THE DISTINCTIVE ELEMENTS OF THE OTHER

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Abstract: The balance between surreal and real mental space has not yet been discovered in the cognitive sciences. It is definitely time for us to get used to the idea that mental space is not something impossible, unreal, but a different kind of reality. Moreover, the interdependance between the mind and the physical world cannot be dismissed as both phisics and philosophy have demonstrated that one cannot exist without the other.

Keywords: interdisciplinary approach, identity, reality, virtual.

The identity is the one that reunites all the major features which a person can comprise while the alterity sums up all the distinctive elements of the Other. A series of authors consider the identity as a ontological concept but there are theories that stat the fact that alterity and identity represent two notions which are subjected to the continuous change. The analysis of the two concepts requires a interdisciplinary approach which starts from the nature and the functional aspect of these two, from the idea of evolving structures, highly dependent on the historical factor and of course on the mentality of a specific group of a particular epoch.[1]

Identity and alterity are related to a series of factors such as: family, religion, class, gender, region, age, nationality and so on. The toughest factor to measure is the role of these factors in the evolution of the two terms. The sociologist Manuel Castells underlines the significance of the communication and the interaction between individuals and the limits raised by the previous mentioned factors.[2] Castells puts forward a typology of the identity, which makes a clear distinction between the legitimation identity, the identity as a strength form and the identity as a form of change. The last one redefines the position needed by the individual in a group and simultaneously the one changing the social structures.[3] We can state that identity and alterity are a necessity for a human, while a person needs to be individualized

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[1]*The identity and the alterity are concepts that have their own past. These had different meaning through history and have generated history by the way they gave meaning to different objects. When referring to the imperialist expansion, identity and alterity are defined firstly in terms of race and ethnicity. When referring to the threat opposed to other territories and the change of governmental systems, they are defined as nationality [...] In other words, identity and alterity belong to a series of concretely situations [...] The simple fact that these concepts have their own past has underlined that they are more of a constructions type than ontological categories.* (Emst van Alphen, The Other Within, in Raymond Corbey, Joep Leerssen (eds.), op. cit., p. 1).

[2]*Identity must be dissociated from what the sociologists call roles [...] such as worker, mother, neighbor, smoker, member of a union, which are defined by structural rules and social organizations. The influence on the behavior of an individual is relative and it depends on negotiations and arrangements both between individuals and also between individuals and organizations.* (Castells, Manuel, The Informational Age: Economy, Society and Culture, vol. II: The Power of Identity, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 2004, pp. 6-7).

[3]*The identity is built according to the historical conditions, geographic, biologic, production factors, institutions, collective memory and individual fantasies, power and religions. Despite these facts, an individual, a social group and the society as a whole processes these conditions, reorders them in a way that is socially determined and also cultural defined by the roots in the social structures.* (*Ibidem*, p. 7.)

from the others and also wants to assign attributes to the ones around him, sketching up a sort of distance between the self and the non-self. Identity and alterity accompany the process of replaying the entire world and the steps of conjuring the image, pointing out only the need for individuality, without comprising the content at the representation level.

From the social point of view, identity depends both on the familial background and also on the group in which the person lives, this explains why the self is a construction which grows influenced by a series of social landmarks, from which he gets the common features in order to integrate with the others, but it is also the point of the genesis of his individual characteristics. It is highly interesting that the last elements have their roots in the group, which defines the social classes, the factors that determine the inclusion or the alienation which give meaning to different features which form the identity. In the absence of the group, identity would not make sense as this implies a particularization in comparison with the other, or in the absence of this, the differentiation process and the personal features would not have the role to individualize the person's life, with all that this implies.

The first step of the differentiation takes place inside the self, expanding to the differentiation towards the other. It is the step when the self-consciousness "starts to behave towards himself in a manner close to the one it acts towards the others" [4], developing a reflex behavior which represents the fundament of the self. According to George Mead, the self is summoned at the mental level through the interaction between the environment and him, when he has to face the challenges[5]. Apart from the self-consciousness, identity is an empty concept, without any meaning or signification which cannot be materialized without some interactions focused on identification and differentiation. The self is a construction which takes place by various interactions and relationships, it is a process of gaining the meaning and assigning significance to the self and also to the others.

