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SUMMARY

BOOK REVIEW

ANALELE ŞTIINŢIFICE ALE UNIVERSITĂŢII „ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” DIN IAŞI
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ANCESTRY AND NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION IN ROMANIA

HORATIU RUSU[1]

Abstract:
This paper examines the relation between the ethnic origin and the strength of national identification, as emotional attachment to Romania. Despite there are many nationalism studies, not enough are exploring empirical data while questioning ethno-nationalist conceptions in and about Romania. Considering the primordialist perspectives, the roots of the nation are of ethnic origin, therefore a stronger relation should be expected between those of Romanian ethnic background and their national identifications, as compared to national identifications of people that ascribe a different or mixed ethnic origin. By running a multivariate analysis on the Romanian ESS9 wave, the article finds clues of equal degrees of identification with Romania among all these categories of people. Results do not deny connections between ancestry and national identification. The findings rather point out that in terms of emotional attachment, Romanians, Hungarians, Roma, and other citizens declaring a different common ancestry for all ancestors or a mixed ancestry, have similar levels of identification with the country.

Key words: national identification, primordial attachments, ancestry, European Social Survey, Romania

Résumé:
Cet article examine la relation entre l'origine ethnique et la force de l'identification nationale, en tant qu'attachement émotionnel à la Roumanie. Bien qu'il existe de nombreuses études sur le nationalisme, elles n'explorent pas suffisamment les données empiriques tout en remettant en question les conceptions ethno-nationalistes en Roumanie et à propos de celle-ci. Considérant les perspectives primordialistes, les racines de la nation sont d'origine ethnique, donc une relation plus forte devrait être attendue entre ceux d'origine ethnique roumaine et leurs identifications nationales, par rapport aux identifications nationales des personnes qui attribuent une ethnie différente ou mixte. origine. En effectuant une analyse multivariée sur la vague roumaine ESS9, l'article trouve des indices d'un degré égal d'identification avec la Roumanie parmi toutes ces catégories de personnes. Les résultats ne nient pas les liens entre l'ascendance et l'identification nationale. Les résultats soulignent plutôt qu'en termes d'attachement émotionnel, les Roumains, les Hongrois, les Roms et les autres citoyens déclarant une ascendance commune différente pour tous les ancêtres ou une ascendance mixte, ont des niveaux d'identification similaires avec le pays.
Mots-clés: identification nationale, attachements primordiaux, ascendance, European Social Survey, Roumanie

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Rezumat:
Lucrarea analizează relația dintre originea etnică și intensitatea identificării naționale măsurată ca atașament emoțional față de România. Cu toate că există multe studii dedicate identificării naționale, nu sunt suficiente cele bazate pe date empirice. cele care să chestioneze concepția etno naționalistă. Conform acesteia, de vreme ce rădăcinile unei națiuni sunt de tip etnic, cei cu background etnic romanesc ar trebui sa se identifice mai puternic decât ceilalți cu Romania. Lucrarea de față investighează aceasta posibilă relație cu ajutorul tehnicilor de analiză multivariate pe datele ESS9 din Romania. Rezultatele indică lipsa unor diferențe semnificative în ceea ce privește identificarea România, în raport cu originea strămoșească pe care și-o asumă respondenții. Aceste rezultate nu sugerează însă că între originea etnică și identificarea națională nu sunt legături. Ele doar spun că în termeni de atașament emoțional, toți cetățenii, indiferent de originea etnică asumată, au un nivel similar de identificare cu România.

Cuvinte cheie: identificare națională, atașamente primordiale, ascendență, European Social Survey, România

Introduction

When I have started to work at this paper, a thought, shared to me by someone with whom I was discussing about current developments in our society, came into my mind. I quote: „I have discussed with some friends of mine today about the political crisis... you know there are not Romanian ethnics...unfortunately very few of them remained in our country... but you know what... they are more Romanian than many Romanians you might know, or you see on TV these days” (M, 67, retired). The idea made me wonder if that was just a personal view or it finds support in large-scale empirical data.

This article examines, drawing on ESS Round 9 Romanian data, whether the ethnic background is related to the variations in the strength of national identification, measured as emotional attachment. the strength of national identification, viewed as emotional attachment, in relation with the ethnic background. A massive body of literature discussing Romanians' identity from various facets exists (e.g. Rusu & Bălașoiu, 2003; Schifirneț, 2009; Boari, Gherghina, & Murea, 2010; Bottyan & Bălțătescu, 2016;). Analyses based on survey data are still scarce. The paper fills this gap and adds to the empirical dimension of the research on national identity in Romania and on its relationship with the ethnic background understood as individuals' declared ancestry. Multivariate analysis techniques are employed. Results constitute departure points for a thorough discussion of the theoretical, methodological, and empirical reasons of the findings of this paper. These results point toward undifferentiated of emotional identifications with Romania, no matter of the ethnic background of its citizens.

ESS9 data, collected in Romania between November 2019 and February 2020, allow to empirically explore one of the main discussion topics of the national identities' theories: the emotional attachment conceptions. Leaving aside the distinction between patriotism and nationalism (see Schatz, Staub, & Lavine, 1999; Blank & Schmidt, 2003), I will consider the emotional attachment with the country as a dimension of national identification.

Different affective or emotional, and cognitive or rational nuances of the identification with the nation exist in theories, irrespective whether one discusses about primordial versus instrumental ethnicities or about the ethnic versus civic perspectives of the nation. The next section of the paper is introducing these perspectives emphasizing the conceptions that express the idea of primordial attachments and their connected factors underpinning national identity. It is followed by a section presenting the data used and methodology. Then, making use of the most recent European Social Survey data collected in Romania, I am testing for the covariates of the intensity of the emotional attachment, with a special attention given to the self-ascribed ethnic background. A discussion of the findings concludes the paper.

Primordial attachments, ethnic and civic views of nation

Nations are conceived in many ways. The distinction made by Kohn (1965) between ethnic and civic nations is probably the most widespread. The first conceive the nation as an ethnic community, an ethno-nation, while the latter conceives the nation as a civic, political community. The ethnic definitions of the nation relate to primordial conceptions of communities, while the civic perspectives of the nation are connected to instrumental conceptions of community belonging.

At least two aspects are relevant for this paper. First, there is the significance of the primordial ties and their connection with the ethnic definition of a nation. Second, the different relationship between nations and states that ethnic and civic perspectives bring. I will introduce them in the reverse order.

State vs. nation shapes first approach in focus. On one hand, from an ethno-nationalist view, a nation is an expression of an ethnic group. It is grounded on a common ancestry, territory of origin and residence and a community of language and habits and it is perceived as a part of the natural order of the world. States are an accomplishment of the nations in terms of cultural, political, economic, and legal terms. From such a perspective a nation creates a state. On the other hand, modern states, are embodiments of common legal, political, fiscal, economic, educational and security systems that are enforced in a distinctive territory where different populations may live. They are results of modernising forces that culminate in the XIX century in Europe. From this perspective, states, as political and administrative units that have sovereignty over a territory and its inhabitants, create nations. The common national identity is rather a matter of rationality, civic ties, and a central system of social and cultural values. The relation between the two conceptions of the nation (e.g., Smith , 1986; Hobsbawm , 1990; Gellner, 1983) is much debated and there is no need to develop it more here. to the paper, the relevant idea states that explicit biunivocal relations exists between nations and states or countries.

Significance of primordial attachment is of even higher interest. The ethnic conceptions of nations integrate views of the primordial ties that are extended from the primary group level to the community level. The primordial conceptions underpin the idea of the natural, ancestral roots of the ethnic groups and nations (Rusu, 2008; Rusu, 2009). An emphasis of the affective or emotional dimension of the identification with the primordial elements (e.g., biological connections, common territory of origin or residence) is accompanying that idea. I will exemplify these conceptions referring to Shils (1957) and Geertz (1973) who are introducing the concepts of primordial elements and primordial attachments.

Shils is credited for introducing the idea of primordial affinities in his endeavour to explain the „bonds which hold a large-scale society together" (1957, p. 131). Attempting to develop his contribution to the social action theory, Shils (1957) pays attention to other attachments than those to the central value system of society. These are attachments to the some „significant relational qualities" or „proprieties" of the persons that are considered *primordial qualities* of the organisms. They are „proprieties of the organisms in relationship to the environment and unconnected with the social structure" namely „biological relatedness and territorial location" (Shils, 1957: 139-142). „The attachment to another member of one's kinship it is not just a function of interaction [...] it is because a certain ineffable significance is attributed to the tie of blood" (Shils, 1957:142). The ethos of primary group is thus not only an effect of interaction, coercion, or interest but also a product of attachment derived from the beliefs in the primordial qualities attributed the others. Geertz (1973) extends Shils' (1957) definition of the primordial elements, by adding the cultural dimension. To him, a primordial attachment is one that „stems from [...] the assumed <givens> of social existence" (Geertz, 1973, p. 259) and comprises cultural elements beyond the territorial and blood ties. Ones' identity is the immediate consequence of the ineffable, unaccountable absolute importance attributed to the tie of blood, language or custom. But the primordial attachments are also invoked and recreated at the political, ideological level to legitimate authority and underline national unity (Geertz, 1973)

This section may be concluded here considering that an investigation of the emotional attachments to a country might reveal on one hand the prevalence of the primordialist views of the nation in a population and, on the other hand, the relations between a state and a nation.

Data and methodology

The main objective of the paper aims at testing the covariates of the intensity of the emotional attachment with the country, with a special focus on the ethnic background of the respondents. The main question pursued in this paper is: „Are there significant differences in the strength of national identifications of the Romanian citizen in respect to their declared ancestry?" If one considers the primordialist conceptions, since the roots of the nation are of ethnic origin, especially when referring to Eastern European nations Kohn (1965), a stronger relation might be expected between those ascribing themselves a Romanian ethnic background and their national identifications, than between the national identifications of the people that ascribe themselves a different or mixed ethnic origin (H1). A similar relation is expected in what concerns the language (H2).

A stepwise technique is used. The analytical model is built on ESS data round 9 from Romania. Data are weighted with the provided weights in the ESS9ROe01 release. The method employed to analyse data is linear regression, using STATA 13.

The strength of national identification is measured on a scale from 0 to 10 as an answer to the question „How emotionally attached do you feel to Romania?” where „0” means „Not at all emotionally attached” and „10” means „Very emotionally attached”. Thus, higher scores reflect stronger attachment to the country.

The main independent variable of interest is the ethnic background. In Romania, according to official statistics, there are about 89% Romanian ethnics, 6% Hungarians, 2% Roma, while among the remaining, there are more than 18 ethnicities, each counting for less than 1% out of total population. ESS captures ethnicity thorough two items, measuring respondents’ declared ancestry. Each question requires that people choose one ancestry that best applies to them. In the analyses, answers are combined so that identical or different ancestries were captured in an index. The index (eth01) has the following four categories: respondents declaring (1) Romanian only ancestry, (2) Hungarian only ancestry, (3) only one ancestry, other than Romanian or Hungarian (i.e., Roma, German, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Jewish) (4) respondents declaring mixed ancestries (i.e., people declaring a combination of ancestries). Observations recorded, simultaneously, at both ancestry questions, as ‘not classifiable’ are not cannot be interpreted in respect with the intended categories and thus not included in the construction of this index (17 cases).

To verify that such a categorisation is not biased by the composition of the mixed category (that includes, besides other combinations, any combination of a declared Romanian ancestry with other ancestry) a second index (eth02) was constructed. The second index was initially constructed so that it comprises the following categories: (1) respondents declaring Romanian only ancestry, (2) respondents declaring a combination of Romanian ancestry and other ancestry (e.g. Romanian *and* Hungarian) (3) respondents declaring another ancestry, common for all ancestors (e.g. Hungarian, Roma, German, Jew), and (4) respondents declaring a mixed ancestry (that includes combinations between all other ancestries except combinations with the Romanian one). Because the last category (4) contained only 5 cases, in the analysis it was collapsed with the previous one.

Since primordialist approaches of the nation underline the importance of language, traditions, religion and place of birth, independent variables measuring these dimensions are introduced into the model. Language is a categorical variable measuring the first language respondents declare to speak at home. The original variable in the database was recoded so it reflects three language categories: Romanian, Hungarian and other language. Also, from an empirical point of view it makes sense to control for it, since, except the respondents having unique Hungarian background (out of which about half of the declare speaking Romanian at home) almost all the other respondents, having a combined ethnic background or other unique background, declare speaking Romanian as the first language at home.

Religiosity is measured on a scale from 0 to 10 as an answer to the question „How religious are you?" where „0" means „Not at all religious" and „10" means „Very religious". The variable does not capture the appurtenance to a specific denomination but rather approximates the level of religiosity or individualization as an expression of importance attributed to the traditional institutions.

The importance of traditions is measured on a scale from 1 to 6 as an answer to an item part of Schwartz-values scale: „Now I will briefly describe some people. Please listen to each description and tell me how much each person is or is not like you: Tradition is important to him. He tries to follow the customs handed down by his religion or his family" where „1" means „Very much like me" and „6" means „Not at all like me". In the analysis the variable was recoded so that „1" means „Not at all like me" and „6" means „Very much like me"

Since the number of respondents not born in Romania is very low (11 persons), I controlled for the country of birth of their parents. To this purpose, form the original variables recording if the father or the mother of the responded was born in Romania or not, an index reflecting if both parents of the respondent were born in Romania or at least one parent was born outside Romania was created (39 persons).

Finally, I controlled for respondents' education (measured as the number of years of education), age, residential area (using urban versus rural dichotomy) and for gender.

The cases of refusal to answer ('I will not answer') and indecision ('I do not know') were treated as missing values for all the variables included in the analysis. Respondents not holding a Romanian citizenship (3 cases) were eliminated from all the analyses. All these and the above-described indices construction leave us with minimum 1724 valid cases out of the original 1846 cases in the sample.

Analysis and results

A descriptive analysis of the dependant variable (M=7.7, SD=2.6) shows that about 8% of the respondents declare a rather low attachment to the country (values 0 to 3 on the 11-point scale), about 20% declare a moderate attachment (values 4 to 6 on the scale) and the rest of about 72% declare a rather high attachment to the country (values 7 to 10 on the scale). Thus, it might be said that the identification with the country, as a dimension of national identification, is, in general, rather high. The importance given to traditions (M=4.8, SD 1.3) and the religiosity are also high (M=6.4, SD=2.8).

One-way Anova was conducted to determine if strength of emotional attachment to the country was different for categories of respondents having a different ethnic background. There was no statistically significant difference among categories when the first (eth01) indexed was used (F=0.49, p=0.68). Same results were obtained when the second (eth02) was used ((F=0.31, p=0.73).

Table 1 (see below) presents the results of the linear regression model of the emotional attachment to the country. The variable of interest, ethnic background (eth01) is introduced first (model 1), and the rest of the variables are introduced in the following models (2 and 3) in a stepwise manner.

Table 1.

Linear regression model of emotional attachment to the country

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Romanian (ref.)			
Hungarian	-.175	-.282	-.736
Other (homogeneous)	.391	.909	.303
Mixed	-.560	-.505	-.688
Education level		.068**	.058**
Birth year		.035***	.020***
Female		.026	-.241
Urban		.004	.271
Both parents born in RO			-.382
Romanian language (ref)			
Hungarian language			.545
Other language			-1.026
Religiosity			.174***
Importance of tradition			.421***
Cons.	7.711***	5.261***	3.889***
N	1808	1788	1724
R^2	0.22	5.69	14.75
Ll	-4309	-4213	-3985
BIC	8648	8485	8066
AIC	8626	8441	7995

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

First it must be noted that no significant differences appear among the categories of respondents in respect to the ethnic background.

No significant relation is also found between the dependant variable and the place of residence or the gender of the respondents. On the other hand, age has a positive relation with the national identification. The emotional attachment increases with the age of respondent. Unfortunately, data allow only for equivocal interpretation of this result. Two hypotheses might be derived. The first is that what is observed is an effect of ageing, once people grow older, they become more attached to the place of residence, i.e., the country they live in. The second is that a cohort effect might be present. That is older generations being socialized during the communist epoch, were much more exposed to a nationalist ideology, thus more attached to Romania. Education also has a positive relation with the national identification. The more educated a person is, the higher the attachment to the country. A possible explanation might be that educated people more accurately understand the complex and multi-dimensional citizen-state relations while downgrading the ethnonationalist ideologies.

No significant differences in identification are present in these data for those who Romanian is the primary language used at home and for those who Hungarian is the primary language used at home. Similarly, no significant differences were detected between those who have both parents born in Romania and those having at least one parent born in a different country. However, religiosity and importance people give to traditions have a positive, significant, influence on the emotional attachment to the country in all models. These results are according to the theoretical expectations suggested by the primordial view. That is the more religious a person is, the stronger is his/her identification with the country; and the more importance one gives to traditions the more intense are his/her emotional attachments to the country.

The annex (Table 1a) presents the results of the analysis based on a different version of the index used above. That version of the index splits the category of respondents classified above (Table 1) as 'other unique ancestry' in two categories: Roma and other ethnic groups (i.e., German, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Jewish). Relations and significance levels remain the same as in the models presented above.

When the second index (eth02) capturing the ethnic background of respondents (Table 2) is employed in the analysis, similar results are obtained. No significant differences appear among the categories of respondents in respect to the ethnic background.

Table 2.

Linear regression model of emotional attachment to the country			
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Romanian (ref.)			
Romanian mixed	-0.544	-0.483	-0.666
Other (homogeneous or mixed)	-0.047	-0.030	-0.490
Education level		.0600**	.052*
Birth year		.034***	.020***
Female		0.017	-0.247
Urban		0.016	0.267
Both parents born in RO			-0.655
Romanian language (ref)			
Hungarian language			0.315

Linear regression model of emotional attachment to the country			
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Other language			-0.281
Religiosity			.172***
Importance of tradition			.427***
Cons.	7.711***	5.398***	3.698***
N	1825	1804	1738
R^2	0.13	5.39	14.46
Ll	-4352	-4255	-4022
BIC	8727	8562	8133
AIC	8710	8524	8068

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Discussion and conclusions

While views of a cosmopolitan population are utopian beliefs for some, for others they are guiding principles of their lives. On the one hand, the world today seems to be heavily stirred by the differences between new and old knowledges, ideologies, and ways of life, not only within but also among societies. Examples of various forms of identities revival are illustrated almost daily at news televisions and in social media: from the illiberal turn of some Eastern European governments to the attack on the United States Capitol, or from the conflicts in and between the former USSR states, to the ethnic tensions in Bosnia and Herzegovina or conflicts in the multi-ethnic societies, like Ethiopia. On the other hand, studies bring evidence that many borders of identities are fading. Examples of such trends are brought, for example, by comparative (time, cohort, age, societies) studies of tolerance towards other groups or categories in various contexts (Comșa & Rusu, 2011; Twenge, Carter, & Campbell, 2015; Janmaat & Keating, 2019)

The paper examined the relation between the ethnic origin and the strength of national identification, as emotional attachment to Romania. On one hand the paper considered the different relationship between nations and states that ethnic and civic perspectives bring. On the other hand, accounted for the significance of the primordial ties and their connection with the ethnic definition of a nation. By running a multivariate analysis on the Romanian ESS9 wave, the article finds clues of undifferentiated degrees of identification with Romania among the categories of people of different ethnic backgrounds (H1). The same is true for the language (H2). Thus, both hypotheses are rejected.

Robust regression run for the full models confirmed all findings. However, a note must be introduced here: results should be treated with caution since the size of some of the categories of ethnic background introduced in the analyses is rather small. Future research, more focused on ethnic groups, could test interaction effects between ethnic background variables and language or the country of birth of respondents' parents. Multilevel approaches, considering fractionalization indices at localities' level, might be also relevant.

