

POSTMODERNITY AND THE EXPERIENCE OF IDENTITY

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Abstract: *By expressing the position in the social field, the identity has been studied in the context of many psycho-social theories. In postmodernity, the individual, attracted by the mirage of the depth of his own personality, loses the measure of reality and becomes mere screen, mere surface of influence network.*

Keywords: *identity, psycho-social theories, postmodern schizophrenia.*

From the psychological perspective, the identity expresses the oneness of every human being, of their personality; it reflects the distinction of the inner self related to other persons and objects. As "a central dimension of the conception about the inner self of a person" (P.P.Nevanu), the identity represents his position in the social field, position given by his belonging to groups and by his constantly assuming social roles. In other words, the identity derives from his "social fusion" (M.Kuhn).

Although it is a theoretical distinction between the personal identity and the social one or the collective one, in fact the person's identity is by her mean a social one because it is attained through the experiences, the acquisitions and the social interactions, it's built from the first day of life and through all the existence. No matter the states of identity it is the result of an auto identification process which is in essence a psycho-social process. Emil Durkheim uses the concept of "collective identity" to indicate the stable perception of the inner self which had interiorized the collective conscience.

The same point of view is adopted by functionalist theories (T.Parsons), which sustains that the identity is the product of socialization, the person becoming through the interiorization of general rules accepted, a recognized member of the community.

Another perspective is offered by interactionist's theories (C.H.Cooley) which put the accent on the interaction with the

persons that form the nursery that forms the identity of social actor.

The Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman in "Every day life as a representation" (1965) speaks about the interaction in terms of theatrical representations; the actor and his role represent the multiple dimensions which compete for the formation of the social identity whose exterior manifestation is "the face", "the inner self showed", the image throughout the Subject-agent appears on the interaction scene and plays his role. According to S.E. Asch the person has an identity for herself and another one for the others and having an identity involves, besides the fact he knows who he is and the fact that the others know him as the same person. No matter what is the adopted perspective, it's certain that the identity, besides our unique genetic existence it's a form which is born in the social cultural environment. The construction of the personal identity begins early in childhood, through the interaction with the family and continues taking turbulent forms during the period of adolescence through the shaping of the personality's architecture and the emphasis of the sensitiveness at the expectations of others.

The teenager and later the adult, understands and recognizes himself related to the other's social expectations that are exercised on him and whose central object he is. The conscience of himself is formed and develops in symbiosis with the conscience of the world, of the others. "Self", "Ego" are concepts difficult to set apart. Self-image, self-respect, self conscience, terms which reflect

the direction of the specialist's preoccupation today are derived from "self" and "ego". Shred between what he is today and what he would want to become, man never stops searching himself, revealing his essence, his coordinates in this world.

The modern age, through its projects of emancipation, liberty, progress, gives to the "self" the power to know through the rational force, the power to act to a presumptive total power of science and technique. Step by step, this excess triggers the modern crises which represent in fact a crisis of self that becomes the product of the uncontrollable mechanisms, rended from a direction that gave them purpose. From this position of protagonist of the process of conscience and expansion of modernism, the self is dethroned and depotentialised. During the late modernism or postmodernism, this destructured and weakened self is fed by the new configuration of the society. If the physiognomy of postmodernism would be characterized through "an avalanche in a word factory" (I.Hassan) such as: pluralism, perspectives, fragmentation, decentralization, hybridization which is the faith of the identity's experience in this context. G.H.Mead in his work "The mind, the self and the society" (1934) points out the fact that the person, split from the social is pure abstraction. "The stable self" of the person who gives cohesion to the society is formed by social interactions.

What happens in fact with this stable self in a plural and dynamic world eroded by instability, incertitude and uncertainty?" That's what's explaining the focalization of scientific debates on the human being, on the problems of self which grade of reflexivity it's accentuated in postmodernism. The human being enters in a labyrinth and he is strained by the question which follow his search: "Who am I?" the self of today amazed, the self of yesterday forgotten, the self of tomorrow unpredictable. The experience of his identity, the fury of the present becomes overwhelming. M. Buber, E. Levinas, P. Ricoeur, K.O. Apel sustains the necessity to reduce the status of self to an initial relationist perspective like me-you or me-others. It's interesting to observe the action ego-alter. At social level, the ego,

initially dependent of the alter, orientates to the outspoken behavior and the expectation of the alter. Otherwise, Parsons formulates his utopia of mutual report "in an integrated system, this orientation for the expectation of the other is mutual or complementary".

Every man assimilates "the symbols of reglementation" and becomes the single man of the crowded society, "the stranger" near the others, separated from the malleability of the report to a cultural system and dependent on the others' thoughts. It's a stable equilibrium. On the razor's edge, ready to fall in himself, the postmodernist ego and the postmodernist alter are fighting with the near stranger and the inner stranger.

The contemporary society, in which the values mixed, in which the hierarchies are not respected and new technologies entered in every domain, faces harder and harder every day the provocations of this upheaval. The person, on one side attracted by the mirage of the society and on the other attracted by the mirage of the depth of his own personality, opening, of a permeability and malleability through the essence of the opinions, look from where it comes the lost of self and the postmodern schizophrenia: "*The schizoid is open to all without wanting it, living in the biggest confusion. He is obscene quarry of the world's obscenity. What's characterizing him is less the loss of the reality as it's usually said, as this total proximity and this total instantaneity of thing, this overexposure to the transparency of the world. Without any scene and penetrated without force, he could not produce the limits of his own spirit; he could not produce himself as a mirror. He becomes pure screen, pure suction surface of influence's networks.*"

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