Studies carried by Jean Piaget emphasize the manner in which the identity creates itself, starting from the freeing of the self-esteem and the first forms of the self-conscience[6]. In order for this to happen, the parents or the others surrounding the child are the ones who influence the identity gaining process as the child expresses the imitation ability and the need to adapt to the group. However, Piaget pints out the importance of the assimilation, accommodation process and the imitation in the building identity, underlining the fact that a child makes a transition from the submission state towards the group to the autonomy state[7].

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[4] George J. McCall, J. L. Simmons, Identities and interactions, New York, Free Press, 1978, p. 52.

[5] Mead, George, H. Mind, Self and Society, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1934.

[6]*We can talk about an absolute egocentrism to designate this phenomena without self-conscience because the subject does not know the moving settings which he perceives towards his basic activity. At the other end, in the moment of a fully developed sensorimotor intelligence to the point when the knowledge becomes possible in the reflexive language and intelligence, the universe is structured spatially, causatively and temporally.This arrangement of the reality is done by   [...] as long as the self-frees itself unveiling itself and positions itself among the other things.* (Piaget, Jean, Construirea realului la copil, traducere de Dan Răuţu, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, Bucureşti, 1975, pp. 4-5).

[7] It is easy to notice the assimilation and accommodation of the person towards the social group as it presents at the beginnings of the language a not so well defined balance in comparison to the *sensorimotor intelligence and in order to enable the adaptation to the group spirit , these functions must pass again through the same steps in the same order as in the first days of life, Accommodation to the social point of view is not anything other else than the imitation and the sum of the operations which enable a person to reset to the examples and the imperatives of the group. When it comes to assimilation it consists of [...] incorporating the reality to the activity and to the perspectives of the subject [...] on the social layer the child, even if at first he listens to the*

The entire mechanism is triggered by se segregation from the universe and the becoming a self, and the self- conscience is born literally from the dissociation between realities as it is proposed by the primitive conscience and not from the association of some predetermined contents.[1]

The mechanism of identity and alterity can be searched inside some constructions which are changing. The ontogenical perspective of the self/non-self indicates the logical correlations which are the fundament of the idea of identity and alterity marking two categories: the self and the other.

Johan Gotlieb Fichte uses the ontological opposition self/non-self to express the perspective on the human conscience, describing the relationship between these two by using the principle of identity and negation. Self/non-self can be the equivalent of the subject-object, when the subject determines the object, the opposition case being the one that generates the content. Fichte states that when the content of the identity is fixed we can talk about the alterity because this is a denial form of the identity, the first one being determined by the first.[8] He also speaks about egoity[9], which is opposed to the other *(dem es)[10]*.By this, the man refuses everything which comes from the outer part not only from the others, representing a concept which defines the spirituality of the self. The self is a summary of the self and itself as I am what establishes itself «because I» and not just what establishes in general; and what is established in the same act as me and not by himself as I'm «you». However, there is no doubt that it is possible to disregard the product of a synthesis that must be exposed: because it can reassess what was synthesized, and what remains after this abstraction is the ego in general, as non-object[11]. Fichte's philosophy proposes the self which is an absolute subject and a non - self representing any object outside the self. Non-ego exists in relation to an I being quantified based on negation operations, non-self is therefore detached from the outer ego and finds certain dominant characteristics by the inner call it realizes. Fichte leaves open the question of non-self nature as not sublimating clear to what

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*suggestions of the others, he remains a very long time trapped in his own way of thinking before staying among the other. The self and the group start by being unseparated, in a mix «*sui generis*» of egocentrism and submission to the environment limitations, only to separate later on and give room to the cooperation of some independent personalities.*   (Ibidem, p. 297).

[8] I mean me determined, as my name is Caius Sempronius in opposition to all others who call themselves such. If, as required by scientific doctrine, disregard this individual personality, I have nothing else to be characterized by "I" \ as well as what remains might call "that (es)". (Fichte, Johan Gotlieb, Doctrina ştiinţei, translated by Paul Blendea and Radu Gabriel Pârvu, Bucureşti, Ed. Humanitas, 1995, p. 93).