The results do not suggest that ancestry or language, signifying primordial ties, are not connected with the national identification. Rather they point out that in terms of emotional attachment, those who ascribe themselves a Romanian only ancestry and the other respondents declaring completely, or partly „asymmetric" ethnic origins have similar levels of identification with the country.

If the ethnic nation theory, in what concerns Eastern Europe, is assumed, the results might suggest, on one hand, two competing mechanisms of identification. An ethnic one, for those respondents declaring Romanian ancestry. And a modern, participatory mechanism, based on a civic conception of the nation, of the respondents declaring „asymmetric" ethnic origins and nationality. But they also might suggest a conflated model of identification, grounded on both an ethnic and a modern, participatory, conception of the nation. The results may also point out toward the integrative force of the state, exercised by the former communist regime, as a factor underpinning the building process of the nation. No matter how one may decide to read these results, they are consonant with the findings of a different paper investigating the importance of the civic and ethnic criteria that one must consider to be a Romanian (Rusu, 2020). There too, a clear civic - ethnic divide could not be detected. Taken together that results and the results of this paper, bring evidence that exclusive ethnic or civic conceptions of the nation are rather improbable.

On the other hand, as Llobera (1999) points out, the understanding of the collective feelings of national identity is practically *terra incognita*. Even though criticism is made to the affective aspects of primordialism (see also Eller & Coughlan, 1993) conceptions defending the emotional attachment idea exist. Grosby (1994) argues that emotional attachments to primordial elements, like descent or territory, derive from the cognitive perception of these object and the significance they bear for life. However, if that is true, not only primordial elements defining a nation are subject of attachments. Since a modern state protects life and welfare, the civic dimensions of a nation are subject of attachments too. Thus, an explanation of the results obtained in this paper: respondents are equally attached to Romania, no matter if they hold a modern or primordial view of the nation.

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Annex:

Table 1a

Linear regression model of emotional attachment to the country			
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Romanian (ref.)			
Hungarian	-.175	-.282	-.736
Roma	.245	1.001	.262
Other (homogeneous)	.763	.687	.414
Mixed	-.560	-.505	-.686
Education level		.069**	.0578*
Birth year		.0348***	.0200***
Female		.024	-.240
Urban		.004	.272
Both parents born in RO			-.368
Romanian language (ref)			
Hungarian language			.545
Other language			-1.032
Religiosity			.174***
Importance of tradition			.420***
_cons	7.711***	5.250***	3.334***
N	1808	1788	1724
R^2	0.20	5,70	14,74
Ll	-4309		-4213
BIC	8656		8492
AIC	8628		8443

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

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IDENTITY CHANGES IN CRISIS SITUATIONS. ANXIETY, FRUSTRATION AND ANGUISH DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract
In this article, a review of the socio-anthropological literature on the impact of pandemics on the mental health of the population is made. Also, the way this pandemic affects the construction of identity of the population affected by pandemic is taken into discussion. The historical-anthropological perspective refers to the plague epidemic that affected Europe during the Middle Ages, to its psychological impact from the perspective of the individual's relationship with otherness - as a possible source of danger. The article presents a series of similarities and differences from the perspective of anguish, anxiety and frustration caused to the population by the plague pandemic and the Covid-19 pandemic, highlighting the results of studies published during 2020 in journals indexed in Web of Science, dedicated to the impact of the pandemic. of Coronavirus on the mental health of the population. The research focused on several dimensions of the social construction process of the Covid-19 pandemic, among which we mention: information on the pandemic, restrictions imposed by the authorities as elements of social (re)construction of the limit of the human condition, medicalization of the social life and the perception of the contemporary society as a risk society. In this article we will refer exclusively to the results aimed at changes in the identity construction of people affected by the pandemic.

Keywords: pandemic, psychological impact, mental health, anguish, anxiety, frustration

Résumé
Dans cet article j'ai passé en revue de la littérature socio-anthropologique sur l'impact des pandémies sur la santé mentale de la population. Aussi, la manière dont cette pandémie affecte la construction identitaire de la population touchée par la pandémie est prise en compte. La perspective historico-anthropologique fait référence à l'épidémie de peste qui a touché l'Europe au Moyen Âge, à son impact psychologique du point de vue de la relation de l'individu avec l'altérité - comme une source possible de danger. L'article présente une série de similitudes et de différences du point de vue de l'angoisse, de l'anxiété et de la frustration causées à la population par la pandémie de peste et la pandémie de Covid-19, mettant en évidence les résultats d'études publiées en 2020 dans des revues indexées dans Web of La science, dédiée à l'impact de la pandémie. du coronavirus sur la santé mentale de la population. La recherche a porté sur plusieurs dimensions du processus de construction sociale de la pandémie de Covid-19, parmi

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lesquelles nous citons : les informations sur la pandémie, les restrictions imposées par les autorités comme éléments de (re)construction sociale de la limite de la condition humaine, médicalisation de la vie sociale et perception de la société contemporaine comme société du risque. Dans cet article, nous nous référerons exclusivement aux résultats visant les changements dans la construction identitaire des personnes touchées par la pandémie.

Mots-clés : pandémie, impact psychologique, santé mentale, angoisse, anxiété, frustration

Rezumat
În acest articol se realizează o trecere în revistă a literaturii socio-antropologice privind impactul pandemiilor asupra sănătății mintale a populației. De asemenea, este luat în discuție modul în care această pandemie afectează construcția identității populației afectate de pandemie. Perspectiva istorico-antropologică se referă la epidemia de ciumă care a afectat Europa în Evul Mediu, la impactul ei psihologic din perspectiva relației individului cu alteritatea – ca posibilă sursă de pericol. Articolul prezintă o serie de asemănări și diferențe din perspectiva angoasei, anxietății și frustrării cauzate populației de pandemia de ciumă și pandemia de Covid-19, evidențiind rezultatele studiilor publicate în cursul anului 2020 în reviste indexate în Web of Science, dedicate la impactul pandemiei. de Coronavirus asupra sănătății mintale a populației. Cercetarea s-a axat pe mai multe dimensiuni ale procesului de construcție socială a pandemiei de Covid-19, printre care amintim: informarea asupra pandemiei, restricții impuse de autorități ca elemente de (re)construcție socială a limitei condiției umane, medicalizare. a vieţii sociale şi a percepţiei societăţii contemporane ca societate de risc. În acest articol ne vom referi exclusiv la rezultatele care vizează schimbări în construcția identitară a persoanelor afectate de pandemie.

Cuvinte cheie: pandemie, impact psihologic, sănătate mintală, angoasă, anxietate, frustrare

1. Introduction

The specialized literature in the field of social and humanistic sciences dedicated to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the mental health of the population is very rich and topical. This paper reviews the historical-anthropological perspective on pandemics, with reference to the plague pandemic in Medieval Europe, presenting similarities and differences with the current pandemic situation. Also, a series of papers dedicated to the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of the population, with reference to studies published on this topic during 2020 in journals indexed in the Web of Science, are analyzed.

This research is addressed mainly to public health specialists who are interested in the psychosocial impact of the pandemic, especially on the mental health of the population. We wish to use the results summarized in the literature as a starting point for discussing coherent mental health policies in the post-pandemic period.

2. Pandemics and social fear - historical presentation

Over time, social fear has been directed at various manifestations of a subjective otherness, such as the supernatural (divine, demonic, or magical), the stranger (in the basic sense, as the one belonging to another culture, religion, civilization, or the one perceived to have interests divergent from those of one's own community), the dysmorphic (the one who does not share the same morphic characteristics with the fearful individual, the other race, the „sick” or even the imagined dysmorphic: pygmies, giants etc.).

Fear of illness and of the ill person polarizes social imagination, as it is generated by a threat that can take on the character of the immediate - a spreading pandemic - and about which there is a cultural memory, that includes devastating experiences for the community. The plague is one such example, a disease that has terrified Europe for centuries. Along with the plague, history has seen the devastating effects of pandemics of typhoid fever, Spanish flu, as well as recent threats of pandemics of bird flu, swine flu and their possible mutations.

3. Jean Delumeau about fear in the West. An anthropological perspective on the plague in Europe from 1348-1720

Jean Delumeau (2021), in his volume „Fear in the West”, analyzes, from a historical and anthropological perspective, the collective behaviors during the plague that affected Europe between 1348 and 1720. From the fourteenth century to the sixteenth century, says Jean Delumeau (2021), the plague appeared every year in one part or another of Western Europe. The chroniclers of the time called the successive outbreaks of the disease „the first plague", „the second plague", ... „the sixth plague", in a manner somewhat similar to that in which contemporary epidemiologists count the waves of the current Covid-19 pandemic. The historical experience of pandemics, of which Delumeau speaks (2021), implies the disappearance of up to 40% of the population of the European community in a single such wave of the plague pandemic.

Therefore, the collective memory and, especially, the historiographical memory of humanity generated a feeling of strong negative emotion - especially panic - in the early stages of the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in China, Europe and then around the world.

The quoted author (Delumeau, 2021) shows that, during the plague, there was a state of nervousness and fear that covered the whole of Europe. Boccaccio (2003), in his book „The Decameron”, shows that „a lot of the sick have been so little helped, because of the horror they inspired in healthy people, left to such a cruel mess that we can count, with enough ground, to more than 100,000 the number of those who lost their lives within the walls of the fortress".

4. Historical manifestations of the social fear of pandemics: undertakers

The particularly long period of the plague pandemic and the devastating violence of its waves generated a social fear of pandemics. The appearance of pandemics was attributed to the will of the Divinity, to divine punishment, to fatal astral conjunctures or to „rotten emanations of the soil or subsoil." The theory of miasmas meant that, at the time, people in charge of collecting corpses were protected with masks in the shape of a bird's beak. The image of people wearing masks, but also of isolates from the first period of the Covid-19 pandemic, resonated in the collective mind with the image of plague beaks, about which the population did not have a direct collective memory, but an indirect one, through literary and historical evocations, often exaggerated in terms of the apocalyptic dimensions of the pandemic.

5. The pandemic and the refusal of otherness. The other, as a social danger

The coverage in the media of images of the old pandemics was able to increase the degree of panic and anxiety of the population, especially in the early period of the Covid-19 pandemic, when neither the degree of mortality, nor the spreading rate were known (Rotilă, 2021). In the collective mind - medieval and modern -, the plague was correlated with two other scourges, famine and war, which associated their destructive power with that of the epidemics. Not coincidentally, the Covid-19 pandemic was more or less officially associated with biological weapons, while the president of the United States at that time made statements accusing China of producing biological weapons. Panic over food shortages manifested itself in the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic, but was quickly offset by measures of oversupply of food taken by the authorities.

Associating the pandemic with divine anger generates a feeling of guilt, which amplifies the anxiety of the population, because individuals experience a sense of guilt for the divine punishment inflicted on the community, which could have been brought on by their own sins. In the current pandemic, the lockdown measures also targeted the closure of religious activities, an issue that generated sporadic dissatisfaction, but was quickly settled by official communications and the dialogue that church institutions of most religious denominations had with both the state, as well as with their followers.

6. From former pandemics to actual pandemics: Covid-19

Historical works on the plague focused on the social transmission of the pandemic from individual to individual, an element of similarity to the current pandemic, during which, among the measures taken, was social isolation or quarantine, a measure introduced for the first time to prevent the plague. The epidemiologists consulted by Delumeau (2021) consider that the main plague transmission agent were fleas, that transmitted the disease from the infected or the deceased to the healthy individuals, which was indeed a community transmission, but would not have made it necessary for protective measures such as wearing beak-shaped masks or quarantine to be taken, but rather hygiene and disinsectization measures - generally unknown at the time.

A significant difference between the current pandemic and the plague, described by Jean Delumeau (2021), is the level of mortality, but this level could not be known in the early period of the Covid-19 pandemic, when reports from China, Italy or Spain highlighted a significant number of cases, which exceeded the capacity of health systems to provide care to patients, and mortality was estimated to be high. Uncertainty and ambivalent communication could be sufficient grounds for panic and anxiety among the population, especially among those who inform themselves from alternative media sources, where the phenomenon of infodemic - an epidemic of false information and news - was particularly present and difficult to understand or counter by the authorities.

7. The specialized literature dedicated to the Covid-19 pandemic

An initial search in Web of Science, on June 21, 2021, revealed a number of 64,847 papers that were registered for the Covid-19 pandemic (keywords: „Covid pandemic"). Of these, 4,066 papers are indexed for the keywords „Covid-19 pandemic and anxiety", which shows a particularly broad concern for studying the psychological effects of the pandemic from the perspective of the it anxiety generates. A more refined search, for the keywords „Covid-19 pandemic and social anxiety", provided a result of 1,566 papers on this topic. Compared to these results, only 102 articles were found for the keywords „Covid-19 pandemic and frustration", which shows less interest in addressing the pandemic in terms of frustrations among the population. A total of 18 results were found for the keywords „Covid-19 pandemic and anguish", while 399 results were found for the keywords „Covid-19 pandemic and panic".

8. Stress, anxiety and depression. The pandemic as a source for psychiatric disorders

Conducting a general meta-analysis on stress, anxiety and depression among the population during the Covid-19 pandemic, Salari et al. (2020) show that this epidemic has generated a significant number of psychological disorders, that were added to the actual concern about the physical health of the population. The study shows that the spread of the virus has a significant impact on the population in various communities and, therefore, during the pandemic, psychological measures must be taken to improve the mental health of the population, especially of vulnerable groups.

The research was published on July 6th, 2020 and analyzed papers published in indexed journals in various databases until May 2020. Data on the prevalence of stress resulting from the pandemic were collected by analyzing five studies, on a total sample of 9,074 people, resulting in an incidence of 29.6% of stress among the studied population. The prevalence of anxiety was analyzed according to 17 studies conducted during that period, on a sample of 63,439 people, and it resulted that the level of anxiety affected 31.9% of the investigated population. The prevalence of depression was analyzed according to 14 studies, conducted on a total sample of 44,531 people, being rated at a level of 33.7%.

By comparing these results with the incidence of anxiety in the United States in 2013, according to DSM-5, previously mentioned to be of 13.3%, we can notice a worrying increase in the incidence of this disorder, due to the occurrence of the pandemic. At the time of the study, it was known that the Covid-19 infection causes symptoms that include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, nausea and vomiting. Infected people manifested symptoms of varying severity, from simple cold symptoms - later cases of infected, but asymptomatic people were documented - to severe cases, which manifested respiratory failure or acute respiratory syndrome, that can culminate in the death of the patient. The article by Salari et al. (2020) focuses on the psychological effects of the pandemic - not the actual infection with Covid-19 -, effects highlighted for the individual, the community, the national or the international level, during the period when most states were in a state of lockdown.

At the individual level, the authors of the cited study (Salari et al., 2020), based on previous literature dedicated to the pandemics (Wall et al., 2008), considered it to be predictable that individual behaviors might appear when subjects manifested fear generated by the possibility of their own death, or of their loved ones, the feeling of helplessness and the obligation to manifest a stereotypical social behavior (Salari et al., 2020). The psychological damaging effect of the pandemic can generate a significant psychological crisis, which can be considered a real threat to public mental health (Xiang et al., 2020).

The effect of the psychological crisis is considered to be more pronounced in patients who show the early stages of mental disorders. The major health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic can lead to psychological changes, and could reach a pathological level, both for individuals who are working as health profesionals and for citizens. The most likely pathologies or disorders are caused by fear, anxiety, depression or insecurity (Zhang et al., 2020).

Research consulted by Salari et al. (2020) demonstrate that people in isolation and quarantine show significant levels of anxiety, anger, confusion and stress (Brooks et al., 2020). Also, studies conducted in the early stages of the spread of the Covid-19 virus in Asia show that fear of the spread of the virus, especially in the context of a lack of information about its nature (infection rate, morbidity, mortality), can lead to mental disorders, including some severe ones (Shigemura et al., 2020). The predisposition to mental disorders and even mental illness is accentuated in certain social categories, which include patients infected with Covid-19 and their families, health care workers, children and patients with other mental disorders (Bao et al., 2020).

9. The prevalence of anxiety and depression during the pandemic in the case of health personnel involved in the care of patients infected with Covid-19

Another study on the prevalence of anxiety and depression during the Covid-19 pandemic was conducted among students at health schools in Jordan (Basheti et al., 2021). The study highlights a number of peculiarities regarding the prevalence of anxiety and depression among health personnel involved, in one form or another, in the direct care of patients infected with Covid-19, staff who, therefore, have a high risk of contracting the virus (Huidu, 2020). The cited study shows that there is indeed a high level of anxiety among the surveyed students. Among people who were psychologically tested by means of an online survey, which was based on the scale of anxiety and depression in hospitals (HADS scale), 40% of participants had normal scores for anxiety and depression, 22.4% obtained a normal bordeline score, while 33.8% of the surveyed students had a score considered abnormal in terms of anxiety, and 26.2% of respondents had an abnormal score in terms of depression. Other anxious factors were taken into account, such as smoking, low family income and the use of a specific medication, which were statistically significant when correlated with anxiety. After excluding these additional anxiogenic factors, the percentage of people with high levels of anxiety remained significantly higher than normal in the pre-pandemic periods.

10. The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the incidence of migraines and other neurological disorders

The specialized literature analyzes the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the incidence of migraines and other neurological disorders (Suzuki et al., 2021). Suzuki et al. (2021) show that the Covid-19 pandemic caused a number of neurological disorders, including migraines, sleep disorders, anxiety and depression. These disorders were mainly recorded during the first wave of the pandemic, and the other waves did not show significant variations in the occurrence of these types of disorders. Also, during the first pandemic wave, there was a significant increase in the consumption of neuroleptics, following the increase in stress levels, in parallel with the identification of comorbidities associated with Covid-19. Studies cited by Suzuki et al. (2021) also show that the changing social conditions (social distancing, lockdown, diminished social mobility and freedom of travel) had a significant on people who have not been infected with Covid-19 in various countries (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2020). An increase in the negative impact of the pandemic on hospitalized patients with migraines and acute headaches has also been noted (Kristoffersen et al., 2020). Other works consulted by the same team of researchers highlights the concerns of American psychiatrists regarding the discontinuation of treatment for patients with mental disorders, including those with migraines, an interruption caused by postponements of non-emergency therapies, which have been imposed by many states in order to limit the rate of infection with Covid-19 (Rizzoli & Grazzi, 2020).

11. The predictive role of the intolerance to uncertainty in terms of family life, marital status and health status - in correlation with the perception of the risks of the Covid-19 infection

Other research investigate the predictive role of intolerance to uncertainty - in terms of family life, marital status, raising children, state of health, chronic diseases, caring for the elderly, fear for the welfare of relatives working in health professions, for the life and health condition of relatives or close people diagnosed with Covid-19 etc. All these categories of people were perceived to be at risk of infection – and a huigher risk of occurrence for depression and anxiety, because they are people physically or socially affected by the pandemic (Korkmaz & Güloğlu, 2021). The results of the mentioned research showed that the meaning of life and the intolerance to uncertainty were statistically significant predictors of depression and anxiety. Chronic illness is a statistically significant predictor of anxiety, and the frequency of hand washing is a statistically significant predictor of depression.

12. Qualitative research report

A research on the social construction of the pandemic and the role of anxiety and frustration in the process of its social construction was conducted between April and May 2020 on a number of 110 respondents coming mainly from the NE area of Romania. Along with them being in the sample were also included respondents from other counties in Romania (Cluj, Bucharest), from the Republic of Moldova, as well as Romanian citizens residing in other European Union countries, such as Great Britain, Spain, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Germany. The interviewees were mostly female (62), male (31) and a number of 7 people did not specify their gender. The occupational profile of the respondents included the following categories: salesperson (7), medical staff (6), student (35) pupil (9), teacher (5), economist (3), clerk (1), civil servant (10) , trade worker (3), unemployed (4), housewife (6), retired (7), unspecified (7). As a level of education, the research participants stated that they have a formal education of higher (63) and secondary level (31), while the rest did not specify (9).

