Mihai I. SPĂRIOSU, *Global Intelligence and Human Development: Towards an Ecology of Global Learning* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2004), 287 pp., ISBN 0-262-69316-X

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At the very beginning of his book, Mihai Spăriosu (Distinguished Research Professor and Academic Director at the Institute for European Studies at the University of Georgia) describes global intelligence by referring on various levels to globalization, but in a way concludes that it is a human problem, noting that "most thinkers agree that human problems have now become global, that is, highly complex, nonlinear, transdisciplinary, and transnational in nature." (p. 2) Having this in mind, one observes that Spăriosu describes globalization not just as a result of the Industrial or Technological Revolution (he argues, righteously, that the development of the World Wide Web has led to a global communication medium where individuals can easily generate, access or transmit information); he rather describes it as a complex system that incorporates diverse cultural, political, spiritual or economic issues because, he argues, there seems to exist "an awareness of our globe as a single place, as a great plurality of culturally diverse, yet interdependent localities." (p. 2) Here, Spăriosu proves he has a deep understanding of the central concept of his book, and does not resume to presenting globalization as a one facet problem.

The fact that this awareness envisages cultural diversity may be explained by the general political shift from authoritarian regimes to liberal democracies. However, the author delineates ideas from actions, noting that the latter seems the preferred form of government, at least as a political statement. Still, he does not

detail only this relaxed liberal approach, but also the far left-wing and right-wing one, which argue that the effects of globalization are catastrophic to national borders and identity, claiming that the global market paves the way to a global empire. What is definitely interesting and refreshing about Spăriosu's writing is his sense of complete detachment from any ideology or political thinking, which makes him capable of understanding, on the one hand, both the advantages and the disadvantages of various political or economic systems, and, on the other hand, which of their arguments are solid and which are just crude exaggerations that offer no alternative to the situations they criticize. Moreover, instead of blaming one group or another, the author tries to raise awareness by claiming that each individual is accountable for having allowed a radical paradigmatic shift to happen, if, in fact, will happen, thus empowering the population: "global awareness means understanding not only the interdependence of all localities within the global framework, but also the enhanced individual responsibilities that result from it." (p. 3)

On the issue of global vs. local in the academic field, once again, the author makes an extremely interesting point: he argues that global intelligence, in this sense, functions against general presuppositions, but most of all against the idea that the two are mutually exclusive. He gives the example of transdisciplinarity, and states that it easily proves that, in fact, global and local are mutually enriching, because global thinking does not ignore the fact that knowledge is 'local', both in terms of limits, and of its historicity. It comes as no surprise that he defines global intelligence as "the ability to understand, respond to, and work toward what is in the best interest of and will benefit all human beings and all other life on our planet." (p. 5) Indirectly, Spăriosu addresses some critical issues that humankind is facing, terrorism, nuclear or biological war, environmental destruction being just some of them, but his definition seems to resolve, at least in theory, all these problems: to say the least, none of them comes close to work in the best interest of humankind; therefore, we need to develop a global mindset that takes into consideration all the problems that threaten humankind, and engage in intercultural dialogue and cooperation.

Therefore, global intelligence also refers to a "completely different human mentality, based on peaceful cooperation, responsive understanding, and love of the other, instead of contest, conflict, and material self-interest." (p. 9) Later on, he

argues that, although a mentality shift, like the ones produce by Gautama Buddha, Pythagoras, Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples, Mahatma Ghandi or Martin Luther King seems unlikely to happen in the present circumstances, noting the "increases in violent conflict, civil disorder, lawlessness, environmental degradation, terrorism, nihilism, political cynicism and opportunism," (p. 31) precisely these violent and disruptive movements create the need for opposing, peaceful ones.

Global Intelligence and Human Development is divided into three parts, the first one ("Cultural Theories and Practices of Globalization in Social Sciences") being concerned with social sciences and the manner in which its Western theories of globalization pretend to be universal approaches. Taking the intercultural world as the core principle, Spăriosu makes the point that such approaches are rather counterproductive, and he makes a distinction between globality (which he defines as "an infinitely layered network of variously interconnected and interactive actual and possible worlds or localities", p. 16) and globalism (which, in his view, can be seen as "the proper or improper expression of the aspiration toward globality", p. 16). Moreover, he argues for the rethinking of most important issues related to globalization, such as the interrelation between the global and the local or cultural identity and difference. Having said that, what he really suggests is that we undermine the improper ideas in social sciences, and focus on intercultural comparative analysis. In return, this can ensure the appearance of proper ideas. For instance, this non-universalism approach can redirect our attention to ignored issues, such as cultural "hybrids, borders, diasporas, and incommensurable sites spanning institutions, domiciles, towns, cities, and now even cyberspace," (p. 60) proposed by cultural anthropologists Steven Marcus and Michael Fisher, in their *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (2000).