[9] The *ego arises not through a synthesis whose diversity could be further analyzed, but by absolute release. And this is the equity generally speaking, for, as we have just demonstrated, the concept of individuality obviously arises by synthesis, and its principle is therefore a synthetic sentence.* (Ibidem, p. 94).

[10] The *ego, for that matter is a rational being, in so far as, on the one hand,the universal reason in itself is perfect, it is indeed completely rational and nothing else; ie: the extent in which he ceased to be an individual, it was only by virtue of a sensitive limitation: and, secondly, to the extent that rational being conducted largely beyond reason itself in the world which therefore remains established and this idea [...] the whole philosophy is based on intuition and the I is her fundamental concept; It is moving towards the idea of self; this idea cannot be established only in the practical reason as supreme goal of aspiration. Ego as intuition as it is, as said,is the original intuition and becomes concept in a manner which was exposed enough; the other is only the idea; it cannot be conceived and effectively determined nor ever will be, but we need to approach this idea indefinitely.* (Ibidem, p. 107).

[11]*Ibidem*, pp. 92-93.

extent it precludes self, or if it is a denial of the content of his ideas or just dissociation to them.

We consider that it is important to analyze the concept of the collective identity, which influence that acceptance and the rejection, the integration or the alienation of a individual or of a category towards the group. The same for the identity and alterity, the collective identity is a construction, the result of processing the individuals following a series of variables. In the specific case of the collective identity, we can talk about the influence of some factors like the social environment, the geographic area but it is essential the way they gain the signification in the process of creating the collective identity because, as Michael Wintle said, building the identity is a political process and is always important to ask ourselves who promotes the elements of the collective identity and for what reason and who is against them[12].This does not mean that we have to negate the importance of climate, environment, ties of blood and kinship in their collective identity, but that we must accept that these «givens» are just some of the elements of a complex whole that we call collective identity, and their role is most often determined by the degree to which they are valued[13]. From this point of view, Wintle points out that collective identity is by no means a natural given, but is linked to processes of education in social, culture is defined not by genetic inheritance, but this does not necessarily mean a consistency, or lack of contradiction to the collective identity as its elements, often can stand by content[14].

It is necessary to discuss this report in terms of identity, otherness and alien representation to analyze categories of foreign and Romanian literary space marginal in relation to the self-image of the social group. Integration or exclusion shall be done according to horizons of interpretation of society and its interests, interests that are linked so that individuals have access to resources and the need to preserve the unity of the group, or, conversely, the need to interact. The criteria by which acceptance and exclusion occurs depend on the type of society in rural areas exclusion is less common, the need to ensure the cohesion of the group members in order to survive, while in urban societies are more important the economic interests and involvement of the central authority influences the marginalization process [15].

The phenomenon of inclusion or exclusion of the stranger is quite different than the marginal, in this case the different interests of the two leading types of companies determine opposed attitudes, according to the potential benefit or danger that the stranger represents for him. Prevailing interest and context: it becomes obvious inverse correlation between an

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[12]Wintle, Michael, The Image of Europe. Visualizing Europe in Cartography and Iconography Throughout the Ages, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 3-4.

[13]*Ibidem, p. 4.*

[14]*Oamenii sunt loiali unor instituţii care, la un anumit moment dat, se pot afla în dezacord.* (Wintle, Michael, The Image of Europe. Visualizing Europe in Cartography and Iconography throughout the Ages, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009, p. 4).

[15]*If for micro-societies of farmers the exclusion is less clear in the case of urban micro-societies, it states with much more force. One possible explanation is that the number of micro-societies of farmer's fragility makes them bound to protect members of the community solidarity which exceeds apparently exclusion criteria. Another plan is to force the central authority exercises its powers. Thus, the central authority is present in the micro-society, the phenomenon of exclusion and marginalization is evident.* (Bogdan-Alexandru Halic, Ion Chiciudean, Corina Daba-Buzoianu, Strangers, Aliens and Foreigners in Romanian Medieval World' în Pedro F. Marcelino (ed.), Home in Motion. The Shifting Grammars of Self and Stranger, Interdisciplinary Press, Oxford, 2011, p. 60).