The sample was one of opportunity, its selection being made based on the snowball method. The interview operators were the students from the Faculty of Law and Public Administration of the „Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava" University, under the direct coordination of the author of this article. The research focused on several dimensions of the social construction process of the Covid-19 pandemic, among which we mention: information on the pandemic, restrictions imposed by the authorities as elements of the social (re)construction of the limit of the human condition, medicalization of social life and the apperception contemporary society as a risk society.

In this article we will refer exclusively to the results aimed at changes in the identity construction of people affected by the pandemic.

Regarding the construction of the personal identity of the subjects affected by the pandemic, we find that the anxiety and frustration generated by the pandemic threat but also by the restrictive measures imposed by the need to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus are the key elements that operate changes in this discursive instances. We call it pandemic identity. Pandemic identity is generally anxious and anguishing, the identity discourse being built around the fear of otherness as a possible source of illness.

The personal identity of the affected subjects is reconstructed by adherence or non-adherence to the limitations of their own freedom, in order to preserve public safety and health.Wearing a mask is an eloquent example of a closed identity, hiding the face, although pragmatically motivated by public health needs, and is an anthropological reconfiguration of the separation from the Other.

> *I suffered when I couldn't attend a relative's funeral, when I couldn't hug my loved ones, when that mask kept me from seeing a smile or an expression. I missed the Easter customs and traditions (I.E.).*

Such a situation as the one described by the interviewee (I.E.), aiming at the impossibility of participating in funeral rituals, but also the impossibility of an open relationship, through hugs, transforms the spatial distance into real social distance, with profound effects on the sociability of individuals and their alienation, which is a process of dissolving social solidarity.

There were subjects who mentioned that they feel overwhelmed, imprisoned in their own home and in their own life, and dramatic aspects were recorded, such as a subject who considers that his life is over, being faced with limitations that he does not understand, although he accepts them as necessary, but which he cannot integrate in his own personality.

The fear of infection has brought to the forefront of identity construction a series of pre-existing elements in the collective mind, namely the memory of pandemics that have marked humanity throughout history and their association with divine punishment and implicitly with the feeling of personal inefficiency. This feeling of personal inefficiency contrasts with the modern and post-modern society, which, in addition to the medicalization of the social life, is based on a plea for personal development as a justification for the self-emancipation of the individual from any limitation imposed on the human condition.

Prolonged isolation has an effect on the identity construction of subjects, namely an interpretive adrift of the meaning of the notion of sociability - from „living together" and the community accents of social life, to postmodern individualism, that replaces subjectivity as a form of expression of the individual in his own community, with methodological selfishness as a rejection of the society, presented as a source of risks for the daily well-being of the individual.

The perception of the post-pandemic society as a „post-apocalyptic" reconstruction, according to the anthropological scenario highlighted by the Science Fiction literature, is exaggerated in the speeches of some respondents, by contagion with elements of fake news and conspiracy theories, already abundant in pandemic speeches. During the research period, when the state of emergency was in force in Romania, this process became more and more acute as time passed and pandemic waves followed one another. However, the discourse on the post-pandemic society as a re-humanization of normality is opposed to the vision of a post-society, with strong migrations in the virtual sphere and the virtualization of the social space, but also with postmodern accents, inspired by the discourse of Lipovetsky (1996) on duty. A society enclosed both in its own anxieties and in the limits of public discourse, that encourages self-isolation and discourages solidarity, can have the effect of an individualistic identity construction, in which communication with the other is based on a succession of unequal transactions, with the main goal of survival and not social or personal development.

13. Conclusions

The research papers presented in this article allow us to emphasize the acute nature of mental disorders that occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic and that severely affected the quality of life of psychiatric or neurological patients, but also of people who do not usually suffer of mental disorders, whether or not they have been diagnosed with Covid-19.

The works cited in this study may lead to the conclusion that the most important variables that influence both depression and anxiety were intolerance to uncertainty and lack of meaning in life. Pandemics, both historically and at present, have a number of common elements, namely the depreciation of the individual's relationship with otherness, feelings of helplessness, guilt and lack of control over their own destiny - which, ultimately, are sources of anguish, anxiety and frustration. These feelings, once they become chronic, turn into psychic conditions from which the individual can no longer find a way out, thus gaining a pathological nature.

The post-pandemic society starts with accents of social pathology, and the post-pandemic identity reconstruction should remove the perspective of the medicalized society, that finds a therapy for any situation specific to the human condition.

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„ESCAPING FROM SELF” AND REBUILDING IDENTITY

NICU GAVRILUŢĂ[1]

Abstract
This article proposes an understanding of the issue of personal / social identity as the result of binary choices such as yes or no. They make up a fractal complex of our own lives. Depending on these choices, each of us builds and rebuilds our life, but also our own identity. Some of the hypostases of our identity are quantifiable and captured by empirical sociological analyzes. I illustrated the idea with the results of field sociological research on European identity from 2015-1017. This classic identity - focused on social representations of country, language, religion, family and national culture - is reconfigured as a result of „self-escape” (David Le Breton) and the magic of new technologies. The escape into the white space of the virtual world is often accompanied by the reconfiguration of otherness by identifying with social otherness in the guise of radical religious movements or classical religious denominations. To all these challenges and problems that appeared as a result of the recomposition of the identity, we also proposed a series of solutions.

Keywords: choices, identity, mental form, self-escape, white space, new technologies, religious otherness.

Resumé
Cet article propose une compréhension de la question de l'identité personnelle/sociale comme résultat de choix binaires tels que oui ou non. Ils constituent un complexe fractal de nos propres vies. En fonction de ces choix, chacun de nous construit et reconstruit sa vie, mais aussi sa propre identité. Certaines hypostases de notre identité sont quantifiables et saisies par des analyses sociologiques empiriques. J'ai illustré l'idée avec les résultats d'une recherche sociologique de terrain sur l'identité européenne de 2015 à 1017. Cette identité classique - centrée sur les représentations sociales du pays, de la langue, de la religion, de la famille et de la culture nationale - est reconfigurée sous l'effet de « l'évasion » (David Le Breton) et de la magie des nouvelles technologies. L'évasion dans l'espace blanc du monde virtuel s'accompagne souvent de la reconfiguration de l'altérité en s'identifiant à l'altérité sociale sous le couvert de mouvements religieux radicaux ou de confessions religieuses classiques. Nous avons également proposé une série de solutions à tous ces défis et problèmes qui ont surgi à la suite de la recomposition de l'identité.

Mots-clés: choix, identité, forme mentale, fuite de soi, espace blanc, nouvelles technologies, altérité religieuse.

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Rezumat
Articolul de față propune o înțelegere a problematicii identității personale/sociale ca fiind rezultatul unor alegeri binare de tipul da sau nu. Ele alcătuiesc un complex fractalic al propriei noastre vieți. În funcție de aceste alegeri, fiecare dintre noi ne construim și reconstruim viața, dar și propria identitate. O parte dintre ipostazele identității noastre sunt cuantificabile și surprinse de analizele sociologice empirice. Am ilustrat ideea cu rezultatele cercetării sociologice de teren privind identitatea europeană din perioada 2015-1017. Această identitate de tip clasic - axată pe reprezentări sociale privind țara, limba, religia, familia și cultura națională - este reconfigurată ca urmare a „evadării din sine” (David Le Breton) și a magiei exercitată de noile tehnologii. Evadarea în spațiul alb al lumii virtuale este însoțită deseori de reconfigurarea alterității prin identificarea cu alteritatea socilală în ipostaza mișcărilor religioase radicale sau a denominațiunilor religioase clasice. La toate aceste provocări și probleme apărute ca urmare a recompunerii identității am propus și o serie de soluții.

Cuvinte cheie: alegeri, identitate, forma mentis, evadare din sine, spațiu alb, noi tehnologii, alteritate religioasă.

1. Identity is the result of our choices

"Each individual is made up of a wardrobe of characters in which they fit, but not in a random way, because each one moves within an identity spectrum, a nimb whose meaning is indiscernible and which only circumstances highlight. He never accesses the ensemble of his characters, possesses only a life and not the infinity of lives he could have lived” (Le Breton, 2018, p. 229). Our own identity contains a lot of virtualities that, when they come into life, have the faces of strange characters. These characters are part of the content of what David Le Breton calls to be an *identity spectrum.* Their number is very large and I do not think it can be known. „No one can live all the virtualities that are in it, they cannot even imagine them. Every moment that passes leaves behind it an infinity of possible lives that have held only one breath” (Le Breton, 2018, p. 238). For these lives that have me as the main character to cross the boundary between virtual and real, our choices are required.

Thus, a recognized truth is that each of us is the sum of our choices. In life we are often faced with binary choices of the type *yes* or *no.* All these choices form a complex system of life understood as „a fractal in the Hibert space” (Eliade, Culianu, 2007, p. 20).

A choice or refusal creates a new identity. It involves combining *mentis form* in different dosages (representations about country, language, religion, family, national culture). Therefore, each of us has the chance to activate some unique hypostases of our own identity. Theoretically, their number is infinite. Basically, he's up to our own options. By saying *yes*, I make it possible for a new character from my own identity spectrum to enter the world. In his mirror I recognize myself more or less, but he is an updated *alter-ego* of mine. Refusing a certain option, I remain in a position to preserve my identity. In conclusion, life forces us to choose and to permanently (re)build our identity hypostases. Some of them are also captured by sociological research of empirical type.

2. The residual pillars of the Romanian identity

In Romanian culture, the theme of identity has always been a permanent concern, some even obsessive. The historian Ioan Aurel Pop blames it on the „terror of history” (Mircea Eliade), the fact that the Romanians were historically and fatedly located on the border between three great empires. However, almost miraculously, Romanians have survived the times and challenges of history. Why? Among other things, because they had and have a national identity of their own. In a clear, concise and profound formulation, this national identity refers to „the Romanians' way of being and feeling together, on the basis of several characteristics, such as language (speech), origin (stirpea), culture (spiritual creations and adjacent institutions), religion (Christianity), territory, customs (traditions), etc.” (Pop, 2019, p. 22). It is interesting to notice the subtle fact observed by Ioan Aurel Pop that only together and in interaction the five elements really define the Romanian identity.

This fact is also confirmed by relatively recent sociological analyses. Thus, a *Pew Research Center* research from 2015-1017 was conducted on a representative sample of 56,000 major subjects from 34 countries of Central, Western, Northern and Eastern Europe (Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views of Minorities, and Key Social Issues, 2018). The general theme was centered around a major research question: *how do current Europeans (still) represent their national identity?* The results were more than surprising. Thus, being a *Christian* is an important component of national identity in eastern European countries. For example, 74% of Romanians identify Romanianism with Christianity. For them, „to be a true Romanian is to be a Christian". With this score, Romanians are placed on the 5th place in Central and Eastern Europe, after Armenians (82%), Georgians (81%), Serbs (78%) and Greeks (76%). In the last five places we find highly secularized European countries, such as Latvia (11%), Sweden (15%), Estonia (15%), Denmark (19%) and Belgium (19%). For the latter, Christianity, regardless of its denomination, is not an important component of national identity.

This self-presentation of identity manifests itself against the background of the declaration of 98% of Romanians as Christians. This fact comes with a consistent dose of *conservatism.* For example, only 29% of the Romanians surveyed would agree that a Jew or a Muslim should be part of their neighbors or their families.

Another essential pillar of identity is the *national culture.* The Pew Research Center's research during that period also looked at how Europeans still represent their own culture today. The results reveal high and very high scores on belief in the values of national culture for Eastern Europeans: Greeks (89%), Georgians (85%), Armenians (85%), Bulgarians (69%), Russians (68%), Bosnians (66%), Romanians (66%) and Serbs (65%).

Some of these values are related to the old, pre-Christian *popular culture.* They are stronger in the area of Central and Eastern Europe. They refer, among other things, to beliefs in fate, curses, spells and the evil eye. It is not by chance that Armenians believe in *fate* in the percentage of (83%), Bosnians (80%), Moldovans (75%), Lithuanians (74%) and Georgians (73%). Similarly, 68% of Romanians believe in the implacable force of destiny. At the bottom of the ranking of belief in fate are Italians (24%), English (25%), Swiss (28%), Germans and French (31%).

Beliefs in the unusual strength *of the evil eye* also achieved significant scores: Latvians and Greeks (66%), followed by Ukrainians (60%), Armenians (50%) and Moldovans (57%). In their turn, Romanians believe in the evils of the evil eye in the percentage of 44%. The ranking of European countries with low scores on the belief in the evil eye is as follows: Sweden and Denmark (9%), Finland (10%), the Netherlands 12%), respectively the United Kingdom, Germany and Austria (13%). Equally high scores were obtained by sociologists in other areas of the world (sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, for example). Why? Because there, as in Eastern Europe, the old, indigenous cultures were particularly strong.

This is explained by the existence of different histories in these areas of the world. In Eastern Europe, for example, Christianity did not have the force of annihilating traditional, pre-Christian cultures, as it happened in Central and Western Europe. In the eastern part of the continent (including Romania) we have not had confessional wars, monastic orders with a missionary role, scholastic disputes, inquisitorial processes or radical attitudes of rejection of popular culture, as it happened in the other part of the continent. Therefore, traditional culture has survived time better, becoming today a very important part of the representation of national identity.

Another indicator of the representation of national identity is *the fact that you were born in your country.* Here, Romanians rank first in Europe considering 88% that „being a good Romanian" implies being born in your country. They are followed by Bulgarians (85%), Hungarians (83%), Poles (82%) and Portuguese (81%). For all of them, being born in your own country is a very important element of your national identity. On the contrary, Swedes (22%), Danes (36%), Norwegians (41%), Dutch (41%) and Germans (48%) are convinced that their national identity is not significantly linked to being born in your own country.

Similarly, *the cult* of family and *ancestors* was another equally important indicator of how Europeans assume their own identity. Thus, in descending order of importance given to the family and cult of ancestors, the European ranking is as follows: Armenians (92%), Georgians (90%), Hungarians (89%), Romanians (87%) and Greeks (85%). Conversely, the European countries that do not significantly link their own identity to the family and the respect given to their forefathers are Sweden (21%), Denmark (35%), the Netherlands (38%), Norway (48%) and Belgium (42%).

In contrast, when we consider the link between speaking the *national language* and identity, the situation is completely different. The top of the association of the national language spoken and one's own identity is no longer dominated by Eastern Europeans. On their first are Hungarians (98%), followed by Norwegians (97%), Dutch (96%), Portuguese (95%) and Czechs (95%). The countries that achieved the lowest scores on this indicator are Belarus (54%), Ukraine (62%), Moldova (66%), Finland (68%) and Bosnia (69%).

3. Identity crisis and self-escape

Beyond all these sociological considerations, what we can certainly argue is that individual and social identity are subject to permanent challenges today. They are permanently configured and reconfigured. „Identity has become an essential notion for the issues of every individual as well as of society in crisis today; the question of identity fuels a „radical uncertainty over the continuity and solidarity of the self" (Gauchet, 2004, p. 257). (...). To maintain, as an individual, a place of your own in the bosom of social ties involves a strain, an effort" (Le Breton, 2018, p. 11).

At the limit, these social ties can be greatly diminished or even suspended. They end up being weakened during the pandemic crisis, but also after the end of the pandemic. It is not infrequently that we get to communicate with others through the means of new technologies. We graciously avoid communion because we have become accustomed to loneliness. For some of us, it has come to be second nature. Dominated by loneliness we prefer, out of convenience, *contactless interaction.* In the Western world, it has become a real *lifestyle:* „we attend yoga classes through an app on the phone, we „talk" with a robot at customer service, and not with a real person, we attend a religious service live from our own living room or we do our shopping through Amazon Go, the new chain of stores of the tech giant, where you can shop without having direct contact with other people" (Hertz, 2021, p. 19).

This form of limit to contactless human interactions reconfigures our identity. The theme is extensively analyzed in one of his books – *The Escape from Self. A contemporary temptation*– by French sociologist David Le Breton. He observed and finely analyzed a strange contemporary phenomenon: *the self-flight of modern man.* Some of us get tired of being ourselves anymore. We feel through all the pores of our being the desire to „take a well-deserved vacation", as the author says. We escape from ourselves into the anonymity of social decay. According to the expression of David Le Breton, from *the person* we become *the persona*, that is, a mask behind which nothing is hidden. We retreat strategically (not permanently) into a *white space* of detachment from the world. Defining it, David Le Breton associates it with the *wu-wei* principle of Chinese philosophy. It is an attitude of temporary detachment from the world and the desire to let things be, without getting involved in their natural flow.

A sure way to unseal and multiply our identity is that offered by *virtual worlds.* „Entering chats, forums, or online video games and the parallel worlds of the Internet, by multiplying pseudonyms and avatars, is a simple way to free ourselves from identity constraints" (Le Breton, 2018, p. 113). So sometimes identity is felt as a burden from which we want to free ourselves. An easy solution would be to use new technologies and get lost in the magic of virtual worlds. Here we multiply our existence and build false identities (pseudonyms or avatars), thus trying to live other lives completely different from the real one.

For example, we can give up our real student identity and make a false one, obviously if the technique allows us to disguise it. Behind this virtual mask we can freely relate to anyone in this world: „an engineer from Tokyo, an unemployed man from Berlin, a teenage girl from Oslo and a technician from Vancouver (...)" (Le Breton, 2018, p. 114). Obviously, all of them can also assume false virtual identities. In this case it would be a dialogue of virtual masks worn by those frustrated by their real identity. They may relate wonderfully in their virtual universes, but they may prove to be sociopaths or socially autistic in their real worlds. They can be seduced by the magic of freedom in virtual spaces, without taking on elementary real-world responsibilities. In the latter case, adventurers who betray their identity can build a new *lifestyle* based on the avoidance of social contacts and the absence of natural, human responsibilities.

What is interesting is that these virtually constructed avatars are *ideal expressions* of one's own identity. We don't project ourselves on social media platforms as we are, but the way we want to be. We intensely publicize only our ideal image. In other words, „the life we post online is made up of a carefully selected gallery of happy moments, parties and anniversaries, sunny beaches and dishes that leave our mouths watering" (Hertz, 2021, pp. 139-140). But we all know that the reality is quite different. However, sometimes we go so far as to look like we want to beautify our real face to look as much like our ideal avatar as possible. The FaceTune application from the Apple App Store, for example, allows us to discover a filter „that can smooth the skin, define the cheekbones and enlarge the eyes, thus creating a slightly improved version of our own face, under the appearance of an innocent *selfie*" (Hertz, 2021, p. 141). There are then other digital editing programs, writes Noreena Hertz, which improve our face by „brightening our complexion, elongating our jaw line and thus thinning our cheeks, whitening our teeth, redrawing our nose, contour and width of our face" (Hertz, 2021, p. 142). With this image of his own manifestly improved face we go to a plastic surgeon and ask him to reshape our face to resemble our ideal avatar.

4. Reconstruction of identity by identification with religious otherness

Another method frequently assumed, especially by young people, of reinventing identity is the *religious* one. „Adherence to one religious group is a renunciation of the constraints of identity, a retreat into the other. The sect (or fundamentalist group in any other aspect) severs any connection with the world, establishing its own dimension of self-proclaimed transcendence in order to move geographically or symbolically away from an impure, pagan or devoid of self-consciousness humanity. With its flat convictions presented as sacred truths, with its rigid hierarchy, it eliminates the infinite complexity of the world. It is intended to be totalizing, if not totalitarian in its actions. It simplifies the world to the extreme around a few elementary truths and specific ways of functioning, finally offering a lot of trouble” (Le Breton, 2018, 127).

In this situation, the one in which the young man in crisis withdraws is another *collective one.* Otherness is the social group, more precisely the sect or the fundamentalist group. Both hypostases of saving otherness are extreme versions of religious fact. More precisely, they internalize the absolute and absolutize certain values and social behaviors. This religious offer is doubled by an extreme negativization of the Other. The other – the world, the society – are seen as hypostases of the ultimate, total human degradation. The salvation of the one in identity crisis comes from the full renunciation of the old world and the sincere assumption of the new religious path.

