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REPUBLIC:**

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Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I am happy to be in Helsinki again. I was in this room exactly a year ago at a conference, which was dedicated to European financial and economic crisis. Now I am here again at the conference, which is dedicated to the conscience of Europe. And I think these two issues are actually linked because last time I talked about the lack of brotherhood in Europe, which is somehow linked with the idea of conscience, so even though the topics seem to be quite different, for me they are still similar.

However the conference of today is a bit more focused because we have an important intellectual contribution here by **Veijo Baltzar**, which we are expected to comment and to react on. And even though I did not have opportunity to listen to his keynote speech today, I had the opportunity to read his book, **Towards Experiential Philosophy**. I was very impressed by the book and as one of the key ideas of the book I saw the link he makes between education and social reform. And this is something that actually resonates quite deeply in Czech hearts and minds.

I come from Prague from Czech Republic and one of the most important thinkers in the Czech intellectual tradition and the Czech history is **Jan Amos Komenský** – we call him by the Latinised name Komenius. Komenius had a very similar agenda as Veijo Baltzar because he also believed that we can achieve social reform through education. And both him and Baltzar have similar souls: they fight against mindless memorising at schools and against the reality of the academic life. And there is another link between them: whereas Veijo Baltzar labels himself in his book as a wondering gypsy, Komenius himself was a wondering priest, because he kept wondering all his lifetime never having actually a single place of his home. Both of them were/are actually wondering intellectuals.

I was actually a bit concerned when I found out who are the main targets of Baltzar's critique because these are three groups: academics, bureaucrats and politicians. Until a few weeks ago I used to be an academic, now I am a bureaucrat. So I have at least a warning sight that I should never become a politician because then I would incorporate all the three evils in one person. But I have to admit that a gist or the main spirit of this critique is right, because it lacks creativity. Baltzar actually shows how these groups or not these people but the institutions, in which they are set, discourage creative thinking and one of the reasons I left the academic life was actually the lack of creativity which I missed there. So, in this respect I have no quarrel with the main theses.

I appreciate that for Veijo Baltzar the education is an interactive process, it is a process of a dialogue. Dialogue is stressed. And that is why I also considered my intervention today, which is not really a long speech but an intervention, as a dialogue with some of the ideas and concepts which I found in his book, and which I find particularly interesting. So this is my own attempt at interaction.

I appreciate or I find it so provoking what he writes about human rights and multiculturalism because he challenges the Western liberal concept of human rights by pointing to its narrow-mindedness. That is actually quite important for us. It is important for the Czech foreign policy, because I am Czech foreign policy bureaucrat. It is part of the Czech foreign policy, or human rights are part of the Czech foreign policy. And the new government believes that we should keep this tradition and it is important. But we should perhaps frame it a bit differently from the past. And what Baltzar writes about human rights can be inspiring to some extent.

I find interesting the way he speaks about the freedom of speech because the **freedom of speech** is something that is basically uncontested. Everybody would agree that this is very important, that this is one of those rights who are the least contested. Because any human right can be contested, viewed from different perspective but freedom of speech seems to be the basic right. But it is very important actually to point to the fact as Veijo Baltzar does, that freedom of speech in current western society can often be used to enhance the position of those who are already privileged. Because to really make full use of freedom of speech you have to have all of these important skills and equipment, which is part of the elite. And if you are not part of the elite, you will not be actually able to use your right to speech properly.

So actually it is very important that when we talk about these rights and even those rights, which seem to be obvious and uncontested, we have to see actually also the riverside; that the focus of these rights can actually lead to discrimination even when we would not expect it. Veijo Baltzar also challenges the fight in some European countries against the veil, the idea that Muslim women should be unveiled. And he points to the fact that we also need to take into account the tradition, dignity and respect. And I think it is very important that the key words, when we talk about human rights, are actually the words of empathy and respect. Because when we talk about human rights we usually forget about these things. We have the list of freedoms and we forget about empathy and respect. And when we try to promote human rights without empathy and respect to others, we actually may make things even worse they were before.

One of the things which can be brought about, provoked by the lack of empathy and respect, is the *inferiority complex*. Inferiority complex is like a disease, it is something, which makes minorities weaker, depriving them of their ability to act on the one hand, and driving them to extreme position on the other hand. And I have to say that for me this is quite interesting, if I look at the problem of inferiority complex from the international political perspective because in international politics we have many examples of an inferiority complex turned into aggressive, dangerous and as a threat to the mankind.

The most often sighted example is inferiority complex of some young Muslims, which have joined al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. Their main driving point is actually the inferiority complex, which they feel towards the West. I think we need to be aware of this. This does not mean that we should apologise them. No. The people who want to kill us need to be fought against. But if we want really to eradicate this evil we have to be aware of the social conditions in which this evil came into being. And inferiority complex of these people, which is to some extent also caused by the acts of the West, is something, which is the true root. And if we want to address the issue of their radicalism or their terrorism

properly we need to be aware of the inferiority complex. And we need to be aware of these factors causing these things and we have to try to stop that.

Another example, which is actually quite topical today, is Russia and Ukraine because we should never underestimate the inferiority complex, which Russia suffered after the loss of the empire, after 1989 and 1990. Again, I am not here to give any apology for Russian aggression against Ukraine because it is an aggression. On the other hand, we have to take into account the mental development, which Russians went through in this very painful period of the 1990s, when actually all things they took for granted fell down, grumbled down and they were exposed to the savage capitalism and pretended democracy, not real democracy but something which looked like a democracy. And this sense of humiliation, which was very deep now actually gives a political legitimacy, internal domestic political legitimacy, to the aggressive actions of Russia abroad. It is a very sorry state but we have to be aware of the complexity of these mechanisms.

So, the feeling of the humiliation is something, which is the most dangerous thing we face in society and international politics. I would like to dissent a bit from one of the arguments Veijo Baltzar makes and this dissent may be actually caused by the fact that I did not read it properly but it seems to me that he underestimates the important contribution of hybrid identities, the identities which are somehow mixed or crossed. In his book, Baltzar talks about hybrid identities in the way which is a bit belittling or disparaging like speaking about *cocoanuts* people, which are black outside and white inside or *yogurt-coated raisins* where it is the other way around: they are white outside but black inside.

I have actually some understanding for Baltzar's critique of this kind of political actions because these people often abuse, manipulate their own positions. But on the other hand, for a true multicultural society we need actually hybrid identities. And it would be probably wrong to insist on clear identities, which are only black or only white. The society which is cohesive and where we will not face too much of humiliation, too much of inferiority will be, in my opinion, a society where we will have a lot of hybrid identities and these hybrid identities will foster and reinforce each other.

But otherwise I would like to stress again that if we want to understand modern societies and international politics - which is not the primary focus of Veijo Baltzar's work, but as I said, it is still applicable - we have to pay much more intention to **empathy, respect** and **inferiority complexes** because these are the things, which need to be taken care of, which need to be understood. If we want to create a society which is more equal, more just.

Thank you for your attention.