exclusion and marginalization of the stranger. Thus, if the exclusion is less used, the exclusion of foreigners is stronger and vice versa16. Adrian Neculau and Gilles Ferreol explain the mechanism by the fact that every aspect of exclusion corresponds not only to a specific vocabulary (asocial, misfits ...) but also to different modes of action, private or public, organized around helping or sanctions, torture or compassion17. At this level it is important to note that social influence phenomenon occurs and requires a permanent exchange between the reference group, on the one hand, and minority and marginalized, on the other hand, exchange process which needs revaluation of causes of exclusion which can be observed in time. Obviously, the categorization is latent, and the effects are observable as the influence can be seen in time18. Moreover, Serge Moscovici, Gabriel and Juan Antonio Perez Mugny consider that not only the evaluative connotations of social influence determines the characteristics of the group, but sociocognitive conflicts which may arise between categorization and attributes, as the source case with the "in-group" that reveals the negative connotations (the identifying conflict is particularly strong) or source "out-group", with positive connotations. Besides, the consistency of minorities could have the effect of introducing new uncollected attributes and contradicting initial categorization and initial assessments. Maintaining the conflict, the consistent behavior of the minority lead to changes associated with sign-livers minority19.

The social construction of identity must be understood and analyzed in terms of social governing policies, economic and political, as they are the ones which assign social meaning and historical events, have access to society's resources and regulate its activities in accordance with certain interests either specific or general20. Moreover, educational policies content should be considered, also from social and cultural perspectives, as they have a great influence on how it is shaped the otherness, indicating that groups can interact and they may have some type of exchange. In this respect, identity is closely linked to social and political institutions that govern a society, but also from those who control information, as this will determine which individuals are exposed to messages, messages that have an influence on their behaviors, attitudes, but also of how the group perceives itself. Thus, there is in every society a policy through which it is structured both identity and otherness, and this policy is subject to slow changes. If in traditional societies, these policies are closely linked to the religious factor in the modern ones it passes into obscurity due to the secularization of society and culture. Also in modern societies, information and communication have a far greater impact because the individual is exposed to huge amounts of messages. Moreover, while in

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[16]*In a hierarchical society based on real estate proprietary, such as micro-societies of farmers, the stranger is heavily marginalized. Conservatism of this type of society, the major interest shown by community members to preserve land assets in the congregation as a significant share of that imaginary traditional collective mentality has on the structure generates a reaction marginalization of foreigners wholly unambiguous. Instead, societies in which the hierarchy is based on the patrimonial goods with high value and low volume or amounts of money hoarded, the acceptance of foreigners is much easier, significantly restricting their marginalization.* (Ibidem).

[17] Neculau, Adrian, Ferreol, Gilles (coord.), Minoritari, marginali, excluşi, Editura Polirom, 1996, Iaşi, p. 12.

[18]*Categorization of minorities as "in-group" or "out-group" may acquire, at latent effects theory postulates opposing the relations between groups. We regularly find evidence supporting the idea that a minority is capable of inducing influence especially when it was categorized as "out-group" and are the subject of discrimination manifest.* (Moscovici, Serge, Mugny, Gabriel, Perez, Juan Antonio, The influence of the minorities, in Adrian Neculau, Gilles Ferreol (coord.), op. cit., p. 21).

[19] *Ibidem.*

[20]Castells, Manuel, The Informational Age: Economy, Society and Culture, vol. II: The Power of Identity, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2004.

the traditional societies, the individual receives messages that respond mainly to its system of reference in modern societies, although he pays attention only to some of them, he is exposed to a significant number of messages that appeal to other values and content which may conflict with his views. This exposure to a variety of messages, some of them being incompatible, generates a permeation in the reference system of the individual. Identity and otherness mechanism is the same in all three situations that we talked about – I - we, I-other and I / we-other - but there are different factors that determine the process of building identity and otherness. In all cases, we are talking about specific regulatory elements that institutionalized identity as much of their meaning is derived from the group, but also incorporate absolutely essential constants: the interests and background, according to a certain context and certain interests, identity and alterity are processed or adapted to meet new requirements and to meet new needs to meet new expectations. Taking into account a number of factors, the identity of the contents of the individual structures and otherness, exteriorizing in this respect the two main types of image.

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