In conclusion, the one in an identity crisis finds in the offer of the radical religious movement to which he adheres „a secure limit, a precise container to find his landmarks, an ideology to build a place under the sun and finally feel a development of the sense of his own existence. Palliative for an unbearable depressive feeling, it gives at first simple and firm answers to the great questions of existence, where our societies have lost some of their anthropological orientation, exposing the individual to an unlimited freedom, but difficult to assume (Le Breton, 2018, p. 129).

There are also different situations in which identity adherence to a religious group is made as a result of the discovery of a *religious vocation of a devotional type.* This is also the case for ultra-Orthodox Jews in Israel and other parts of the world. From a clothing point of view, they are easily recognizable: they wear black hats with wide brims, long cloaks and white shirts. Today, ultra-Orthodox Jews „make up about 12% of Israel's population, a percentage that is likely to increase to 16% by 2030” (Hertz, 2021, p. 29). Although they have an unhealthy lifestyle (food with butter, fat and sugar) and modest incomes (54% of them live below the poverty level), they still have a life expectancy above the average in Israel.

How is this explained? Noreena Hertz resorts to a study and explains the increased longevity of ultra-Orthodox Jews through „*participation in* religious services” (Hertz, 2021, p. 31). This would „increase life expectancy by up to seven years” (Hertz, 2021, p 31). With honesty, Noreena Hertz invokes other studies that explain the longer life that most ultra-Orthodox Jews live by their intense *religious faith.* I personally credit the second explanation. Religious faith can often work wonders, while mere participation in a religious event or intense community life (close family and collective ties) are not enough to achieve *well-being*, so necessary to increase life expectancy.

5. Conclusions

The issue of identity is a complex and susceptible to multiple interpretations. I had in mind the thesis that the individual/social identity is, above all, the result of our own choices. We have at our disposal an infinite identity spectrum and we are destined to choose and update several aspects of our identity. Some of them can also be captured by sociological field research. We presented the results of such a complex research conducted in Europe by the Pew Research Center.

In view of the fact that the pillars of national identity are still to be found today in the European social mindset, we must take into account the challenges of today's world in regards to identity. Some of these relate to the escape from oneself and the flight into the white space of virtual worlds created by new technologies. Other challenges concern the reconfiguration of identity as a result of religious reconversion and identification with radical religious movements or classical denominations.

To all these diseases we can think and announce certain solutions. In order to avoid escaping from himself, David Le Breton proposed walking, sports, trips, trips, hiking, meetings with friends at the seaside or in the mountains, temporary retreat to the house of parents / grandparents, discreet living for a while at the monastery, reading, writing, listening to one's favorite music, meditation, sleep, long distance driving, etc. In other words, we all frequently feel the need to escape to a special space of a comforting silence and the dreamy bliss. This place is a kind of *intermundium* between the social world and nothingness. It is a form of suspension of life and an imitation of death. This is precisely what we have all deepened during the pandemic crisis. This beneficial and comforting retreat and we will practice therapeutically throughout our entire life.

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"I AM LARGE, I CONTAIN MULTITUDES": IDENTITY, ALTERITY AND THE TRANSITIONAL SELF

GABRIELA IOANA MOCAN [1]

Abstract:
What is identity and what makes us be who we are? The concept of identity has changed considerably over the past century, the subject finding itself at the intersection of nation, gender, the rise of multiculturalism and colonial history. While we are born with no self-awareness and our first point of reference is the world outside us, navigating existence involves a constant self-analysis and the realisation that any attempt at defining ourselves will result in newer interrogations. Aiming to provide some guidance to this relentless quest by introducing few of the key concepts used in identity research, the present paper addresses the fluidity of the self by focusing on the identity-alterity nexus and by prioritising the 'becoming' over the 'being'. Identity is, thus, always shifting and never a given; it is a transitional process oscillating between self-identification and identification made by the others, a puzzle whose interlocked pieces can be moved around and change in meaning.

Keywords: identity and alterity, self-presentation, external evaluation, belonging, alter-ego, becoming.

Résumé :
Qu'est-ce que l'identité et qu'est-ce qui fait de nous qui nous sommes ? Le concept d'identité a considérablement changé au cours du siècle dernier, le sujet se trouvant à l'intersection de la nation, du genre, de la montée du multiculturalisme et de l'histoire coloniale. Alors que nous sommes nés sans conscience de soi et que notre premier point de référence est le monde extérieur à nous, naviguer dans l'existence implique une auto-analyse constante et la prise de conscience que toute tentative de nous définir entraînera de nouvelles interrogations. Visant à fournir quelques conseils à cette quête incessante en introduisant quelques-uns des concepts clés utilisés dans la recherche sur l'identité, le présent article aborde la fluidité du soi en se concentrant sur le lien identité-altérité et en donnant la priorité au « devenir » sur le 'être'. L'identité est donc toujours mouvante et jamais donnée ; c'est un processus de transition oscillant entre l'auto-identification et l'identification faite par les autres, un puzzle dont les pièces imbriquées peuvent être déplacées et changer de sens.

Mots-clés : identité et altérité, présentation de soi, évaluation externe, appartenance, alter-ego, devenir.

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Rezumat:
Ce este identitatea și ce ne face să fim ceea ce suntem? Conceptul de identitate s-a schimbat considerabil de-a lungul secolului trecut, subiectul aflându-se la intersecția dintre națiune, gen, ascensiunea multiculturalismului și istoria colonială. Deși ne naștem fără conștiință de sine și primul nostru punct de referință este lumea din afara noastră, navigarea existenței implică o autoanaliză constantă și conștientizarea că orice încercare de a ne defini va avea ca rezultat interogații mai noi. Cu scopul de a oferi o îndrumare acestei căutări neobosite prin introducerea câtorva dintre conceptele cheie utilizate în cercetarea identității, prezenta lucrare abordează fluiditatea sinelui concentrându-se pe legătura identitate-alteritate și prin prioritizarea „devenirii" față de „ființă". Identitatea este, astfel, mereu în schimbare și niciodată un dat; este un proces de tranziție care oscilează între autoidentificare și identificarea făcută de ceilalți, un puzzle ale cărui piese interconectate pot fi mutate și se pot schimba în sen

Cuvinte cheie: identitate și alteritate, autoprezentare, evaluare externă, apartenență, alter-ego, devenire.

1. Introduction

Far from the ages in which 'roles' were distributed on a social level, for they were assumed in a natural manner by the individuals who seldom had the chance to question them, a rather heavy task lies before contemporary man: he must face the toil resulting in the demarcation of his place in the world. While, in the past, society provided the individual with substantial identity references that he himself assumed rather unconsciously, contemporary times are less generous in this respect, leaving him to come up with the answer to the burning question of „Who am I?" himself.

Much too often, we are defined by ascribed identities that confine us to categories established and used by those around us. We are witnessing a shift from the collective individual to the self-focused individual, from a holistic conception of identity to one that is highly individualized. This, of course, does not mean the individual is completely disconnected from his surroundings; instead, identity can equally be defined as that part of the self-concept derived from the awareness of belonging to one or more groups or social categories (Tajfel, 1978). Belonging to a group may have positive or negative connotations, depending on social comparison: the mere need of positive evolution of the self equals the need to belong to groups evaluated positively in relation with other groups. Identity is thus portrayed as a concept that takes into account both the individual conscience and the social experience of the person, integrating it into a psychosocial context.

Coming back to this significant paradigm shift that marks the transition from a time when a person's identity was assigned from the outside to one in which its definition is assumed individually, we can safely state that these are the times when individuals must embark on a journey of ceaseless life examination. This self-quest is certainly identifiable throughout the entire history of mankind; however, what makes it into a significant trait of the 20th century is its generalization, the fact that during this period it has manifested itself in the form of social conformity. In this century, finding one’s self becomes an obligation that seems to function on a large scale, targeting everyone, beyond any individual trait (social origin, age, profession, etc.). The 20th century is thus the period in which a key role has been assigned to the individual in defining his own identity, which has become almost exclusively the result of an individual endeavour.

The powerful doubts cast by the 20th century over one’s identity become an obvious and indisputable explanation for the massively increased number of autobiographical writings. We do not merely refer here to the productions that aspire to belong to the realm of literature, but to attempts of identity clarification through in extenso writing. This phenomenon, observed and analyzed by all of the humanities confirms identity confusion as a defining trait of this century, and all those who lay down their life story on paper are haunted by the anxiety, confusion or frustration they hope to tame through writing. Their ordeal will be appeased in finding a satisfactory answer – through writing – to the burning question related to who they actually are. We believe, therefore, that any form of autobiography, whether written or oral, originates from the impossibility of the seeker to provide a clear and satisfactory answer to this question. Identity itself is neither a fixed formula, nor a presumed good, and the challenge of the search bears higher value than the spreading of certain convictions for one’s self and for others.

Another variable that occurs when outlining identity is represented by the perception of permeability or non-permeability of the reference group so that the perception of border permeability leads to individual strategies, whereas border impermeability leads to group strategies. Also, the individual’s encounter with a multicultural context requires a re-signification and the development of strategies to clear up the confusion implied by the different reference codes. These situations, whose essential characteristic is the symbolic relationship between identity and alterity, often socially compare groups considered unequal from the point of view of a criterion perceived as important at that moment (minority-majority relations, situations of immigration or integration in a wider geopolitical framework which requires the fulfilment of certain conditions).

According to existential theories, identity is „founded on the belief in ‘essences’, in essential realities, in substances both immutable and originary” (Dubar, 2003, p. 7), it is immutable reality, essence outside time limits, it is permanence in time. From an ontological perspective, the logic of categories and genres orders the permanence of empirical beings through the identical essence (eidos). Ipseity (the specific difference) conceives the differentiation from the other essences with a view to defining the specificity of the essence. In contrast to Heraclitus’s theory, which states that there are no permanent essences (pantarheï - everything flows), Dubar asserts that „identity is not something that remains necessarily ‘identical’, but rather the result of a contingent ‘identification’. It is the result of a double language operation: differentiation and generalization” (Dubar, 2003, p. 9). In other words, singularity signifies difference.

2. Negotiating Oneself as Another

Starting with prehistoric times, man distinguished between body and soul, between I and the other (identity and alterity), even if relatively instinctually and not through complex mental processes. People disguised themselves as animals, dressed in animal skins, wore masks and imitated animal movements and cries. The mask now plays an important role in determining the distance from and closeness to others and it will continue to be used without a doubt. On the world's great theater stages the mask represents a mode of manifestation of the universal self. Generally speaking, it does not alter the personality of the wearer, which means that the self is immutable, unaffected by its accidental manifestations. This, however, is only an appearance, since the change imposed by the actor's adaptation to the role, through his identification with the divinity he imitates, is the very purpose of the performance. „I call it the mimetic faculty, the nature that culture uses to create second nature, the faculty to copy, imitate, make models, explore difference, yield into and become Other" (Taussig, 1993, p. 235).

Identity negotiation is often performed behind masks, and in a confusion of roles: author–actor–character. Putting on a mask is one of the means of signaling a certain identity or any changes that might occur to it. For renowned anthropologist Donald Pollock (1995), masks are not simple images or direct representations of the objects or beings they portray, but rather symbols and identity clues. Masks represent only one of the countless semiotic systems, which are linked together by their conventional use in disguising, transforming, or displaying a certain identity. According to Taussig's theory, there is no identity, only masks of appearance, „longings lounging in the interstices of quaint necessities [...] nevertheless the masks of appearances do more than suffice. They are an absolute necessity" (1993, p. 254). By imitating the other and abandoning my own identity, I become the desire to be another, a social construct.

Notions such as 'internal' vs 'social' or 'personal self' vs 'collective self' explain the so-called interactive performances in which the individual manifests certain aspects of his identity, according to a particular context. In this respect, what people convey to others does not necessarily coincide with their self-perception. Freud (1960), with his famous distinction between the ego (self-in-the-world) and id (self), along with Snyder (1974) and Goffman (1956), are but a few of the advocates of a fragmented self, of the division of the individual and of the struggle between self-identification and the identification made by others. And it is this very struggle that leads contemporary man to move beyond boundaries that remain fluid, difficult to define and constantly reconstructed within specific social, economic or geo-political contexts (Baumann, 1996, 1997).

In contrast, in interacting with others, individuals communicate aspects of their self through a series of signals that others need to learn how to read and evaluate. The negotiation between self-presentation and external evaluation can be viewed as a performance that helps in the construction of the individual's social identity. While the internal identity is constructed and maintained in its entirety by the individual, social identity is perceived externally, based not on intentions, but on expression and the manner in which an individual's presentation is perceived.

Taken together, similarity and difference are the two dynamic principles of identity, the core of social life. Inside a group each individual opens up toward the other (both consciously and unconsciously) in order to get to know himself. Identity therefore involves a process of constant communication: putting myself together with the beings of others. I am what I am (myself) only in contrast with another. Through reflection I draw my individuality. Accordingly, the environment plays an essential part in the production and perception of social identities, the public version of the self being influenced by the internalized version, which in turn evolves based on the individual's experiences. The more an experience incites the notion of self for an individual in relation to society, the greater its impact on his identity will be.

3. Identity and Alterity: towards a Fluid Self

Identity is permanently constructed on the basis of the I-alter relationship dynamics, both at an individual level and at a group level. With a view to this, we can outline two dimensions related to the way in which identity interacts with its surroundings: an objective dimension that refers to the way in which privileged identity carriers shift when the context changes and a subjective dimension pointing to the way in which individuals see themselves or the group they belong to. At this level, the identity-alterity relationship takes centre stage through representations of all that unites or all that differentiates individuals or groups from one another. Identity is, thus, constructed by means of a 'reaction', either to distance itself from the image the other has about him/ herself or to conform to it (Camilleri, 1990). Ultimately, identity is an individual reality, pervaded by personal meanings (Zavalloni, 1984).

The opposition between identity and alterity dominates the threefold structure of a person, alterity itself being divided into complementary alterity (you) and absolute alterity (him). We refer here to the transposition of the self into another soul, even to a personality split, an apparent hypertrophy of the 'I', an 'I' that nevertheless paradoxically extends into alters of ipseity by successive reflections. However, these 'dissipations' take it constantly further apart from its particular self. Therefore, the connection put forth as a reference point in the title of this endeavour is not a dialectic antinomy – identity vs alterity – for it becomes identity and alterity, or better yet both identity and alterity at the same time. We live in a postmodern world that alters the border of our social self and that exposes our identity within the paradoxical „I am another". Identity is exposed in a double sense: it is firstly displayed, (ex)posed, as a series, image, representation, affiliation, but always as individual or collective memory, then exposed to the danger of being disbanded.

Alterity represents the belonging to the same class, paradox of identity, unique and divided, singularity and belonging: „There is no identity without alterity" (Dubar, 2003). There are two types of identification: identity for the other (created by the others) and identity for oneself (created by one's self). The two do not necessarily need to coincide. They will only coincide when „a human being internalizes their belonging inherited and defined by the others as the only possible or even imaginable" (Dubar, 2003, p. 10). Otherness is, hence, „necessary to the constitution of identity and its world. At the same time otherness resists categories that tend to limit it, or eliminate it altogether, subject it to the identity of the same. Otherness obstacles integrity, compact identity, the monologic totality" (Petrilli & Ponzio, 2019, p. 48).

The alter and the self maintain a symbolic relationships of identification or of positive /negative differentiation. These relations and symbolic reactions actually constitute a preview of the behaviours required by the external environment so that, upon meeting other people, an individual thinks and acts by duplicating the imaginary relationships he cultivates with alter on a symbolic level. Extreme behaviour is an extension of mental attitudes and representations, as an expression of each individual's psychosocial identity (Zavalloni, 1984). An individual's discriminatory behaviour stems from an alter representation focused on a polarized egomorphism: positive for the self, negative for the alter.

Overall, one person's representational framework stands at the intersection of the 'identity axis' (self-other) with the 'affectivity axis' (positive-negative). In order to highlight this and starting from a representational perspective of identity, Zavalloni (1984) distinguishes between four quadrants: the positive pole of the self, the positive pole of the alter, the negative pole of the self, the negative pole of the alter. In accordance with this theoretical framework, social reality exists in representation, being the result of cognitive and affective mechanisms that distill information. Hence, social perception becomes the main instrument in constructing the social world, construction that triggers individuals' behaviour and determines the evolution of groups and individuals.

The alter-ego resulted from the splitting of the self, which involves being aware of another, was overwhelmingly regarded by critics as an anomaly, a serious sign of derailment leading to the torpor of alienation. Hence, 'a foreign thought' that might arise within any of us at a given moment resembles the hallucinatory perception of a disturbed self that contaminates the universe with its own agony. The coexistence of multiple personalities within one and the same individual is, however, no longer considered a mental disorder and is no longer mistaken for schizophrenia, the crucial contribution of F.W. Putnam's complex study stemming from the problematisation of the alter: „The existence of these entities raises questions related to the fundamental conviction regarding the unity of one's personality and the structure of one's conscience" (1989, p. 26). The author underlines further: „I believe evidence suggests that we were all born with a potential for multiple personalities and that, during normal development, we more or less manage to consolidate an integrated sense of self." (idem, p. 34) We can, therefore, refer to the instability of the self as something that is „fragile, fragmented and dispersed rather than integrated, as well as fluid, mutable and resistant to definition" (Scott, 2015, p. 16).

When contemplating the identity-alterity nexus, the symbolic image that comes to mind is that of the accordion in search of its own sounds: starting out with a clear knowledge of its own shape, but not its content (I, who can see my contour in the mirror, still, not understanding what is behind this surface), opens up with sounds produced by the expanding bellows and the pressing of the buttons (opening toward alterity, revealing the layers of identity and becoming aware of the differences, meeting in a space of common existence), for it only to return to its initial position, enriched, however, by a myriad of musical notes (opening toward the world, translated in terms of self-knowledge). Recently, at a conference entitled What to do about the black horse?, Romanian philosopher Gabriel Liiceanu spoke about the drama of love, which, according to him, consists of this stepping out of one's own person and placing oneself outside of it: „Every love lasts as long as its ecstasy, as long as the two (people) remain in a place that is outside of them – and outside of others – a place that holds and contains both of them. But as any ek-stasis, any placement of yourself outside yourself and any suspension of one's own breath are limited, every love gets tired in its own externalization or ex-propriation" (Liiceanu, 2011). We are wondering, however, if this 'externalization' of the being could be the driving force of love and the source of self-knowledge. For once we have stepped out of the grip of a shrunken shirt to greet the other, we are able to return to a brighter place: that of the awakened self.

4. Concluding remarks

The issue of personal identity is raised in terms of identifying the necessary and sufficient conditions for maintaining this identity, since our beings cannot be reduced to a constant state, but rather that of a 'becoming'. Therefore, in order not to lose the true essence of personal identity, three elements will be put forth which, in our view, are defining and necessary in understanding the connection between identity and alterity, namely: memory, conscience and perception. Our identity is defined by a stream of experiences filtered through self-consciousness, which in turn is based on the power of our memory to place the current experience within a temporal continuum. Our personal histories are histories of lived experiences and this fact is essential in understanding one's own person. As pointed out by Alisdair MacIntyre (1981), the integrity of an individual's life is conditioned by its perception as a narrative that develops from birth to death.

We are tempted to assimilate our own identity at the level of the ego/I, which „is revealed to us as an independent reality, unique and well differentiated from the rest of our existence." With this temptation, identity is consciously constructed within the space of a personal history, based on what we know about ourselves, on what constitutes the uniqueness of our own existence and of the experiences we had. Psychoanalysis, says Freud (1960), shows us that this appearance is deceiving and that, in opposition, the ego breaks any precise limit, extending into an unconscious psychic area that we call self and to which the ego only serves as a façade. At this point, when we realize that the I, seen as existing at the borderline between the self and the world, is rooted in the unconscious, we are forced to admit that our identity transcends the conscious limit of what we know about ourselves, entering an unfamiliar area that is, nevertheless, ours.

