

THE PROBLEM OF IDENTITY AND OTHERNESS IN THE POST-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY. SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES

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Abstract: identity; alterity; globalization; democracy; postindustrial society; The hybrid (and, especially, fragmentabil, seemingly endlessly) of general responses and social science generalizante the operaționalizarea philosophy through the concepts of identity and alterity are, in fact, concrete and concretizante through the sociology. Thus, the previous thematic snips are becoming much more comprehensible, operaționalizabile, and instrumentalizabile through recourse to a specific sociological theme, namely globalization.

Despite the image that globalization an advertisement in the collective imaginary, it means less a process of homogenizing world in terms of economy and technology and more of a global process of distribution and production systems of the capitalist system.

Identity is linked to globalisation through several factors regarding both its cultural spectrum and ruling system which supports this spectrum. Democracy as a political system and culture, at least in the West, is one of the major factors of analysis, from a perspective that combines human rights with labour legislation and with the foreign policy of countries where democracy already keep tradition and cultural heritage. But what is the connection between democracy and globalization? To what extent the crisis of democracy can motivate through economic mechanisms of globalization and not by an asymmetry in the democratic legitimisation of the mechanism itself and the popular sovereignty? In order for a democracy to bear her own operating mechanisms, it needs a political community, a popular sovereignty which is governed. Democracy, meaning popular sovereignty, seems to achieve formal limits, although political momentum continues to stay, this time, however, exercised by the institutions of globalisation. The problem of alterity has a shade too metaphysical for what is needed at the moment. Identity is an issue that requires pregnant before any thoughts of otherness, even if the latter is the first, in the logical sense. Asserting their own identities take precedence before other recognition. The other has metamorphosed into something more and bigger than the individual next to us. Globalization has an oversize on a global scale, each action affecting it, while it affects us. The responsibility of our time lies in this task of thinking the world while we think and on us.

Keywords: identity, alterity, globalization, democracy, postindustrial society

In the hybrid¹² perimeter (and especially, fragmental one and apparently endless) of the social sciences, the general answers to which the philosophy is getting by the operation of

¹ Dogan, M., & Phare, R., *Noile științe sociale*, Editura Alternative, București, 1997, p. 7 și p. 161.

² Bauman, Z., *Globalizarea și efectele ei sociale*, Editura Antet, București, 2005, p. 5.

ⁱⁱ Nørretranders, T., *Iluzia utilizatorului*, Editura Publica, București, 2010, cap. III și *passim*.

ⁱⁱⁱ „Globalization means that we are all dependent on each other. Distances matter little now. Whatever happens in one place may have global consequences. With the resources, technical tools and know-how we have acquired, our actions span enormous distances in space and time. However locally confined our intentions might have been, we would be ill-advised to leave out of account global factors since they could decide the success or failure of our actions. What we do (or abstain from doing) may influence the conditions of life (and death) of people in places we will never visit and of generations we will never know.”, Bauman, Z., *The ethical challenges of globalization*, articol accesabil la pagina web: http://www.digitalnpq.org/archive/2001_fall/ethical.html.

^{iv} Klein, Naomi, *Doctrina Șocului. Nașterea Capitalismului Dezastrelor*, Editura Vellant, București, 2009.

^v Giddens, A., *The constitution of Society: Outline of the theory of structuration*, University of California Press, 1984, accesată de pe pagina web: www.brynmawr.edu/Acads/GSSW/schram/Giddens.pdf.

^{vi} Lyotard, J.-F., *Condiția postmodernă*, Editura Idea, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, p. 33.

^{vii} Marion, J.-L., *Vizibilul și revelatul*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2007, p. 54.

the self and the otherness concepts become, in fact, concrete with the help of sociology. Thus, the previous misunderstanding of the themes become more intelligible, operational and instrumental with the help of a specific sociologic theme: globalization. *“The word globalization is on everyone’s lips, a hobby which soon became a saying, a magical incantation, a key ready to open the gates of every present and future mystery. For some, globalization is something we need to do if we want to be happy; and for others, the source of our happiness lies in the globalization.”*³