Spăriosu himself criticizes some of these improper ideas: for instance, in the next part, when talking about E.O. Wilson's appeal to Western societies to cease to support what is, in his terms, an 'exemptionalist' attitude regarding the environment, Spăriosu does not hesitate to underline the fact that Wilson's "absolutist view of Western reductive science is such an exemptionalist attitude." (p. 85) Moreover, he criticizes other contemporary attitudes in social sciences, such as utilitarianism or reductionism, on which the works of some of the most influential Western thinkers in the field in based on. Later, making sure he does not repeat the mistakes he had previously criticized, Spăriosu offers an alternative to all

these improper ideas, "defined not as lack of war, but as a state of mind and mode of behavior in which power ceases to be the organizing principle." (p. 69)

The second part (**An Intercultural Ecology of Science**) works primarily with the concepts developed in the previous part, but focuses them on natural sciences, "where they are equally operative, at both the theoretical and the practical level." (p. 17) Reductionism also plays here an important role, having made some theories ("the sociobiological version of Darwinian evolutionary theory in the contemporary life sciences and of the «theory of everything» in elementary particle physics," p. 18) turn to a totalitarian type of interdisciplinarity and interculturalism. Then, in the second chapter of this part, Spăriosu turns to a different field of study, and analyzes the relationship between material and spiritual approaches. He focuses on Buddhist, Taoist and Sufi views, trying to find an alternative that has nothing to do with the will to power. Here, the author appeals to ecology, to recognize an ecology of science, and an ecology of ecology that have the capacity of guiding us toward resonance with the natural world. For him, the notion of resonance differs from mimesis, which he sees as a "a form of conflictive or violent resonance." (p. 135) Or, in other words, resonance leads to "amplifying feedback loops," while mimesis, understood as mimicry or imitation, to "amplifying destructive loops." Based on Janine M. Benyus' concept of biomimicry, the author argues that ecologists try to apply to human ecology the concept of mimesis, but once again in relation to nature. At the same time, he does not ignore the nonlinear scientific models, such as those "developed by general systems theory and applied in chaos and complexity theory, as well as in the environmental sciences in the West.' (p. 18) But by far the most interesting aspect of this part is Spăriosu's attempt to unite all sciences under the human sciences label, and his argument is solid:

> "All sciences are human sciences because human beings produce them. Consequently, all branches of science, whether we call them natural, animal, or human, should serve the same purpose, that is, human development." (p. 143)

The last part of the book (**Global Learning and Human Development**) deals, as the title suggests, with global and local-global learning environments. Here, Spăriosu focuses on academies "that train our scientists and other members

of the world elites entrusted with directing human affairs," (p. 19) because these are the institutions that can influence the elites to reorient toward global intelligence. After offering a brief history of the current circumstance of Western academia, particularly in North American and Europe, the author proposes

> "the development and implementation of a university model designed to foster the kind of local-global learning environments and intercultural, intellectual climate that are needed for sustainable human development in the next few decades." (p. 19)

He argues that this is an urgent matter because in the past two decades, the university has seen radical changes that could only escalate more if nothing is done in this direction.

Spăriosu sees a big impediment that needs to be dealt with, what he calls "conflictive impulses or forces": on the one hand, the "aristocratic" or "elitist" (organizing the Western university as a "citadel of knowledge"), and, on the other, the "democratic" or "popular" (structuring the academia as a "factory of knowledge"). As an alternative, he makes the case for a local-global learning environment, "understood as liminal spaces for intercultural research, dialogue, and cooperation," (p. 184) as opposed to the competitive nature of contemporary Western academia. Moreover, the author argues that the risk of not doing anything may contribute to the universities transformation into service industries, as, according to him, it is already the case for most of the universities in the United States.

Spăriosu's tone throughout the book is a serious and pragmatic one, staying away from any temptation to overstate or understate an idea for the sake of making a point. Quite the contrary, he always tries to see all the possible facets of a problem, and, from this perspective, to derive the best possible conclusion. Although he talks primarily about contemporary issues, the author always has an eye for crucial moments in history, which makes his arguments even more valid or compelling. *Global Intelligence and Human Development* is as actual today as it was in 2004, when it was published, and I believe it will continue to be, maybe even more now in the face of the vertiginous rise of religious or political radicalism.