With all this being said, we are only left to admit that parts of our identity remain unknown to us, making us be, at the same time, a self and another. Alterity is, therefore, incorporated into our own identity, while we conceal a stranger deep within ourselves.

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DIGITAL IDENTITY

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Abstract:
The text aims to bring forward a topical issue, that of *digital identity*. Based on a series of international discussions (Davos Forum, EU) but also in the context of recent announcements in the field of new technologies (the announcement made by M. Zuckerberg on the *metaverse*), I proposed a socio-anthropological approach of the identity phenomenon today. At least in the documents consulted, the *classic social identity* is doubled by a *virtual social identity* and the latter has different names: *digital wallet, Good Health Pass, global identity*. From a phenomenological perspective and placed in the context of the distinction between utopia and heterotopia (M. Foucault) we can say that digital identity is revealed to us as a heterotopic identity that places our entire system of perception and identity construction in a new paradigm.

Keywords: digital identity, global identity, heterotopia, metaves

Resumé:
Le texte vise à attirer l'attention sur une question d'actualité, celle de *l'identité numérique*. Sur la base d'une série de discussions internationales (Forum de Davos, UE) mais aussi dans le cadre d'annonces récentes dans le domaine des nouvelles technologies (l'annonce faite par M. Zuckerberg sur le métavers), j'ai proposé une approche socio-anthropologique de la phénomène identitaire aujourd'hui. Au moins dans les documents consultés, *l'identité sociale* classique est doublée d'une *identité sociale virtuelle* et cette dernière porte des noms différents : *porte-monnaie numérique, Good Health Pass, identité globale*. D'un point de vue phénoménologique et replacé dans le contexte de la distinction entre *utopie* et *hétérotopie* (M. Foucault) on peut dire que l'identité numérique se révèle à nous comme une *identité hétérotopique* qui place dans un nouveau paradigme tout notre système de perception et de construction identitaire.

Mots-clés: identité numérique, identité globale, hétérotopie, métaves

Rezumat:
Textul își propune să aducă în atenție o o temă de mare actualitate, cea a *identității digitale*. Plecând de la o serie de discuții purtate la nivel internațional (Forumul de la Davos, UE) dar și în contextul recentelor anunțuri din sfera noilor tehnologii (anunțul făcut de M. Zuckerberg privind metaversul), am propus o abordare socio-antropologică a fenomenului identitar azi. Cel puțin la nivelul documentelor consultate, *identitatea socială* clasică este dublată de o identitate socială virtuală iar aceasta din urmă poartă diferite nume: *portofel digital*, *Good Health Pass, identitate globală.* Din perspectivă fenomenologică și plasată în contextul distincției dintre *utopie* și *heterotopie* (M. Foucault)

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putem spune că identitatea digitală ni se dezvăluie ca o *identitate heterotopică* ce plasează într-o nouă paradigmă întregul nostru sistem de percepție și construcție identitară.

Cuvinte cheie: identitate digitală, identitate globală, heterotopie, metaves

1. Preamble

At the end of January, 2021, the Davos Economic Forum was held for a week in Switzerland, its theme bearing a suggestive title: „The Davos Agenda", whose motto „The Great Reset" was announced before an editorial appearance by Klaus Schwab (Sckwab & Malleret, 2020). An article by Dani Rockhoff (2021), covered by the well-known news agency Hotnews of January 30, captures some of the topics debated at this meeting by the most important leaders of the world: global challenges, climate change, the inclusive world of the future, the fourth industrial revolution, etc. The author of the article, however, insists on some of the accents present in the speech of the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel and the host of Davos, Klaus Schwab. In the exchanges of ideas between the two, we identify a few sub-parts that need to be remembered: the „windows of opportunity" offered by the pandemic, the „capitalism of stakeholders", and „the merging of physical and digital identity". All this would be the starting point for the founder of the Davos Forum, Klaus Schwab, the starting point of the Fourth Industrial Revolution that will change the world thanks to digital innovation and artificial intelligence.

Another more recent event, covered by all news agencies in the world was the announcement launched by Mark Zuckerberg at the end of October 2021, the one regarding an ambitious *project Metaverse*, a new concept through which the internet becomes something organic. The man is no longer a spectator in front of a screen and becomes an integrated actor, engaged in virtual reality.

"The idea itself of Metaverse signifies that an increasing part of life, work, leisure, wealth, happiness and relationships will be lived within virtual worlds rather than just being expanded or aided by digital devices and software," Matthew Ball said in a commentary to the Washington Post. In fact, an erasure of the boundaries of reality and the expansion of identity into a whole series of avatars and alternative virtual worlds is at stake.

Both events, although coming from totally different directions, one from the area of leaders and decision-makers worldwide and the other from the private area and new communication technologies, draw attention by having as a focal point the idea of change with direct reference to the concept of identity. The two examples have as their main topic man and technology. If, in the first case, human identity expands in the virtual space of technology, in the second case things take a different course, opposite to the first one: the virtual space becomes organic, invading the physical space. The two perspectives announce major changes and are placed by a whole series of authors, journalists and analysts either under the sign of conspiracy theories, or likened to a utopian project, or in the category of a global attempt to get the world out of the crisis. The question justifiably arises: Under the given circumstances, how is human identity reconfigured at the encounter with artificial intelligence?

2. Digital identity and identity.

Etymologically, the concept of identity comes from the Latin *idem* (the same) and designates „the ability of an individual or group to self-know and be recognized by others" (Borlandi, Boudon, Cherkaoui & Valade, 2009, p. 357) Today, it is defined somewhat more technically: a „data sheet by which a person is identified" (Dexonline, n.d.). It basically eliminates that part of identity that derives from human interaction, perception and mutual exchange. However, our daily experiences show us that, in fact, we operate with several types of identities. In relation to the state and its institutions, we often assume an official identity by presenting an identity card. In relation to others we run a series of identities that encompass our social roles and a complex individual and social system of recognition.

From a sociological point of view, the issue of identity has taken a much more complex approach. H.C. Cooley (1902) launches the concept of *looking-glass self* to show that a person's identity cannot ignore the social and that between the two there is a permanent reciprocity. Both support and feed each other. For his part, G.H. Mead points out that „the self is a product by social essence" (Borlandi, Boudon, Cherkaoui & Valade, 2009, p. 357). For him, the relationship of identity with society is one of an integrative type, the individual being able to connect singular roles in a unitary Self *(the generalized Other).*

Therefore, identity is not just presented as an official formula, compressed into an identity card. It represents an accumulation of personal and social data, which are in a permanent negotiation process with a strong symbolic imprint and which, ultimately, can be expressed through clear language and categories. The data that enters this complex existential equation of identity can be of a biological, psychic, ethnic, racial, religious, economic, statutory, professional, professional, health nature, etc. All of them express our uniqueness but also our belonging to a certain social category. Therefore, the individual is not and cannot be regarded as an atom, an isolated ins and his identity involves a complex process of *identification* and *individuation.* (Tap, 1986; Sciolla, 2000).

The development of technology and the democratization of access to it has led to the use of a new concept, that of *digitized identity.* Although new, it refers to the idea of *virtual social identity,* used in sociology by E. Goffman (1963). For the well-known sociologist it has a strong, symbolic component. Together with *real social identities,* it forms the general picture of identity that, in Goffman's view, multiplies, diversifies and can have a provisional or experimental character according to the social scenes on which we evolve and according to a series of instances and symbolic elaborations of identity boundaries. This extremely versatile and flexible identity with which we operate on the stage of social life cannot be perceived by the current technological means. Today, in the digital world, identity appears rather as an authentication process. The processes used are of the most diverse: from typing passwords or control questions to scanning documents or biometric data.

However, digital identity, as it is currently configured, is intended to be more than just a simple or even a more complex identity verification algorithm. At the moment, worldwide, this virtual identity bears different names: *digital wallet* in EU documents or Good *Health Pass* within id Alliance 2020. This founding member of the ID 2020 alliance is Microsoft, Gavi The Vaccine Alliance, Accenture, Ideo.org, Rokheffeler Foundation and brings together a large number of partners such as: Facebook, Mastercard, Grameen Foundation, International Computer Center, National Cybersecurity Center, Tech (5) Technology for inclusion etc. The projects already carried out and the upcoming projections for 2025 and 2030 announce rather the idea of *global identity* mediated and instrumented by new technologies.

Returning to the examples from which we started in this article, we can say that we distinguish two great meanings regarding digital identity.

First of all, it is designed as a digital transfer formula and management in this environment of our identity brands: identity card, bank cards, signature, personal data of all kinds, health card, documents, certificates, etc. At the limit, everything that defines us socially could be transferred to the digital universe. Considering this, digital identity bears the imprint of a need to keep up with technology and its pervading into the most varied sectors of social life. Therefore, digital identity is configured as a tool and undoubtedly has a *utilitarian character*. In her State of the European Union address on September 16, 2020, Ursula von der Leyen said: „Every time an app or website asks us to create a new digital identity or easily connect through a large platform, in reality we have no idea what is happening with our data. For this reason, the Commission will soon propose a secure European electronic identity. An identity that we trust and that any citizen can use all over Europe for any operation, from paying taxes to renting a bicycle. A technology in which we can control for ourselves what data is used and how it is used" (European digital identity, n.d.).

All official materials insist on this utilitarian aspect. Among the most important facilities evoked regarding digital identity are:

- It poses less risk of error in document control and identification than traditional, man-made methods. This would reduce the risks of forgery of documents and considerably reduce errors in identification.
- It facilitates access to various public services. The use of electronic documents and electronic signatures reduces bureaucracy, eliminates the time spent accessing some services and reduces the costs of data management and the process of identification (McKinsey Global Institute ,2019). In addition, the utility extends to more efficient monitoring of transactions.
- They have cross-border validity. On the official website of the European *Commission, the digital wallet* is a project that expresses the European digital identity. It is a necessity for the Brusseles officials

because, according to the eurobarometer statistics invoked, „only 14% of the providers of essential public services in all member states allow cross-border authentication" while 72% of users want to know how their data is processed and 63% of European Union citizens want a single digital means to be able to identify themselves (European digital identity, n.d.).

- It facilitates the realization of transactions from the payment of the partitions to important purchases, rentals, taxes, duties, etc.
- It is an accessible means of storing, confirming and using information to confirm a particular right (right of residence, work, study, health, travel, etc.)
- You can always and anywhere prove certain characteristics related to identity (age, profession, domicile, state of health, quality of insured, etc.)

Of course, these facilities are accompanied by a number of limits. Some are also highlighted in the European documents and others appear in the form of perplexities and questions that sprout in everyone's mind as a natural consequence of this challenge that the new technology brings:

- The vulnerability of digital systems and the danger of identity theft.
- Technological limitations present in certain regions of the world. Not everyone has access to a computer, and not in all areas internet access is possible:
- The refusal of the population to use this identification tool. The causes may be of the most diverse from the inability of the population to use the new technology (digital illiteracy) to the distrust of the safety systems offered by the system.
- Questions arise regarding data management and security in relation to the operators who are sitting behind the system.
- Energy crises or device power problems that would make it impossible to use data and could practically block people, groups, regions, etc.
- Increased control and limitation of freedom.
- They can be a lever to achieve abuses by the state or other entities in relation to citizens by favouring constraints and limitations.

Secondly, digital identity, beyond the management of personal data, tries to extend into the area of the symbolic, that of the social and the subtle mechanisms of producing our identities. We are witnessing, from a social level, a permanent construction and reconstruction of the concept of social identity. It is always invested with new meanings, while representations and values of the most diverse are weaved around it. Thus, technology interposes itself in the interactions between people, mediates them and generates in turn new categories such as: digital citizens / nondigital citizens; desirable citizens/ undesirable citizens; trusted citizens / citizens with a low level of trust; connoisseurs/ ignorant, etc. Depending on these categories, different levels of social accessibility can be created, implicitly generating a series of symbolic categories. This can obviously influence our behaviors, attitudes and interactions with others and our association.

On the other hand, our symbolic universe is not only formed in the daily interactions, technologically mediated or not. They have a much more subtle anchoring in our inner universe. The imaginary, the phantasms, the archetypes or other raw data that haunts through the hidden corners of our being sketches us an identity profile. It is not measurable and quantifiable, but it is equally important. It shapes our beliefs, attitudes, representations, judgments, behaviors, ideals and mode of action and defines us as unique, unrepeatable beings. Or, from this perspective, the metaverse configured by the owner of Facebook is nothing more than a formula to connect technology to this inner symbolic universe that we are not fully aware of, but which represents that subtle ingredient that makes us unique in the way we think and act.

The accessibility of this inner universe, thanks to technology, is tantamount to a process of unveiling in the sense *of devouring* and not *asking* the imaginary (Culianu, 2015). Technology is one of the important brands of modernity and besides its undeniable benefits, it has also led to a disenchantment of the world (Weber, 1971 p. 270). In a similar register, new technologies have every chance to unveil the human being through accessibility of this fantastic inner world. The virtual worlds of the metaverse in which we can practice our freedom unhindered, in fact, access this inner symbolic universe and exploit it to the fullest. The status of master in your own virtually created world can reveal a multitude of symbolic fabrics and unravel the mystery of human being and identity. Man becomes an open book, easy to decipher and intuit, a certain ins in a place without place. The paradox of new technologies is that they can make our dreams become that way, but they can also drain us of them.

3. Digital heterotopia and identity without place

What has been presented so far indicates that the identity of the individual expands in the digital world encompassing a multitude of personal data and information (from age, home, tax data, professional data to financial or health data) taking over the symbolic and imaginary universe step by step. At the limit, one can imagine a digital identity in which man makes a common body with technology, merging into a hybrid identity of transhuman type (Gavriluță, 2018; Gavriluţă, Bănescu, 2019).

However, beyond these imaginary projections regarding a possible future of digital identity, we cannot fail to notice that our encounter with technology lies under the spectre *of canceling boundaries and borders*. It is a cancellation that takes place on several levels:

- It transgresses territorial and administrative boundaries and from this point of view one can speak of a global identity;
- It had crossed the barriers between the inner and outer universes, between the social I and the inner I, between the visible and the invisible;

- Transgresses the limits of intimacy and sociability
- It's pulling the boundaries of human nature when it comes to a fusion with technology.

This deterioration of its identity and boundlessness makes it a *fluid construction* (Bauman, 2000), hardly definable and somewhat paradoxical. We are everything and nothing, from everywhere and from nowhere. Such an interpretation refers to the writings of Michel Foucault that distinguishes between *utopia* and *heterotopy*. For the well-known French philosopher, *heterotopias* represent „a kind of utopias actually performed within which all the other real sites that we can actually find inside a culture are at the same time represented, challenged and reversed, a kind of places that are beyond place" (Foucault, 2004, p. 15). The digital world is a current hypostasis of heterotopia. It's a non-place. The fact is verifiable by reference to each principle of operation of heterotopia.

- Heterotopia is specific to all cultures, being a constant of human groups. If primitive populations have created their own heterotopies reserved for sacred spaces accompanied by taboos and prohibitions, in our country, contemporary virtual worlds can function as veritable spaces with their own rules and prohibitions. Access is limited by IDs, passwords and identification manners. There are security areas where only the chosen ones have access, like sacred spaces. As in the real world, our digital identities only allow us to access certain spaces, others being forbidden, inaccessible.
- Heterotopia has an accurate functionality determined by society and the culture within which it operates. If utopia is a „location without a real place", an ideal projection in relation to something real, heterotopia, however, can superimpose on a real space several spaces incompatible with each other. The metaphor of the mirror in which both the virtuality and the reality of our image overlap easily supports an analogy with any digital identity tool: it reflects a reality (visible or less visible) through a virtual projection.
- Another principle that lies in the functioning of heterotopy is to superimpose several spaces or locations incompatible with each other. Everything is like in a play where different spaces are superimposed. The same spatial condensation is found in the digital world where we can visit museums, work, attend a conference, attend concerts in different areas of the world, shop at virtual stores, etc. Concepts such as teleworking, telemedicine, teleschool have become increasingly common. The virtual space has a great versatility in terms of spatial composition of the world and its accessibility. Any place and any experience related to that place is a click away. Our identity experiences related to different spaces and roles end up being transferred little by little into the virtual universe.

- Heterotopias perform time clippings. They concentrate not only spaces but also various time sequences. They are like a library that, thanks to books, allow access to multiple temporal universes, focusing materially in a seemingly continuous but sequenced present, the past, the present and an imagined future. The same goes for the digital world. Thanks to new technologies we can come into contact with different temporal expressions from the existence of the world and individual. They can preserve different temporal landmarks of our identity by making up collages with sequences from childhood, adolescence, adult life, etc.
- A final principle of operation of a heterotopia is that it has a system of inputs and outputs that are both isolated and awkward. A heterotopy is out of reach of anyone. An initiation is required, a set of rituals. In the case of the digital world it is totally inaccessible to the digitally illiterate. Then there are different levels of accessibility: for regular users, for specialists, for data management, for simple consumption. And our virtual identities do not have unlimited accessibility. There are access keys, controlled inputs and outputs, as is foreshadowed in the case of the digital wallet.

In essence, as heterotopias present themselves, they present themselves as a space of illusions that are intended to be real through the cutouts they concentrate and their functioning. It is what the French anthropologist Marc Augé called in being the reality of fiction and the fictionalization of reality (Augé, 1997). The virtual world wants a recomposing of the real world in the technological space by concentrating space-time fragments and generating a certain regime of accessibility and functioning. It is, of course, intended to be a perfect, flawless world from which all bureaucratic or operating impediments and all limitations of the real world are removed.

And in terms of how to generate a digital identity, the algorithm is respected. Spatio-temporal landmarks are defining. Socio-demographic, financial, material data, health and medical status data, educational, professional data, etc. are put to the date. At the limit, such an identity can extend to the area of the imaginary, the phantasms. They can manifest freely, unhindered in a metaverse that also brings out the hidden and deep dimension of one's own identity. Everything is like a play that compresses on the space of a vast virtual scene different situations, roles, aspects that characterize episodes of a man's life in a single and defining identity. Space-time experiences, visible, as well as less visible ones, can be merged into a comprehensive digital ID.

To a certain extent, things are the same in real life. We are the sum of all our interactions, actions, thoughts and beliefs, roles that we perform in our daily lives. However, judging a person by such an overlap of scenes and roles can be risky. We forget that human nature is much more complex than it reveals itself. There is a social self *(social identity)* and a deep one *(deep, spiritual identity),* which is harder to capture. For example, the studies conducted by Bargh (2002) attest that virtual space facilitates the expression *of the real Self* when the person is not part of the circle of offline relationships. As relationships with new people crystallize, the Self begins to idealize itself. Basically, under the protection of anonymity, the Self reveals itself differently and metamorphoses as soon as the idea of a social relationship enters the equation. In sociology, the fact was excellently explained by sociologist E. Goffman (1959) through his dramaturgical model. The real self and the social self are in a permanent negotiation mediated by the nature of human interactions and the social scenes on which it evolves.

In a contemporary heterotopic digital paradigm, we risk forgetting that theatre involves assuming roles and masks, permanent mechanisms for negotiating and reconfiguring identity. Beyond digitally and socially managed identities, there is a wealth of data that expresses the uniqueness of each person and his or her own way of being in the world.