Despite the image that the globalization has in the collective imaginary, it means less than a world homogenous process of economic and technological terms and more than a global process of the distribution of the production systems of the capitalist system. With those, globalization means leveling all laws (especially the labour legislation), in order to support this extension movement of the production systems towards the outer areas of the capitalist economy, often unidentifiable with their own system of government of the countries, which invest in them. The democracy is not on the same agreement point to the globalization but a pack of benefits, secondary ones and ideological once, which comes with the foreign investment capital. For now, we could talk about a relatively complete globalization only in the Western countries. However, in the rest of the world, globalization has an economic sense and sometimes legislative. What is obvious is the fact that some of the first phenomena, which took place once with the idea of globalization is the division of the world economic blocks: The European Union, the South Cone of Latin America, the Asian Block. And from here, a series of problems arise which deal with immigration, the work laws, the human rights and the cultural dimension of the globalization. Globalization, like any other system is a process of centralization and creating links between the main centers of financial and technological powers and the rest of the world, thus bringing to new forms of division and inequality as well as new types of exploration on the work force both in the third world countries and in the financial centers of the world. This phenomenon is marked by the quick deindustrialization and focusing on the services. This turn of events which defines the postindustrial era has had and still has long term effects on the life of the community involved directly or indirectly in these processes. The economic factor have imposed mass movements which have once unbalanced the traditional perception of the labour forces. New policies of handling these movements have appeared as a follow-up to this and also a renewal of the racial, nationalist and patriarchal movements. The Other is again the Stranger, the Unknown.

Globalization is linked to the identity through a couple of factor which real both with the cultural spectrum and also by the system of government. The democracy as a cultural and political system, the Western democracy, at least is one of the major factors of analysis of the identity from a perspective which combines the human rights to the work laws and with the foreign policy of the countries in which democracy is already a cultural tradition. Only in the West, one can observe that one’s identity is politically defined (and economically by formulas like: neoliberal, leftist, ultraconservative, etc.) by the governmental system. To talk about otherness and identity in the era of globalization one must take into account this characteristic that the identity is legitimate and also political. Thus, the individual identity can be separated

³ Bauman, Z., *Globalizarea și efectele ei sociale*, Editura Antet, București, 2005, p. 5

by the socio-political one but it does not include the whole concept of identity, it being limited to a simple *self-image*.

What is the connection between democracy and globalization? To what extent can the crisis of democracy motivate by using the economical mechanisms of globalization. Should this not happen asymmetrically in the mechanism of democracy in itself but also by popular sovereignty? In order for a democracy to support its own working mechanisms, it needs a political community, a self-ruling popular sovereignty. But this would require a capacity of self-governing ahead of the apparition of supporting democratic institutions which is not the case. We could say from the beginning that such a legitimization could come from the concept of *nation*, a pre-political notion, which has occupied this vacuum with the help of the tendency towards cosmopolitan and the distance from the concept of country-nation. In this case, the asymmetry of power created by the globalization cannot find their answer though democracy because this does not have any alternative for this situation. However, even globalization could, in a way to fill-in this void by the homogenous of some transcultural concepts which could offer the possibility of a new identity: multiculturalism, tolerance, collaboration, partnership, union. The link which seemed necessary between a nation and its political system now appears as a lack of basis as democracy fortified its nature by an approach which involves a designated territory and a sovereign power – the people. Globalization attacks this fundament of territorialism, ruining and re-inventing new spaces which must be filled by a king. Democracy, i. e. the popular-nationalistic sovereignty seems to have its formal limits, although the political impulse continues to remain, this time, exercise by institutes of globalization.

These economic and geographical movements of relocation force the community status to tensions which did not exist before. The city itself sustains these moves, which are not all the time agreed by its workers. Thus, we deal with a limitation of the sovereignty of the inhabitants of a city in what the economic decisions are concerned. Thus, a gap is born between what is economically necessary and what the people believe it is necessary. The practice of the politics is more necessary as always, it being the only one capable to please different interests among them. It would be wrong to imagine globalization as a world-wide economic stratification, between the developed countries and the third world countries. Stratification is done at the local level because the cities are directly influenced by these stratifications. They have the same delineation movements among the residential areas and the peripheries (favelas in Brasil, banlieue in France, ghettos in the U.S.A).

