *Roman Catholic* neoromanticism, the foundation of great religious orders and the spread of monastic institutions are considered a return to early Christian ideals and a period of general revival of piety.

In more extreme cases, the same category is applied to periods of the reign of "Roman Catholic" monarchs that tended towards a mono-denominational constitution of the states they headed.

Also hierocracies (e.g. the Jesuit rule in Paraguay) can appear as examples of historical periods where the purity of faith was safeguarded even by public institutions. Periods of consolidated papal power are contrasted to periods in which the papacy suffered under restrictions imposed by the rulers of this world.

It is obvious that *Protestant* neoromaticism poeticises the sixteenth century, the consolidation of Protestant state churches, as well as those pre-Reformation periods in which "heretics" fought for their right of self-determination against the authoritarianism of the corrupt Roman church.

Authors like Gottfried ARNOLD or Carl ULLMANN found precursors of the Reformation in the period of the dark Middle Ages in the German mystics (e.g. Meister ECKHART and Johannes TAULER), and saw on the basis of the witness of Martin LUTHER and Philip MELANCHTHON in these preachers an alternative to "useless" scholastic speculation.

For an *Orthodox* neoromantic mind, the glorious period might be the time of the great Councils held in the East and the pre-Islamic flourishing of spirituality and theology in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Needless to say, such reglemented memories are an optimal way of eluding self-criticism and forgetting the historical faux-pas of one's own tradition.

Geographic Mystifications

Geographic mystifications work both locally and globally. The Christianised part of the globe can be understood as chosen by God as the epicentre of civilization, sound doctrine and erudition.

At the same time, the rest of the world can appear as a vast mission area governed by beliefs of inferior quality and a significantly lesser condensation of truth. Also, Europe is divided according to the prevailing denomination of the countries in the map of the neoromantic mind.

The map of the world appears to a neoromantic eye as one with sacred and profane places. *Cities* like Rome, Jerusalem or Constantinople are caught in a net of stereotypes, and their history and development is viewed in a manner that emphasizes or omits their realities in conformity with the accepted ideology. They are linked to a specific literary heritage that creates a place for them in a given identity in a strictly polarised way.

Sites of pilgrimage also have their place on the neoromantic map. They are the places of apparitions, wonders and conversions, adorned with legends. The ongoing continuity of wonders is not doubted and it is advised to become a *homo peregrinus*.

It is not, however, advised to become a *homo viator*. The religious travel map of a neoromantic Christian is not to be confused with the map of a spiritual traveller. The list of sites to be visited for religious purposes is part of tradition and cannot be modified on the basis of individual piety.

A neoromantic Roman Catholic is encouraged to journey to Lourdes or Rome, but not to the place of martyrium of Dietrich BONHOEFFER or to Optina Pustyn. Similarly, a neoromantic Evangelical–Lutheran would be discouraged to make a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. Places of spiritual renewal of other traditions carry the potential for ideological infiltration.

Local geography follows the same reasoning in segregating the sacred from the profane. Meister ECKHART's idea that if a person does not have God outside the Church, she or he does not have God inside the Church either, is neutralised by a firm belief in the lack of theophany in the profanum.

Biographic Mystifications

Biographic mystifications are based on the recurrent game of emphasizing the timeless and playing down the timely in human life. Valued figures are presented as persons living all their life according to an unchanging set of principles.

Their closeness to God is also manifested through slightly relativised divine attributes in human form. Discipleship is, as a rule, interpreted in outer conformity with Jesus Christ's lifestyle and the maximum number of conversions in a saint's life equals one.

The errors and shortcomings linked to human behaviour in the present moment are deleted from the biographies of spiritual and doctrinal aristocrats. All misogyny, anti-Semitism, opposition to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception or support of a wrong patriarch are omitted from the tradition that shall with time acquire the aura of timelessness.

The anxiety of martyrs, weak sides of saints, errors of the teachers of the Church, or the greed of reformers, are phenomena intrinsically connected to the unpredictability of the present moment and thus worthy of oblivion.

The depiction of the work of God in memorable people's lives tends to be devoid of all processuality and resembles rather the act of a *deus ex machina*, thus observing a strict division between *kairos* and *chronos*.

It is also very symptomatic that the authorship of saints, of teachers of the Church, or of popular preachers, becomes gradually enlarged with a considerable number of apocrypha that carry their name.

Already in the early Church, anonymous works aspired to the authority of the Apostles. The corpus of the works of mystical authors (e.g. Johannes TAULER) at times grew so much that in modern times whole generations of researchers had to invest their energy into the deconstruction of the legend-like haze surrounding the author.

Obligatory quotation of the authorities of doctrine is a mark of the reglementation of intellectual production. This serves to satisfy the neoromantic eye that is frequently contented with the visual appearance of a text, whose orthodoxy is assured by the mentioning of approved authorities.