The claim of reconfiguring a complete identity, perfectly functional in the virtual space, an identity that becomes a business card in our real everyday experiences, may seem like an administratively justified enterprise. But it carries some risks. One of them, however, also belongs to the hegemonic temptation of new technologies that want to transfer reality to the virtual world. Thus, a virtual identity tends to turn into a real one precisely by virtue of the operating algorithm and its usefulness. We say today that if you don't have an account on social media, you don't exist. To the same extent we can imagine a world where if you don't have a digital identity, you don't exist. In this logic, what matters can be the data stored in the virtual world, emptying the identity of its own reality. Living interactions and everyday actions are diluted, liquefied (Bauman, 2000) and the ineffable of spiritual experiences or those with deep symbolic connotations is lost in the magic of virtual worlds. The real world is unearthed (Weber, 1971) over and over again. It was suggestively called postsecular, carrying on its shoulders the *burden of its own self-determination* and aspirations (Baconschi, 2010). In such a context, the image and the ID take the place of the person who then virtualizes oneself. By depersonalizing reality, new technologies recompose a new register of reality in which the living experience is canceled, the subtle area of spiritual experiences is also lived. Although it reveals itself to us as a highly tender space, the digital universe ultimately offers a closed algorithmized experience, marked by operating rules, security and control filters. A digital fortress (Brown, 2013) that closes us in the formalism of algorithmized and depersonalized experiences despite, unlimited promises of exploration and identification.

Although heterotopies are not a novelty in human existence, in the current conditions they present themselves in a totally novel context, mediated by new technologies and artificial intelligence. From a scientific point of view and social-human assumption, this is a real challenge. The discourse is not focused simply on a trivial instrument and its usefulness, but rather on the social, political, legal, anthropological and cultural implications of an identity present beyond the reality. Time will decide whether the burden of our ambitions and creations is a bearable one or not. It will also decide whether we will be able to fill the new identity formulas with a deep and authentic meaning.

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TWO VISIONS OF IDENTITY: FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY AND VLADIMIR SOLOVYOV

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Abstract
In Russian thought of the second part of the 19th century, Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881) and Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900) are two prevailing figures. However, they had different approaches to interpreting the correlations between the universal and the individual, the global (panhuman) and the universal (all-human). These approaches stem from their different visions of identity.

Keywords: human, Dostoevsky, identity, conciliarity, universality, Solovyov

Résumé:
Dans la pensée russe de la seconde partie du XIXe siècle, Fiodor Dostoïevski (1821-1881) et Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900) sont deux figures dominantes. Cependant, ils avaient des approches différentes pour interpréter les corrélations entre l'universel et l'individuel, le global (panhumain) et l'universel (tout humain). Ces approches découlent de leurs visions différentes de l'identité.

Mots-clés: humain, Dostoevsky, identité, conciliarité, universalité, Solovyov

Rezumat:
În gândirea rusă a celei de-a doua părți a secolului al XIX-lea, Fiodor Dostoievski (1821–1881) și Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900) sunt două figuri predominante. Cu toate acestea, ei au avut abordări diferite pentru a interpreta corelațiile dintre universal și indiviual, global (panuman) și universal (tot-uman). Aceste abordări provin din diferitele lor viziuni asupra identității.

Cuvinte cheie: uman, Dostoevsky, identitate, conciliaritate, universalitate, Solovyov

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In Russian culture of the second half of the 19th century, there are two most prominent figures who largely determined the subsequent development of philosophical and socio-political thought in Russia. Vl. Solovyev is traditionally regarded as the follower of F. Dostoevsky: both of them traveled to the monastery of Optina Pustyn (1878), communicated with each other, and little is known about any disagreements in their views. In his famous work *Three Speeches in Memory of Dostoevsky* (1881–1883), Vl. Solovyev sees himself as the spokesman for the outstanding writer's ideas. But is it actually true? Answering this question is particularly relevant today, in the age of both globalization and polarization, when the issue of national and personal identity is topical. As we intently grasp the meaning of the famous thinkers' texts, we discover not only differences, but even starkly differing views. For this sake, it is best to consider *Pushkin Speech* by F. Dostoevsky (1880) and *The Russian Idea* by Vl. Solovyov (1888).

Vl. Solovyev was born in Moscow into the family of the famous Russian historian Sergey Mikhaylovich Solovyov (1820–1879). His maternal great grandfather was the famous wandering philosopher G.S. Skovoroda. It is known that in the early years of his university studies, Vl. Soloviev was absorbed in vulgar materialism and positivism; subsequently, after his enthusiasm for Schopenhauer and Hartmann, he returned to Christianity at the age of 18. He perceived himself as a prophet to whom the truth was revealed. Since that moment, the entire problem was to get the message across to people. To cope with that task, he was supposed „... to put the eternal content of Christianity into a new and suitable – i.e. rational and absolute – form," and then, it would change the world for the better (letter to Ye. V. Romanova dated August 2, 1873). Solovyev saw Christianity not only as a fait accompli, but also as a mission. However, the path in the direction chosen by Solovyev was not quite straightforward and definitive, as his theocratic utopia demonstrates.

A.F. Losev provides the following general characteristic of the works by Vl. Solovyov, „In Vladimir Solovyov's philosophy, there is an organic fusion of various elements of Platonism and Neo-Platonism, patristic philosophy and Gnosticism, Schelling's and Hegel's philosophy, the authentic Russian worldview and Russian philosophy, and mysticism and rationalism by the greatest thinkers of the old and modern times" (Losev, 1991, p. 233). Solovyev provides a unique combination of the religious tradition of the Orthodox East with the philosophical and mystical tradition of the West, especially that of the German mystics and Schelling's theosophy.

If we divide Solovyev's creative path into stages, initially (at the „preparatory" stage, as E.N. Troubetzkoy describes it), he adhered to the Slavophile point of view; the „utopian," or the theocratic period of his work lasts from 1882 to 1894, when he unsparingly opposes the Slavophiles, turning to Catholicism, divine-humanity, and unitotality. Finally, at the third stage marked by the collapse of his theocratic utopia, he regards unification of churches as an issue beyond history, seeing it in an eschatological light. In the end of his life, Solovyev writes a remarkable work titled *War, Progress, and the End of History:*

Three Conversations (1900), where he profoundly and intensely discusses the issue of eschatology rather than that of divine-humanity achieved through external means; it implies not an external unification of Churches, states, and nations, but an internal spiritual unity gained beyond history. At the end of the work, in a *Short Tale of the Antichrist*, Solovyev sees the integrity and truth of Christianity in Christ himself instead of external unification. In this work written before his death, he approaches Dostoevsky's point of view.

Let us turn to the theocratic stage of Solovyev's work, which coincides with the largest period of his life and is the most popular and well-known. Vl. Solovyev starts his „Russian idea" with a pretentious statement, „...the idea of a nation is not what it thinks of itself in time, but instead what God thinks of it in eternity." However, according to Solovyov, the meaning of existence of the nations is concluded in humanity instead of the nations themselves. He finds nothing special about the „truly Russian idea" and sees it as merely one of the aspects of the „Christian idea" which he interprets in a universal manner (Solovyev, 1991, pp. 165-206).

From the second half of the 1880s to the first half of the 1890s, Vl. Solovyev enters into active polemics with the representatives of late Slavophilism, such as I.S. Aksakov, N.N. Strakhov, P.E. Astafiev, and L.A. Tikhomirov, who do not share his theocratic views (Atyakshev, 2013). The „younger" Slavophiles reject Vl. Solovyov's idea of a „Christian community" because of excessive prominence of the concept of „united humanity" to the detriment of individual nations. At the same time, Solovyev views all the national issues as egoistic, pagan, separating people, and conflicting with true Christianity. Yet, as Ivan Sergeyevich Aksakov (1823–1886), a Slavophile, formulates, one could not serve the highest truth (as Solovyev encourages) without fulfilling the duty to one's compatriots. To be able to serve humanity, one must first serve one's nation, helping bring its powers and talents to light.

An opinion similar to that expressed by Dostoevsky is presented in the concept of cultural and historical types. In the second half of the 19th century in Russia, it was developed by Nikolay Yakovlevich Danilevsky (1822–1885, the main book – *Russia and Europe* – 1871) and Konstantin Nikolayevich Leontiev (1831–1891, *Byzantism and Slavism* – 1891). In the West, it is mostly presented by Oswald Spengler (1880–1936, *The Decline of the West* – 1918) and the British author Arnold Joseph Toynbee (1889–1975, *A Study of History* – 1934–1961). Creating their theory, they try to overcome the mechanism of one-dimensional evolutionary schemes of development, which makes it possible to see the individuality and exclusivity of each of the cultures. According to Danilevsky, „Progress does not imply that everyone follows the same direction, but that the entire field which represents the domain of historical activity of mankind is travelled in different directions..." (Danilevsky, 2003, p. 134). There are no privileged cultural and historical types in the world, and they are not supposed to exist. He regards the panhuman as something amorphous, colorless, and unoriginal, that is, as a thing typically called commonplace. Real life is only in the all-human. Danilevsky considers that it is „above any separately human or national issue," but it simultaneously consists of the „aggregate of everything national, existing and having to exist in all places and at all times."

Konstantin Leontiev, in his turn, names his doctrine „the method of actual life" and accepts beauty as a criterion for assessing the phenomena of the surrounding world. The closer a specific phenomenon is to beauty, the closer it is to the truth of existence, vitality, and power. The basic characteristic of beauty is the diversity of forms; therefore, the socio-cultural sphere accepts the need for diversity of national cultures and the unity of their dissimilarity, due to which the uppermost prosperity is achieved. Mankind is alive as long as original national cultures stay alive. As to unification of human existence, it inevitably results in degradation and death of culture.

This is another point where we see a fundamental discrepancy between Vl. Solovyev and F. Dostoevsky, i.e. his „Russian idea" expressed in his *Pushkin Speech* (Dostoevsky, 1984, pp. 129-174). For Dostoevsky, as well as the Slavophiles, there is no universal without national, whereas Solovyev levels down the special for the triumph of the universal, or the panhuman. This „common place," however, is empty and abstract. It is probably a manifestation of his Hegelianism constructing its dialectics on the principle of denial, total submission, and destruction, surmounting the precedent level – the infamous „withdrawal." In fact, development of moral consciousness can be schematically drawn as circles which include each other like a Matryoshka doll:

- individual consciousness overcoming selfishness;
- the family;
- the ancestral; the tribal;
- the national (not the nationalistic);
- all-human; the conciliar (sobornost') – filled with all the previous content, including it, elevating it to its own level (not the panhuman as abstract, groundless cosmopolitanism);
- the oecumenical.

At the same time, it is impossible to reach a higher, universal level without including the developed previous ones (overcoming selfishness at every level, such as individual egoism or nationalism). Such all-human issues are meaningful and replete – personally, ethnically, and nationally. This inclusive dialectic developing and incorporating the previous level was unknown to Hegel or Solovyev; it is Dostoevsky who intuitively reproduces it not as a professional philosopher, but as a humanist in the true sense of the word: he does not find it possible to sacrifice a personality or a nation for the sake of higher-ranking notions. In fact, this is existential dialectic opposed to the dialectic of the global or impersonalism.

V.V. Zenkovsky, a famous historian of Russian philosophy, mentions that L. Tolstoy and F. Dostoevsky „paved the way for Russian universalism." In the 1860s–1870s, there was a tendency to smooth the opposites between Westernism and Slavophilism, searching for a synthesis of both trends. „We Russians have two homelands: our own Russia and Europe," Dostoevsky will say (Dostoevsky, 1984, vol. XXIII, p. 30).

F. Dostoevsky, a member of the Petrashevsky revolutionary circle, was arrested, sentenced to the firing squad, and pardoned at the last moment; he spent four years in hard labor in exile and returned to the capital not subdued, but transformed into a master of prose and metaphysical thought. Florovsky notes that Dostoevsky „was a brilliant thinker philosopher and theologian" (Florovsky 1998, p. 68) He developed an extraordinary powerful and profound ideal of Orthodox consciousness (the elder Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov*, 1881), provided unsurpassed criticism of various social utopias and violence (*Demons*, 1872), and analyzed collisions of moral consciousness and moral transformation of man (*Crime and Punishment*, 1866), cultivating kindness and love for people in his works. According to Dostoevsky, „all the faith of the saints" consists in love to fellow beings (Dostoevsky 1976, vol. XIV, p. 290). He regards compassion as the most important law of human life. Dostoevsky writes, „Man is a mystery. It needs to be unravelled, and if you spend your whole life unravelling it, don't say that you've wasted time. I am studying that mystery because I want to be a human being" (Dostoevsky 1985, vol. XXVIII, I, p. 63). Already in his first novel, *Poor Folk* (1845), he reveals his main feature as a humanist, „compassion for man." He believes in the power of spiritual origins in society and a personality, considering that it is not existence ("environment") that predestines consciousness, but, on the contrary, it is spiritual consciousness or faith that determines everything. Therefore, „Until you have become really, in actual fact, a brother to everyone, brotherhood will not come to pass" (Dostoevsky, 1980, vol. XXI, p. 18, 25, 275).

Dostoevsky's creative method is described as „Christian realism" (Zakharov 2001, 5–20) due to its conflux with „Orthodox cultural archetypes which took shape as early as in Ancient Rus." O.A. Bogdanova concludes that the uniqueness of Dostoevsky's work consists in the fact that he was „the *only* great Russian writer who saw and gratefully brought to life in his major works of art (primarily in his novel *The Brothers Karamazov*) the cultural potential and the anthropological ideal of *hesychasm*, an ancient spiritual tradition of Byzantine and Russian Orthodox faith..." (Bogdanova, 2008, pp. 13–14; Salvestroni 2015).

In his *Pushkin Speech* delivered on June 8, 1880, at the ceremonial meeting of the Society of Lovers of Russian Literature, F. Dostoevsky laid the foundation for unfolding of the all-human content of Russian culture. Any national culture crosses the boundaries of nationality and gains features common to all mankind as it reaches a certain level of development. In Russia, this shift took place in the second half of the 19th century, yet Dostoevsky considers that this process was initiated by A.S. Pushkin who discovered such a trait of Russian culture as „universal sensitivity." Having found this tendency discovered by Pushkin, Dostoevsky joins it, develops it, and makes it more profound: „To become a real Russian, to become quite a Russian, maybe, means only (in the end, it should be emphasized) to become a brother of all people, an *all-man*, if you want... our destiny is universality, acquired not by the sword but by the power of brotherhood and our fraternal desire to reunite people" (Dostoevsky, 1984, vol. XXVI, p. 147). For Dostoevsky, the people in their historical development and present-day state, in the fullness of their real strengths and spiritual needs, are the „soil" outside of which productive creativity is inconceivable. The Pochvennichestvo ("return to the native soil") implies not only immersion in the world of tradition, but also the completeness of modernity. Dostoevsky's „soil-based" concepts included the idea of a universal synthesis as a task facing Russia.

Let us quote a relevant statement from *The Announcement about a Subscription to the Magazine* Vremya *for 1863*: „We anticipate that our activity's nature should be universal to the extreme, that the Russian Idea can be a synthesis of all those ideas that Europe develops with such courage..." (Dostoevsky 1974, vol. XVIII, p. 36–37). In the first issue of *Vremya*, Westernizers and Slavophiles are mentioned as outdated tendencies: „they have lost a sense of Russian spirit." At the same time, those who share the „soil-based" ideas do not confuse the concept of the „nation" with the plain countryfolk. Dostoevsky's concept of the nation is broader and more profound, it is almost metaphysical, „Judge [people] not by what they are, but by what they strive to become" (Dostoevsky, 1984, vol. XXII, p. 43).

According to A.V. Gulyga (1921–1996), Dostoevsky as a „global supporter" stems from the „soil-based" ideology, yet he overcomes all of its limitations while originating from it (Gulyga, 1995, p. 83). One could ask, however: can the all-human be regarded as a sort of superstructure over the national interests, for instance? Dostoevsky answers this question unambiguously (as Chingiz Aitmatov does later), stating that all-human actually descend from the spiritual prosperity of the national. There is no better or worse, rich or poor culture or world religion as a profound spiritual tradition: this is the sphere where everything is original and unique. At the same time, the all-human is not a mechanical set of specific ideas or works: it serves as a core of each of them. Diversity adorns the truth, and national diversity adorns mankind (K. Leontiev).

This understanding complies with the concept of conciliarity (sobornost') as a „unity in a multitude," a „choir where every voice is heard," developed by the Slavophile Aleksey Stepanovich Khomyakov (1804–1860). He regards conciliarity as a „unity in a multitude" (Khomyakov 1994, p. 242); therefore, it opposes individualism which destroys human unity and collectivism which invalidates a personality. Thus, an individual cannot comprehend the divine truth; it can be understood only in a conciliar way – in the Church. Khomyakov regards peasant community as another manifestation of conciliarity. He believes that elements of true Orthodoxy and conciliarity were preserved among common people. As a result of activity of Peter I, the Russian Orthodox Church completely succumbed to the secular authorities, acknowledging the divine origin of autocracy, while it was the nation that handed the autocratic power to the monarch. The initial meaning of the notion of „*conciliarity*" can be defined as the spiritual unity of believers; the Slavophiles demonstrated its general, social meaning not limited to the boundaries of narrow interpretations. According to Khomyakov, conciliarity includes not only unity, but also freedom (collectivism is regarded as unity without freedom, and individualism is seen as freedom without unity). K.S. Aksakov, who continues „sociologization" of this notion, believes that, in conciliarity, „a personality is as free as in a choir."

Vl. Solovyov transforms the idea of conciliarity into the concept of unitotality. He emphasizes the following in this regard: „I call all-unity true, or positive, if the unified exists not at the expense of everyone or to everyone's detriment, but to everyone's benefit. False, or negative unitotality suppresses or absorbs the elements included in it, and therefore, turns into an *emptiness*; true unitotality preserves and empowers its elements, and is achieved in them as the *fullness* of existence" (Solovyev, 1990, p. 552). Nonetheless, as we have demonstrated above, Solovyev develops the dialectic of the universal and the particular to the detriment of the particular. Subsequently, the issue of conciliarity as one of the basic cultural universals of Russia was widely discussed, especially in modern historical and philosophical studies. However, this concept still requires a more profound theoretical development in the context of the present-day conditions.

Conciliarity as a concept, which originated from the religious tradition can be correlated with the concept of solidarity which stems from the 19th-century Narodnik movement (of course, if we free it from revolutionism and violence). Spiritual ideals have to be combined with the social ones based on the idea of social justice to obtain a sufficiently holistic concept which is capable of „functioning" today. These two traditions were set in opposition to each other and denied each other, but the time has come to „to gather stones together," synthesize values, and create an integrated theory.

Meanwhile, conciliarity, or solidarity as a broader concept is relevant for the entire mankind. As Aleksandr Sergeevich Panarin (1940–2003) emphasizes, „in our civilizational context, conciliarity is not communality in its local parochial and patriarchal backward sense, but spiritual unity embracing the whole human race to its limit" (Panarin, 2014). A.V. Semushkin, considering conciliarity from the point of view of its universal characteristics and existential faith, points out the necessity to „gather mankind in a brotherly unity (Semushkin, 2009, p. 304)." Therefore, conciliarity, solidarity, is not a given, but a predetermined outcome which requires discovering all its profoundness and implementation in social development.

Summarizing the above, we can see that, in the 19th-century Russian culture, two opposite trends of understanding the ratio of the individual and the universal, the national and the panhuman/all-human emerged. Some supposed that national identity did not matter, its cultivation could result in national egoism, and it was necessary to immediately assume the panhuman attitude (Vl. Solovyev). Others believed that the loss of identity resulting in denationalization was destructive for the nation and could not yield anything positive for the universal, - for the all-human (F. Dostoevsky). The latter was supposed to organically generate from the national diversity of mankind. Those who adhered to the first viewpoint could be defined as the „Westernizers" in Russia, and those who shared the second opinion could be considered the Slavophiles. They still keep arguing in Russian culture to this day, and this struggle involves the fate of the world: the process of globalization could be implemented through denationalization and depersonalization, leveling national cultures, loss of identity, or globalization could emerge from prosperity of national cultures, personal fundamentals, and take shape naturally, on the basis of the common spiritual and anthropological essence of man for the benefit of all peoples and states.