I would like to point out that the problem of otherness has a more metaphysical nuance for what is necessary now. Identity is a problem which is always present before any other reason of the otherness, even though the latter is the first, logically speaking. The affirmation of one own identity is always ahead of knowing the other. This is the truth. Appreciating the person next to you must be won and if possible, it can offer something in exchange. The symbolic nature of the otherness is buried by the group of messages with symbolic-semiotic layer, which draws the great part of the attention: 40 Hz vibration (attention is signaled by this vibration at the level of the neurons)⁴. This is especially present on TV rather meeting an unknown person. A reflection of this thing can be observed in what

⁴ Nørretranders, T., *Iluzia utilizatorului*, Editura Publica, București, 2010, cap. III și *passim*.

the idea of freedom in concerned because this middle class would rather give up to a series of liberties owned by the ones before them in order to keep their material wellbeing.

One cannot draw a final conclusion. The paradox of the human life is that any action has a negative part. In business this is called “externalization”. What globalization has questioned is the way we can relate to, by using economic methods and different forms of investments at other people’s life. All in all, we influence one another from very long distances without knowing the one whose life will change according to our actions, for instance buying a laptop made in the Philippines, in a tax free zone where the exploration is blooming up to a million dollar investment in a disadvantaged area. Because of globalization, the relation, which links us to the majority of the people around the world is now the consumption. And this model is extended in what the inter human relations are concerned. But let’s not be fatalists. We live in the only moment in history when we can, at anytime, intersect with the fate of the other, to be capable to change something. This is the condition upon which history is made: *“Globalization means that we all depend one from the others. The distances do not really matter right now. Anything that would happen somewhere could have global consequences. With the resources, the technical tools and the knowledge that we have, our actions lie on great distances of time and space. As local as our intentions could be, we would be wrong if we would ignore the global factors because these could decide the success or the failure of our actions. What we do or what we don’t do could influence the living (or dying) conditions of some people from the places we will never visit or of some generations that we will never know.”*⁵

The raising of the problem of the moral value of the globalization could not aim globalization as a whole but only as an economical vision. The countries, which needed the most the benefits of globalization are the ones which are exploited. The process cannot go back. Only two positions are possible: to be or not to be in favour of globalization because for the moment we could not talk about a global culture and not of a global and political legislative system. Our positioning could see it only as a *process in the making* with certain effects. At the same time, the dependence networks which have been created cannot be thought according to their sustainability but according to their immediate effect. This “immediate” of the action of reason being possible by the apparition of electricity, of the telegraph and the phone, spare us to use too much time but it also orchestrates the way we relate to things which from now on must self sustain the utility. Let it be “on hand”. It’s no wonder that the other has lost itself the metaphysical value at the same time, which has won a potential on its own world. Maybe we should question this double movement, which we have noticed beforehand: the movement towards things is met by a movement towards the people. It is not a logical and necessary connection but it meets a certain vision of the world in which the consumption and the holding of the goods are a definition of happiness and the freedom is one of the acquisition and investment. A state non-regulated market is the ideal of the American neoliberalism and it is seen as the supreme liberty although this liberty is often non-democratic.⁶

⁵ http://www.digitalnpq.org/archive/2001_fall/ethical.html

⁶ Klein, Naomi, *Doctrina Șocului. Nașterea Capitalismului Dezastrelor*, Editura Vellant, București, 2009.

What new systems would appear in the distant future of the globalization? We could talk about systems as long as we consider it to be the norm, relatively closed societies, which had their own cultural and political models are no longer seen as valid and are being replaced by multicultural models which test the national cultural models? What is the place of the individual in this model of representation of the globalization? What sort of identity is situated at the emergency of the new cultural, political and social methods. This has the capacity to adapt to the new situations of instability? The systems were seen before as being totalitarian capable of assuring a certain cultural unity which at its turn assured a safety climate for the members of that system. The totality is replaced by an asymmetry from its parts which is formed independently by the other parts, not being a direct correlation between the culture, economy and politics. Each of that advances separately, thus incubating an imaginary of the fragmentation, which will represent the individual formation of the individual. The contemporary technology sustains this eclectic which defines the individual, it creates their own grand ecrits, in their lack of institution.

Let's not fall into the trap in which we believe that the social forces are the only ones which model the way our world looks like. As Anthony Giddens⁷ said, a macro or micro analysis would suffice as long as these two are separated by one another. The social structure is reproduced by the repetition of the action, modeled socially by human agents. This is the process called "structuration" and aims at having a bonding which lacks Marxist or Weber prejudiced. Thus, the other is always defined by its actions and its reference to the social general climate. Its identity cannot be discussed generally but only individually without taking into account both factors and their participation.