Authors whose production was put in the 'Index of forbidden books' often found their way into religious literature through the useful instrument of *citatio tacita*, evading the neoromantic eye by being hidden among quotes from recognised authors.

Mystifications as Origin of Language Games

It is obvious even from the limited number of examples given above that mystifications involve language games. These usually rely on two basic techniques: omitting and over-emphasizing, both of which have different forms.

Omissions as a rule either conceal objectively negative phenomena and failures of one's own tradition, or silence voices that oppose the leading programme of the given paradigm at a given point of time. Both active and passive omission deep inside require a belief that partial truths made latent have a limited life.

At a popular level, *over-emphasis* may take the form of a sweetened or inadequately pompous depiction; at a more sophisticated level it is usually expressed in a fixed logic of "consistent" terms and concepts. These partake in a comfortable untouchability and call for a particular piety that is considered indispensable.

An important institution of neoromantic language games is the institution of *timeless truths*. These are the most basic part of the agenda and their number tends to grow with time. As a rule, no difference is seen between the proposition itself and its potential interpretations. They are considered one and the same thing. The origin of dogmas and their evolution is normally seen in a bipolar way, where only the result is worth remembering.

It is obvious that religious neoromanticism tends more towards *kataphatic* than apophatic language. In fact, a large portion of the authors on the 'index of forbidden books' of a given tradition would be those using apophatic ways of expressing religious reality.

Neoromanticism, which is inseparably connected to the masses, lives in fear that apophatic language would dim doctrine for the ordinary believer and corrupt the image of God in the human mind by using paradoxes and riddles (e.g. *negatio negationis*).

Similarly, other question-opening ways of expressing religious reality (e.g. irony or humour) must be considered profane and thus unfitting. Even partial usage of doubt for discernment purposes is interpreted as an unequivocal path towards total doubt, where no more absolute truth exists and *de omnibus dubitandum est*.

Thus, essentially, religious neoromanticism has an inherent tendency to confine intellectual discourse to the realm of the profanum.

The Codifiers of Religious Neoromanticism

As it has been mentioned above, the main driving force of the neoromantic paradigm in religion is not the crowd. The crowd is one of the bearers of the paradigm, but it needs a *spiritus movens* to stick to a permanent identity and to avoid volatility.

This *spiritus movens* is as a rule an above-average sub-genial individual. In rare cases it is a genius. The main characteristics of this individual are her or his lack of a holistic view of life and a reduced capacity of integration of what happens in the present moment.

This individual is the master of mystification, the great story-teller, the old person of the tribe. At night by the fire she or he tells the stories of dragons and angels, the fire of hell and the shine of the celestial kingdom.

The bi-colour nature of the *dualistic* vision of life (day versus night) is a powerful tool of attracting the attention of the masses. But the acceptance of the division of realities into right and wrong can in more complex situations lead to depressiveness.

For this reason, romantic elements are needed to turn inner strife

into the battle of a saint against a dragon. But as the dragon loses much of its scariness when seen from close up in daylight, so do neoromantic legends when examined in their interconnectedness with the "profanum" of the present moment.

For this reason, the magician of the tribe has to ensure that this very moment (now) and this very place on Earth (here) are not interpreted as the 'suburb of Heaven' and the 'Paradise at hand' (Theologia Deutsch).

Equally, the human is not to perceive her- or himself as *in statu viæ*, but as an entity cut apart by the past and the future. If, namely, past and future happened to be integrated in the *hic et nunc*, dualism would lose much of its strength-infusing potential and the pillars of neoromantic logic would collapse.

Neoromantic Monocultures

The neoromantic world is a tribal world. In religion it is a world of religions-in-opposition. Religions compete against each other or are even in conflict with each other. The same goes for Christian denominations.

Even if the structure of mystifications in the competing traditions is similar, they are not perceived as generally related. Identical formulas infusing the elements of romanticism and legendarism can be used by several distinct traditions, but they are normally identified as exaggerated and critically addressed only in the 'other.'

Tribal masters of mystification are sacred figures and thus should not enter each other's cultic zone. Therefore they cannot meet and enter into genuine dialogue. The side-by-side existence of neoromantic tribes is reality that does not relate to a specific kind of identity.

But on the other hand, it should be stated here that Christianity is no exception to the rule. It does have the capacity to adopt a tribal character and disintegrate into a variety of herds in mutual rivalry.

It can become divided into monocultures that cultivate an ideology that prevents them from realising that their system of beliefs is based on mystifications of all possible kinds that have become codified as indispensable components of the deposit of faith.

We have chosen to call the principal element of this capacity to split *neoromanticism*, because the romantic emotional setting created through mystifications seems to be its chief source of energy.

We preferred the term *neoromantic* to *romantic*, because we do not here speak of a one-time historical phenomenon, but rather of a recurrent tendency that appears in an ever-renewed form whenever it is raised to life by a tribal legend-maker, who considers her- or himself an irreplaceable instrument of the will of a god, whose presence in time and space fluctuates like the price of oil in our days.

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