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ALTERITY, RECOGNITION AND THE DIALOGICAL PRINCIPLE

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Abstract:
The author presents the dialogical principle *I am constituted through Thou* as a tool to understand the double edge concept of identity, as sketched by Zygmunt Bauman whom he considers an enlightened sceptic. He pays special attention to the concept of recognition or acknowledgment, as a meeting point of the universal and the unique, for the building of relational and dynamic identities in post-modern societies. Contemporary authors such as Kierkegaard and Rosenzweig, or Church Fathers such as Saint Augustine and St John Climacus, and other traditions, consider the I and Thou relationship as the fundamental standpoint for man's existence; as such, we may follow their ideas as a reference for intercultural and interreligious dialogue in a globalized world.

Keywords: dialogical principle, relationship, recognition, postmodernity

Résumé:
L'auteur présente le principe dialogique (Je constitué à travers Tu) comme un outil pour comprendre le concept à double tranchant de l'identité, tel qu'ébauché par Zygmunt Bauman qu'il considère comme un sceptique éclairé. Il porte une attention particulière au concept de reconnaissance ou de reconnaissance, comme point de rencontre de l'universel et de l'unique, pour la construction d'identités relationnelles et dynamiques dans les sociétés post-modernes. Des auteurs contemporains tels que Kierkegaard et Rosenzweig, ou des Pères de l'Église tels que saint Augustin et saint Jean Climaque, et d'autres traditions, considèrent la relation Je et Tu comme le point de vue fondamental de l'existence de l'homme ; à ce titre, nous pouvons suivre leurs idées comme référence pour le dialogue interculturel et interreligieux dans un monde globalisé.

Mots-clés: dialogique, relation, reconnaissance, postmodernité

Rezumat:
Autorul prezintă principiul dialogic (Eu constituit prin Tu) ca un instrument de înțelegere a conceptului de identitate cu două margini, așa cum l-a schițat Zygmunt Bauman, pe care îl consideră un sceptic luminat. El acordă o atenție deosebită conceptului de recunoaștere sau de recunoaștere ca punct de întâlnire al universalului cu unicul pentru construirea de identități relaționale și dinamice în societățile post-moderne. Autorii contemporani precum Kierkegaard și Rosenzweig, sau Părinți ai Bisericii precum Sfântul Augustin și Sfântul Ioan Climacus și alte tradiții, consideră relația Eu și Tu ca punct de vedere fundamental al existenței omului; Ca atare, putem urma ideile lor ca referință pentru dialogul intercultural și interreligios într-o lume globalizată.

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Cuvinte cheie: dialogic, relație recunoaștere, postmodernitate.

1. Introduction

The emphasis in interreligious dialogue is often about similarities between religions, as if the differences were superficial and trivial. This is not the case however in times of conflict. Then, what looks like minor variations takes on immense significance, dividing neighbourhoods and turning old friends into enemies. Freud called this *the narcissism of small differences*. Everything may be turned, under pressure, into a marker of identity and, therefore, of mutual estrangement. Thus, we need not only a philosophy of commonality but also a philosophy of difference: both those who are not like us and ourselves are waiting from acknowledgment, but no group has a right to impose itself on others by force. The dialogical principle - *I am constituted through Thou* – may be an answer to this conundrum.

In a liquid society we oscillate between the negation of truth and the paradigm that as we seek truth, we progress from the particular to the universal; thus, particularities are imperfections, errors, parochialisms, and prejudices. The truth, in this vision, should be abstract, timeless, universal, the same everywhere for everyone. Particularities would breed war; universal truth would generate peace, because when everyone understands it, conflict dissolves. Some say *there is no alternative* and it could it be no other way. Is not tribalism but another name for particularity? And is not tribalism the source of conflict through the ages? Both in secular and religious thought this is a mistaken and profoundly dangerous idea

There is something seductive about this vision. Franz Rosenzweig wrote in 1921 that it had a long life in the West, *from Jonia to Jena*, from the pre-Socratics until Hegel (Rosenzweig, 2005). In the same epoch, A. N. Whitehead wrote that Western philosophy was *a series of footnotes to Plato*. We can add that not just philosophy, but Christendom was haunted by Plato's ghost. The result was inevitable and tragic. If all kinds of truth - both religious and scientific - are always the same for everyone, then if my group is right, yours is wrong. Caring about the truth would be the same as to convert the other to my point of view; if the other refuses to be converted, he should be aware: in the end, he will be persecuted. From this flowed some of the great wars and persecutions whenever Western civilization adopted universalist paradigms in Greece, Rome, Christendom, and Modern Enlightenment.

2. Liquidity and recognition

We live in what Zygmunt Bauman aptly describes in his books as a liquid society: a society that killed universalism and has no substitute for it, entangled as it is in a morass of particularities (Zygmunt, 2005; 2000). On the other hand, as a *liquid society* is not driven by a set of ideas, but by a series of institutions, such as markets, media, multinational and digital corporations, everything that is local, special, and particular, is also threatened. The individual is threatened top down and down top. In its present liquid post-modern phase, mass culture is tailored to individual freedom of choice. As culture serves freedom it ensures that choice is inevitable. Responsibility, the companion of freedom of choice, is forced upon the shoulders of the individual; in liquid modernity, the individual becomes the sole manager of his life.

As befits a consumer society, and a show society, contemporary culture is mainly established through offers, not norms. As stated by Pierre Bourdieu, Western culture lives through seduction, not through normative regulation; public relations, not policing; publicity, not doctrine; it is all about creating new needs, desires, needs and whims, not coercion neither sanction. In a globalized and post-modern society we are mainly consumers as production is increasingly developed by machines, robots and artificial intelligence. Without a dialogical horizon, we see and experience the world as consumers.

With globalization, culture became a warehouse of consumer products – each competing for variation, and shifting the attention of potential consumers, in the hope of attracting and maintaining them. Abandon rigid standards; adapt to all tastes without privileging any; encourage deregulation and flexibility; all of these factors combine to build globalization.

What is missing most in a liquid society is a concept of truth that balances universalism and particularities, identity and difference. Zygmunt Bauman discusses the changes that modernity and post-modernity brought to the notion of identity. In liquid existence, identity has become ambiguous, a contested idea that becomes a battlefield: a concept that instead of uniting, divides and excludes in such a way that what formerly served as a banner for emancipation, turns out into a covert form of oppression.

On the other hand, we live in a time where we are experiencing a paradigm shift in scientific understanding. The complexities of the genome, the emergence of the first multicellular life forms, the origins of Homo sapiens and our prodigiously enlarged brain: all these and more discoveries are too subtle to be accounted for by reductive science. Such an evolution in scientific research led science to abandon any kind of universalistic pretence and now presents discoveries as new hypotheses.

Globalization has reached a point of no return and each one of us depends upon the other; we can choose between mutually deepening our vulnerabilities or mutually guarantee our shared security: between swimming together or sinking together. As sometimes happens in history, self-interest and ethical principles of mutual care, point in the same direction and demand the same strategy. Far from being a curse, globalization can still be turned into a blessing: humanity has a new chance with the new science and new technologies! Whether the crisis becomes opportunity, it depends very much on my view, on the adoption of the dialogical principle in postmodern society.

I am constituted through Thou. The dialogical principle has a religious version since the Apostolic Church Fathers, particularly Saint Augustine and

Saint John Climacus. It emerged in a philosophical version in the 20th century through Martin Buber and Emmanuel Lévinas, and, chiefly, Franz Rosenzweig's book *The Star of Redemption* (Henriques, 2016a; Henriques, 2018a). This major work directly inspired celebrated authors such as E. Lévinas, P. Ricoeur, M. Henry, J. L. Marion, Eric Fromm, Walter Benjamin, Gersom Scholem; other trends of dialogical thought are to be found in Mikhail Bakhtin, Karl Polanyi, Paul Ricoeur and Bruno Latour (Bakhtin, 1968). Outside the Western tradition the African *Ubuntu* (*humanity*) philosophy splendidly underlines how *a person is a person through another person.* In Zulu language ubuntu is expressed by the proverb *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (Eze, 2017).

The Star was written in the Balkans front in World War I and was published in 1921. It begins with an introduction about anguish in the face of death, an existential shock comparable to our present Anthropocene and COVID-19 woes. *The Star* has a fiend to shoot at: universalism or totality, *the way of the philosophers from Jonia to Jena*; and it has a secret weapon, too: revelation in consciousness differentiates the whole of reality into man, world, and God (Rosenzweig, 2000). There is no totality, no omniscient father-figure, no authoritarian heaven as god is love and relationship, a poet that engages our freedom and not a boss that generates norms. Identity and difference are articulated in man's response. In a world bereft of God, the primary reality is 'Me', myself and I. Other people are not as real to me as I am to myself. Hence all the problems that philosophers have wrestled with for two and a half thousand years *from Jonia to Jena.* How do I know other minds exist? Why should I be moral? Why should I be concerned about the welfare of others to whom I am not related? Why should I limit the exercise of my freedom so that others can enjoy theirs? In a world in which God is held as existent, the primordial fact is relationship. There is God, there are other people, there is me, and there is the relationship between us, for my identity is built not by myself but through the other. Without the other, we stay trapped within the prison of the self and our identity loses its differentiation

Rosenzweig's positive dialogic would not be possible without the negative dialogic previously expressed by Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche; they all broke with Hegelian idealism, that is, with modernity (Rosenzweig, 2005, about Kierkegaard, pp.7-8; Schopenhauer pp. 8-9; Nietzsche, pp. 9-10). Kierkegaard showed how the impersonal spirit has no right to take possession of the individual soul. His devices of fictional names and heteronyms are a tool to break this veil of universalistic illusion. Schopenhauer was, perhaps, the first to clearly understand the role of subjectivity in which *the philosopher is the form [or system] of philosophy.* Nietzsche turns out to speak to God face to face; not only denying his existence but cursing it, an initiatory atheism that unveils the abyss of divine freedom.

Despite being a metaphysical treatise, *The Star* is emancipated from idealistic tradition, and thus from modernity. It is post-modern much in consonance with the Expressionist Art of the 1920's. The majestic awakening of human I by the divine Thou is followed by mankind´s call to redeem the world. Each of the primordial entities is built through relationships with the others. God becomes God by expressing his nature and freedom in the world of creation, and by receiving human recognition. The world becomes what it is by receiving its origin from divine creation and reaching its particularities through human redemption. Human being becomes what it is, awakening to freedom through revelation, and extending his freedom to the world.

3. Difference and Recognition

We may now explore the value of the dialogical approach on the issue of identity and how such postmodern categories as singularity, alterity, relation, narrative and temporality introduce the issue of recognition.

A large part of our daily life takes place on an intersubjective level as we talk and work together. But recognition is not the same as intersubjectivity. Let us consider a smile. Its meaning is conveyed through a combination of movements of lips, eyes, and facial muscles. We don't smile at everyone; if we did, we would be misinterpreted. Also, we do not learn to smile; it results from a reflex structure. Smiling is an intersubjective act, presenting a wide range of feelings: it can express gratitude, acceptance, friendship, love, joy, charm, satisfaction, fun; it can be sarcastic, enigmatic, tired, resigned. I walk into a room and see someone: if he smiles, so maybe do I; if he or she frowns, I get apprehensive. A smile can be authentic or simulated. A murderer can smile at the person he is going to kill; a liar may laugh at a naive person. A smile does not refer to objects neither guarantees a relationship.

Recognition is not about smiling or frowning but about the being that is behind intersubjectivity. It occurs between subjects, yes, but subjects who mutually constitute themselves. As we are surprised by others - be it nature, man or God - we enter into a process of acknowledgment. Arts, ethics, and religion disclose the scores that lie behind the evanescent sounds we were listening to. Knowledge is about objects. Recognition is between beings. Following Franz Rosenzweig’s suggestions, Martin Buber wrote about the duality we experience in the I-it relationship and the I-thou relationship (Buber, 1971; 2001). Common sense, science and technology are between a subject and an object with a torrent of data in between. Recognition involves the whole person and brings out the reciprocity between consciousness and being. Each one of us wants to know as a subject and to be recognized as a being.

Recognition aims at the mutual appropriation of self and other (Chystyakova, 2017). It is not me or my desires and feelings that determine what I recognize. Rather, I am constituted by what I recognize in other beings. It is an appropriation that begins with a passionate identification with another being; it turns into a responsibility about what to do; a testimony about whom or what there is; intelligence about what is meant; and attention to what we experience (Lonergan, 1999).

While the path of knowledge begins with a trial-and-error research, the path of recognition is open to the other. *You must expect the unexpected*, wrote Heraclitus. Recognition is the realm of difference, where the universal meets the particular: it happens in a specific time and space, through a body and a face, encounter and community, word, and work. We respond to the presence of others by welcoming their dignity, not by exchanging information and desires.

Recognition happens in a specific moment; in a meeting that may be casual and unplanned or, on the contrary, a celebration. Occurring in a concrete emplacement, it creates a territory that, by becoming ours, is more than a space. Our meeting-point is not another one's meeting-point. Our home is not just another house; it is where we display our identities, where we wish to return; it is what a migrant, an exile, or a refugee do not have. When we receive friends, the house becomes crowded. When someone leaves or dies, the house is emptier. Home is a place of origin and destination, longed for after an exuberant day or after a long vacation. *It is good to come home!* Thus concludes Ernst Bloch's *The Principle Hope*.

Recognition involves the body. Our movements, gestures and postures speak for us. What touches and moves us, what make us hold our breath or sigh, requires our action. Tenderness moves our hearts. Caresses take the self to the other and bring a unity of purpose. On the other side, there are words, gestures and acts of violence, contempt, and anger, with which we harass the other or are hassled to the point of becoming mutually unbearable.

We are tested by the faces of others, suggesting answers and conveys attitudes. I decode words, silences, smiles, surprises, and changes in someone else's face. Anxiety, boredom and restlessness slip into our lives, as routine tires us as much as work. Whom I recognize as a Thou transforms me, as Saint Augustine says in *The Master*, as he is in search for a greater truth. Emmanuel Lévinas wrote amazing pages about the importance of the face as the crucible of recognition. Lévinas will state eloquently in this work, his opus magnum, that the Star of Rosenzweig is much too present alongside his book to be cited (Lévinas, 1961, p. 14).

Recognition requires encounter. It is not a contract, but a covenant, a promise. In a contract I give to receive. This is the world of commerce, exchange, ceremonial, diplomacy, and etiquette, which means minor ethics. As with varnish and polish, it is easy to create and easy to break. Berthold Brecht wrote that *hypocrisy is the homage that the cynic pays to virtue*. Recognition confronts me truly with the other. Instead of a conventional thank you, I really feel indebted and thankful if I am truly identified and recognized. Such responses can transform a life. Interpreting Emmanuel Lévinas says Nazaré Barros that „The other gives himself as different and as something that challenges, challenges and summons us. The relationship with the other does not take place as knowledge, but as authority, as difference and mystery" (Nazaré, 2017).

In *The Promise of Politics*, I sustained there is radical difference between a contract and a promise (Henriques, 2018b). A contract is a social transaction, whereas a promise is a relationship. A contract establishes mutual interests, whereas a promise engages a mutual transformation. In a political promise, the community engages in a mutual respect and shares a bond of trust; their members promise to do together what neither could achieve alone; the union makes the force. It is more than a union of interests, as it involves sharing their lives, and pledging mutual faithfulness. Thou and Me come together to form a We. Unlike contracts, which are entered into for the sake of advantage, the dialogical principle promotes promises, that is, commitments sustained by loyalty and fidelity.

Recognition creates a language of its own. *Language is the home of being*, exclaimed Heidegger. *My homeland is the Portuguese language*, said Fernando Pessoa. Through language, we exist. We use language but it is language that keeps us in being. Language finds ways to express what, otherwise, we would not be able to say. It can create words as powerful as life-changing actions. In our entertainment culture, we pay to be distracted. The poetic word has the altogether different task of directing our attention and take noise away. The poet, who has the gift of speech is the one who knows what matters and who matters. He offers us verses that become the dwelling place of the conversation between consciousness and being.

4. When things go sour

The refusal of recognition is a cause of alienation. Turning our backs on people is the beginning of demotion, of social death. We disfigure the other when we do not accept his presence. Failures of recognition create conflicts. The silencing of the other is the first step towards eliminating him from public existence. *Watch and punish*, as Michel Foucault wrote. Conflict sets in and exclusion leads to deliberate violence. This is the struggle to the death between masters and slaves, the rapist and the raped, murderers and victims, both at individual and collective levels.

In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel created a narrative about the dialectics of master and slave, an amazing piece of negative dialogic (Honneth, 1996). It is a story about how consciousness struggles for recognition. The slave possesses nothing but his own work. The master possesses everything except the slave's acknowledgment. The day will come when they face each other, eye to eye. As the master does not see the slave as submissive, the slave rebels. Through obstacles and adventures, the slave will reverse positions. By mastering his destiny, he breaks the chains and frees himself for a dignified existence, and the way in which he frees himself will decide his future.

Hegel’s *dialectics of master and slave* influenced Karl Marx's doctrine of class struggle and Friedrich Nietzsche's ideas about the abyss between the morals of masters and slaves. Simone de Beauvoir examined conflicting gender relations in *The Second Sex*. Frantz Fanon scrutinised colonial relations in *Black Skin, White Masks*. In *Brave New World*, 1931, Aldous Huxley created the character of the director, who practices genetic engineering, sexual selection, and biological experimentation with no ethical limits.

The late Jonathan Sacks – who won the 2016 Templeton Prize - called attention to how some scientists seem to take perverse pleasure in declaring that our life is meaningless. Stephen Hawking specified that „mankind is just a chemical scum on a moderate-size planet, orbiting round a very average star in the outer suburb of one among a billion galaxies. John Gray declared that human life has no more meaning than that of slime mould" (Sacks, 2001, p. 35). In his 2016 book *Homo Deus*, Yuval Harari concludes that, „looking back, humanity will turn out to be just a ripple within the cosmic data flow. You may not agree, he writes, with the idea that organisms are algorithms, and that giraffes, tomatoes, and human beings are just different methods for processing data. But you should know that this is current scientific dogma, and that it is changing our world beyond recognition" (Harari, 2016, p. 395).

There is nothing in science – be it cosmology, neuroscience and molecular biology – to suggest that the cosmos has no of meaning, nor could there be, since the search for meaning is not a scientific task. Human being is disfigured, not acknowledged, when reduced to physical, chemical, biological, psychological, or societal elements, supposedly more real than the whole person herself. Without recognition, human being is disintegrated into fragments; these are left to move helplessly in an anabatic or down top fragmentation, that robs each person of his or her identity; or the fragments are forcefully integrated by major entities that disfigure him in a down top or katabatic fragmentation, such as in totalitarian regimes.

A penetrating diagnosis of manipulation of personality – which is a kind of anabatic fragmentation of identity – is made by La Rochefoucauld, a seventeenth-century French moralist and a creator of maxims and epigrams of profound pessimism. In his *Reflections or Moral Sentences and Maxims*, 1664, he attributes to self-love a preponderant role in motivating human actions. Many of the so-called virtues are driven by selfishness. False sociability is a self-destructive manipulation of others: *We are so used to disguise ourselves that we end up disguising ourselves as ourselves.* There are many distortions of consciousness at the intellectual level. According to Francis Bacon, our conscience is trapped by all kinds of idols: of the self, of the public, of fashion, of species. Lonergan called *scotosis* the deliberate obfuscation of who we are. Nietzsche speaks of a fundamental will that excludes everything that contradicts it. Voegelin claims that our self builds *second realities* to satisfy himself. A lot of internet games for kids and adults such as *Second Life*, explore these delusional constructions.