The malleability of its own identity, its possibility of being built which is reflected upon the corporality, from now on it is the territory of the metonymy and semiotics. According to Giddens, the body has been "reflexively called up" as an improving material and not like an "irreducible" gift. In his famous work "Postmodern Condition" Lyotard talks about the social link which "*as a problem is a language game, the game of interrogation which position immediately the one who asks to the one to whom it is addressed and also the reference who is interrogated; this problem is also the social link.*"⁸

The other is already seen as a rational actor, capable to react and act in the behaviorist scheme of Stimuli – Response. This swift of perception of the other does not mean anything but the owning of the computational model of the informatics theory in which the input and the output are the basic premises of the kinetics of the data packages. In this movement of information, which implies a sender and a receiver, they are both part of the same rational system. But to reduce the linguistic competence only to help the sending of information, this would be superficial. The statements are of many types, each with different functions, sustained by a non-verbal language, an irreducible residue of communication. The corporality plays an important role in this system of transmitting because it embezzles the Stimuli – Response from the essential scheme of functioning. Between the Stimuli and Answer there is the Body.

⁷ www.brynmawr.edu/Acads/GSSW/schram/Giddens.pdf

⁸ Lyotard, J.F., *Condiția postmodernă*, Editura Idea, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, p. 33.

Coming from Descartes, this reflexivity does not reflect a better use of the sense and sensibility towards our needs and the others' but a new set of values which would define calling to a mathematical reason, of the calculus of the consequences "shortly a zero or short degree of phenomenon; its evidence is achieved here adequately because it does not recall only a poor intuition. [...] We should ask ourselves on the privilege so often granted by the knowledge theories of the logical and mathematical knowledge: they are raised at the level of models of the others although they distinguish themselves through their intuition, by the poverty of their donation, or even the unreality of their objectives."⁹

This preference for the thought of the other as a non-phenomenon, a reason made by the contemporary theories of psychology and evolutionism risks of exposing it to some new factors which belong to the world of objects: when could we talk about a real market of the organs? Why was the selling of the organs banned as they can only be donated? Slavery is it an example of this instrumental reason, exploration, as well as the gender differences. However, homo economicus is nothing but an ideal of neoliberalism. Man is not set on only the maximization of their own interests and resources. However this means that it is still a hope for to break the flux of consumerism and to think about the existence of the other, be it an ecological or ethical paradigm. The Other has morphed into something more and big than the individual next to us. Globalization has outsized it to a global scale, each action affecting it while it is affecting us. The responsibility of our time lies in this task to think about the world while we think for ourselves.

One of the most pertinent analysis of today's social sciences is the one presented in the *New Social Science*, Alternative Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997. The work of the two analysts, Dogan and Phare is extremely well-written taking the epistemological line indicated by the new philosophy of the science. It starts from a formidable intuition. It is about the epistemological status, the functions and the finality of the innovation in the perimeter of the theme of the social sciences. The authors' observations lead towards the statement that the most fructuous and important innovations are the result (...) uninterrupted fragmentation of the social sciences in a narrow specialization in the interior of what we (...) call hybrid fields. "Dogan, M., & Phare, R. *Noile stiinte sociale*, Editura Alternative, Bucuresti, 1997): p. 7]. The alternatives of the researcher are reduced to two. On one hand, accepting the idea of an objective truth in a monist manner, the problem of the adequate means is being laid. This is because they either try to put across the discursive methods or it is because there are not but relative truths to the context. Moreover, applying the lakatosian vocabulary, the philosophy, the history, the anthropology, geography, psychology, politics, sociology linguistics or economy do not have a hard nucleus which is forced to see the experimental tests – their predisposition towards hibridation is enormous with the lack of some central disciplines and certain hierarchies. Not even the methodological situation of this sciences satisfies them. The reason is the distinction made by Poincare which debate the personal findngs. They are not preoccupied bu their method. Other specialists easily reach the transisiplinarity. We thus have a situation of hybridation because : "(...) in the social sciences there exist more subjects than methods (...)", so "(...) certain methods must be applied to more subjects." [(Dogan, M., & Phare, R., „*Noile stiinte sociale*, Editura Alternative, Bucuresti, 1997):p. 161].

⁹ Marion, J.L., *Vizibilul și revelatul*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2007, p. 54.

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