The distortion of freedom and personal identity may also come through sadism and masochism, analysed by Jean Paul Sartre (1972, p. 378). A sadist wants to appropriate the freedom of whom he abuses; the more he persists in violating the other, the more the freedom of the other escapes him. The sadist discovers his blunder as the victim keeps looking at him, that is, as he experiences the absolute alienation of his self in the freedom of the other. The fierce look of the victim who does not let the torturers take him down comes again and again in the classical literature of Dante, Victor Hugo, Hemingway, William Faulkner. As the sadist gives up when his will to power fails, the masochist wants to see his self destroyed by others; this abdication is his gloomy expression of freedom. He intends to let himself be dominated. The more he feels dominated, the more he enjoys his abdication. Like sadism, this is an admission of guilt. He is guilty by becoming an object, and he is guilty because he consents to alienation.

Recognition is never guaranteed. The character Gollum in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* desires so forcefully the ring – *my precious, my precious* – that he transforms a good thing into an evil one, a possible liberation into an instrument of slavery. His impulse to be recognized becomes destructive and leads to selfishness. The exaggerated affirmation of himself destroys the relationship with the other.

Another ambivalence of our modern liquid age is that interpersonal relationships - love, commitments, rights and duties mutually recognized - are both objects of attraction and of apprehension; of desire and fear; of duplicity and hesitation, examination of conscience and anxiety. As Bauman suggests in *Liquid Love*, following Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*, the liquid *modern man without ties*, is frequently ambivalent as regards *living without chains*, and having relationships *without commitments*. We covet and we fear relationships at the same time. We do not know what to do to with the relationships we want and, worse still, we are not sure what kind of relationships we want ...

As regards top down or catabatic fragmentation we may start by noticing that in the 20th century, totalitarian policies violated classes and peoples. Societies were violated to serve values of race, nation, and class. Nazis and Soviets caused the death of dozens of millions of people. The politics of identity, or fundamentalism from above, absolutizes race, class, state, nation, religion. The Russian Eugene Zamyatin wrote *Us* in 1920, a dystopian novel. At the beginning of the narrative, the hero called D503, the builder of a project called *the Integral*, totally identifies himself with the state. Getting in touch with the *barbarians* and through his love with I-330 – a *number woman* – D503 begins to develop as a human being. George Orwell brought this issue in the better known *1984*. Big Brother dominates the members of the Ingsoc Party, and each human being is a slave. His perfect society is maintained through lie, illusion, and strength. The hero Winston Smith wants to protect himself from the illusory world created by the totalitarian state. The negative outcome of 1984 means that Winston and his beloved Julia will return to the world where lie is truth, war is peace and recognition is impossible.

Modern nation-building played a primordial role in integrating individuals as the state legitimized their subordination. State and nation were two sides of the same coin ... The State sought the obedience of its citizens by setting himself as the culmination of the destiny of the nation. On the other hand, a nation without a state would feel insecure of its past, indecisive in its uncertain present, and condemned to a precarious existence as regards the future. It was a task of the state to define and select the set of local traditions and laws thus becoming a necessary condition for the nation to exist. We could adept the formula of the Augsburg Confession, *cuius regio, eius natio.*

National identity was from the beginning an agonistic notion and a battle cry. A national community which coincides with a set of citizens, was destined to remain unfinished and precarious. It was a project that requires continuous vigilance, and the application of force to ensure obedience. Ernest Renan spoke about nation-state *as a daily plebiscite*, and yet he lived in France, a state known for its exceptional centralism.

Social class once claimed the rank of meta-identity as it was based on equality: such rank of supra-identity was supposed to give meaning to all other identities and reduce them to a secondary role. As social class no longer offers a secure hub for identity in post-modern societies, it was dissolved into numerous claims of groups or categories, in search of a social anchor of their own. The most effective contemporary collective identities are gender, race, creed, generation. Each of them wages a struggle to emulate the integrating power of social class; each of them is suspicious or outright hostile towards the demands of similar exclusivity from the others.

The effect of these conflictual claims is fragmentation and social dissent expressed in a multitude of intergroup confrontations and proliferation of battlefields, of recognition wars. We are almost back to Thomas Hobbes' nightmare of the *struggle of all against all.* The most recent war of recognition emerged in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemics; the great majority acknowledges that vaccines save lives; a vociferous minority of negationists invokes the principles of individual freedom against health safety provided by the state.

Politics, which has seen a rise in populism, is always about division and confrontation. It is about dividing a nation into „us" and „them." It is about dividing nations through fear and allocation of blame. It is about anger and a sense of betrayal. It is oppositional. It proposes handing power to a strong leader who assures his or her followers that, in return for their loyalty, he or she will fight their battles for them. Can we do something about the politics of „us" against „them"?

Can we have politics of *all of us together*? Can we recover the promise of politics, as upheld by Hanna Arendt, a work for the common good? Promise is about what we have in common despite our differences. It speaks about collective responsibility. Being part of a community requires offering and accepting. A community demands that altruism is recognized. Not only each person, but each society is irreplaceable and precious. Without recognition, the subject disintegrates into fragments, which are left to move helplessly within. Can you re-glue these pieces together? If I get lost in impasses and if I distort my feelings, my ideas and my freedom, can I be a person again? Is there redemption? Just as alienation is the loss of self through loss of the other, does reconciliation allow us to regain relationship with others? How can we ask someone to help us, to understand us, to guide us, to make us ascend the ladder of life?

5. Coming back home

All my methods are rational, says Captain Ahab in the novel *Moby Dick* about his pursuit of the white whale that represents evil. *Only my goals are crazy!* Unlike Captain Ahab, if we were as rational about goals as about means, would mankind's problems be solved? This is the challenge to which Aristotle invites us in *Nicomachean Ethics*. If there were rules for good and evil applicable to all places and times, would conflicts end, and universal recognition be achieved? We face again the problem of universalism, now at the ethical level. It is a waste of time to decide whether moral norms are absolute or relative. They are relative insofar as they emanate from consciousness. On the other hand, given our nature and the laws of the physical world, we must respect values.

We cannot prove that life is better than death, and that God exists. But neither can we prove that love is better than hate, altruism than selfishness, forgiveness than the desire for revenge, as Jonathan Sacks puts it (Sacks, 2001, p. 37). We cannot prove that hope is truer to experience than the tragic sense of life. We can only find a way to them through the dialogical principle, *I am constituted by Thou.* Almost none of the truths by which we live are demonstrable, and the yearning to prove them is based on an equivoque between explanation and interpretation. Explanations can be proved, interpretations cannot. Science is about explanation. Meaning is always a matter of interpretation. It fits to the same territory as ethics, aesthetics, and noetics. In none of these disciplines can anything of importance be demonstrated, but that does not make them irrelevant; they embody the greatest sources of human wisdom.

Let me elaborate this issue. A sophisticated anthropologist as Melville J. Herskovits in *The Science of Cultural Anthropology*, argues that values are derived from the culture to which we belong; ethics is the dominant moral; aesthetics is the current standard of taste; politics is only power management. However, for a society to progress, it needs criteria of excellence. Extreme relativism, the belief that all values are equivalent, may have supporters like the infamous Marquis de Sade; yet, mankind learned the hard way that slavery, paedophilia, trafficking human organs or the rape of women are wrong. The conviction that women would by nature be inferior to man was attacked by Plato in *The Republic* some 2400 years ago. Yet, only in the mid-nineteenth century and after John Stuart Mill's essay *The Subjugation of Women*, did liberal nations began to accept that a society that deals with women as equals is superior to a society where women remain inferior. Recognition worked and gave a better understanding of what mankind is and how it can redeem wrongs.

Let me give another example of recognition: mankind’s struggle against slavery. The acknowledgment that there are no slaves by nature was a slow-motion conquest of Christianity that took centuries to be established. The apostle Paul became the most vigorous promoter of the vision love of in Jesus as he said:

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; because you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3:28). Such vision of universal equality had precedents in the Stoic notion of natural law, and yet it took almost two thousand years to become a reality. Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Augustine viewed slavery as a lamentable but inevitable result of sin. Basil of Caesarea considered it beneficial to the slave as a remedy for his own sins, a tragic echo of the Aristotelian idea that there are servile people. Or, as Ambrose thought, only the body is enslaved, not the soul.

It was the task of a Cappadocian Father to denounce slavery as intrinsically evil, namely Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335 - c. 395) the younger brother of Basil of Caesarea and a cognate of Gregory of Nazianzus. He was influenced by Origen, Justin the Martyr, and Clement of Alexandria in emphasizing that not only Christianity was compatible with philosophy, but its ultimate expression. A member of a family in which five of nine children were considered saints, Gregory of Nyssa made a difference in the writings on Trinity and his radical condemnation of slavery (Holland, 2019, pp. 106-107). His grandmother Macrina the Elder, was also considered a saint and the maternal grandfather was executed in the persecution of emperor Maximinus II. His sister Macrina was dedicated to caring for the sick and poor. In a world where infanticide was rife, she rummaged through the buckets for new-borns she brought home to raise. When she died, Gregory of Nyssa praised her likened her to Christ, and was not his brother, the celebrated bishop of Caesarea.

Too many centuries would pass before Christians adopted the charitable practices proposed by Gregory of Nyssa and Macrina and, later, by Martin of Tours and Pauline of Nola; to help the vulnerable because they recognize Christ in them. Patronage (*patrocinium*) has always existed, as the Latin term recalls. But the gifts of the rich and powerful to the poor were held as a reflexion of glory. Recognizing others as equals, reflecting the divine, was a bizarre and even repulsive idea in Antiquity. The fact that is normal and attractive today shows the power of the dialogical principle.

The claims of the dialogic principle are simple and profound. We must respect the other, a challenge as strong as seeking the truth. We must deal with each person as irreplaceable and indispensable beings. Now, to respect the other means we must give something of ourselves. If I want to give, I must lose something. If I want to receive, I must empty myself. If I want to unite, I must stop being the centre of the world. Only acts of recognition lead us into a genuine relationship.

The psychiatrist R.D. Laing relates how a nurse, when delivering a cup of tea to a chronically psychotic patient, heard the following thanks: *It was the first time in my life that someone gave me a cup of tea...* Many cups of tea had passed through her hands, but none had ever been offered to her in that gentle way. Giving, offering, is the simplest and most difficult thing in the world: you only offer something when you offer a part of yourself, not just in appearance, but in truth.

Accepting is not easy, either. Nan-in, a Japanese Zen master, once received a teacher who wanted to learn Zen. As he served tea, Nan-in filled his illustrious visitor's cup until it spilled. The teacher watched the tea spilling over and couldn't contain himself: *It's already full.* Nan-in replied: „Like this cup, you too are full of opinions and speculations! How can I teach you Zen without first emptying your cup?" (Purcell, 1996).

6. God as an intimate other

Can we carry the dialogical ascent to the point of recognition of God without falling into a universalist fallacy? Can we understand that mankind has no upper part to be freed by human or divine transcendence but that each person is a whole in body and spirit? That is the goal of dialogical authors. For Franz Rosenzweig, identity is not constituted through the self, but through the other: heteronomy is better than autonomy. He emphasizes this priority by quoting the question *Where are Thou?* addressed in *Genesis.* From his hiding place, *Adam-man* answers: *Am I responsible?* Rosenzweig's reading underlines that a human being becomes a self when awakened through a dialogue with the divine Thou; the moral subject arises not through protests of innocence but admitting his responsibility. Subjectivity is responsibility. We discover ourselves by being seen by others; we recognize ourselves in the presence of the other and, thus, we need more than the universal to be ourselves; we need the uniqueness of the other.

The dialogical principle admits the universal with a difference. *Redemption begins when the I says Thou to a him.* The work of human singularity prepares the community and anticipates the kingdom of God. Eternity is not an absolute that absorbs the individual, but the penetration of world through love, and the constitution of the *I-thou relationship* as a „we". *The fact that each moment can be the last makes it eternal.* Death is possible in every moment, but love is as strong as death. Instead of an imagined and delusional eternity as extension of time, we are in touch with the eternity that is future. Love manifests itself as a commandment, an imperative par excellence, making the human being responsible for redemption. The revelation of love awaits a redeeming human response: to dedicate oneself to one's neighbour. To love others is to redeem the world and prepare the Kingdom. Redemption is the work of a singular and mortal being, who participates in eternity.

Söeren Kierkegaard brilliantly grasped that Platonism, Hegelianism, and Christendom (institutional Christianity as distinct from evangelical Christianity) are united in the promotion of universalism and transcendentalism. Schopenhauer called Christendom *Platonism for the people* for this reason. Plato defends that man is both mortal and immortal as he desires to detach himself from the finite. Christendom oscillates between conquering the world and abandoning it to be united with God. Hegel envisions God as the absolute Spirit and integrates (*aufhebt*) man into it. In each case, the universal absorbs the unique.

Kierkegaard's passionate struggle against transcendentalism is based on his vision of man as a synthesis of finite and infinite. Despair, paradox, anguish, and anxiety are marks of that division. As we experience suffering and anxiety we engage in the task of being human; authenticity is not brought by transcending the local and particular, the unique and the individual, but by relating to a divided being, by loving the other.

Kierkegaard/Climacus writes in *Philosophical Crumbs* that sin is a most radical inwardness, when existence as interiorization is cut off from eternal and transcendent truth; for the sinner there is no other, no caring about what happens anywhere else in the world. On the other hand, there is no such thing as „original sin", an absurd theological construct; sin cannot be innate because intimacy is not a fact, but an action to be carried out in existence. Kiergkegaard/ Climacus remains faithful to his project of thought: everything refers to existence.

Theologians may debate in what way Kierkegaard is a voice for the awakening of authentic Christianity. Philosophy does not have to arbiter this issue as Kierkegaard is undoubtedly a Christian. For us, the issue is to evaluate the Christian meaning of existence that defines man as the image of God. Man may be corrupted, but he is not destroyed by sin, as he is able to regain God. An exclusively infinite God cannot assume man's redemption; but a *homodeus,* that is, a God both infinite and finite as manifest in Jesus Christ can do it. According to the Danish author, the *homodeus* is not like a Greek god who accidentally assumes a human form. He enters existence through suffering. The only difference between Him and man is that He is not a sinner. He remains eternal God and, therefore, is not disconnected from the eternal, which is the definition of a sinner.

7. Conclusions

Most of our principles involve long chains of reasons, where each step is a means to the next aim, until the goal is reached. The Californian multibillionaires Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk desperately want to send mankind to space, starting with Mars; for that goal they must improve the technology of space travel. Then, we will learn more about life on Mars. This will improve what we know about life on earth. The more we know, the more health problems we will solve. If that happens, we will help humanity to survive, either in Mars or on Earth. We finally come to a question: why should humanity survive?

As it began to dawn on each of us that philosophy has no wisdom to answer this, we become aware of the limitations of universality and its dual corollaries of totalitarianism and fragmentation. Universality requires propositions that are true in all places, at all times but meaning must be expressed in particularities. There is no universal meaning. Thus we recognize that what is unique in humankind - our imagination, our ability to conceptualize worlds, our capacity to communicate with others, to bridge distances and orchestrate our differences, what makes mankind different - is born through the dialogic principle *I am constituted through Thou.*

We do not have an answer to the question *why should humanity survive?* The cosmos does not care if humanity survives. Only a God cares for His creation and Martin Heidegger wrote *that only a God can save us.* Inside the Christian tradition, we could write *only an homodeus, Christ, can redeem us.* The importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue is that, beyond Christianity, this solution is philosophically valid. An authentic religion overcomes abstract transcendentalism as it makes the eternal present here and now through recognition. In a world threatened by civilizational clashes this is decisive. It suggests that, at the heart of each religion, unity is worshipped in diversity. „To keep my identity does not mean to live in rigidity regarding relationships with other people, other Churches and other nations. A dialogue, firstly, puts people on an equal footing" (Dura, 2020). The glory of the created world is its amazing multiplicity: the thousands of languages spoken by humanity, the proliferation of cultures, the variety of imaginative expressions of the human spirit; if we listen carefully, we will hear the voice of wisdom. That is how Identity comes with a difference[2].

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REONTOLOGIZATION OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN THE LIQUID AND GLOBAL WORLD

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Abstract:
In this article, I intend to highlight the fact that the realities that are being recorded at the morphological level of contemporary societies (the phenomenon of migration, wars, the dynamics of mobility and communication, the economic pace, the health crisis generated by Covid-19) are bringing to the fore the redefinition of *religious identity*. What is undeniably clear is that Western societies have become an ethnic and religious mosaic, a diversity that requires specific regulations in terms of norms in order to avoid conflict. However, this ethno-religious diversity also calls for an interpretation of the relationship between identities. The aim of my analysis is to argue as to whether or not religious identity is an inflexible, immobile reality, static in its representativeness *towards* and *in relation to* other identities representing different religious cultures. In this respect, I will insist on the role that migration plays in the construction of religious identity. Is religious identity decomposing in the context of the *liquid* flow of global society? Are the boundaries of such an identity, as structures of individual, social, cultural validation, desubstantiated in the daily experience of religious diversity and in the dynamics of current societal transformations?

Keywords: identity, religion, borders, globalization, migration.

Résumé :
Dans cet article, j'entends souligner le fait que les réalités qui s'enregistrent au niveau morphologique des sociétés contemporaines (le phénomène de migration, les guerres, les dynamiques de mobilité et de communication, le rythme économique, la crise sanitaire générée by Covid-19) mettent au premier plan la redéfinition de l'identité religieuse. Ce qui est indéniable, c'est que les sociétés occidentales sont devenues une mosaïque ethnique et religieuse, une diversité qui nécessite des régulations spécifiques en termes de normes afin d'éviter les conflits. Mais cette diversité ethno-religieuse appelle aussi une lecture des relations entre les identités. Le but de mon analyse est d'argumenter pour savoir si l'identité religieuse est ou non une réalité inflexible, immobile, statique dans sa représentativité envers et par rapport à d'autres identités représentant différentes cultures religieuses. A cet égard, j'insisterai sur le rôle que joue la migration dans la construction de l'identité religieuse. L'identité religieuse se décompose-t-elle dans le contexte du flux liquide de la société mondiale ? Les frontières d'une telle identité, en tant que structures de validation individuelle, sociale, culturelle, sont-elles infondées dans l'expérience quotidienne de la diversité religieuse et dans la dynamique des transformations sociétales en cours ?

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Mots-clés : identité, religion, frontières, mondialisation, migration.

Rezumat:
În acest articol îmi propun să evidențiez faptul că realitățile care se înregistrează la nivelul morfologic al societăților contemporane (fenomenul migrației, războaiele, dinamica mobilității și comunicării, ritmul economic, criza de sănătate generată). de Covid-19) aduc în prim plan redefinirea identității religioase. Ceea ce este incontestabil clar este că societățile occidentale au devenit un mozaic etnic și religios, o diversitate care necesită reglementări specifice în ceea ce privește normele pentru a evita conflictele. Cu toate acestea, această diversitate etno-religioasă necesită și o interpretare a relației dintre identități. Scopul analizei mele este de a argumenta dacă identitatea religioasă este sau nu o realitate inflexibilă, imobilă, statică în reprezentativitatea ei față de și în relație cu alte identități care reprezintă diferite culturi religioase. În acest sens, voi insista asupra rolului pe care îl joacă migrația în construirea identității religioase. Se descompune identitatea religioasă în contextul fluxului lichid al societății globale? Granițele unei astfel de identități, ca structuri de validare individuală, socială, culturală, sunt desubstanțiate în experiența zilnică a diversității religioase și în dinamica transformărilor societale actuale?

Cuvinte cheie: identitate, religie, frontiere, globalizare, migrație

The reality of *identity* is widely debated today, whether we are talking about religious, cultural, political, national, social identity, etc. The analyses that revolve around this concept derive from the manner in which man feels the need to perceive himself, to have a *place* and a *meaning* in the network of today's world, a world in constant transition from its old patterns to others that are being shaped by these new trends of adaptability.

An identity's way of *being* involves a conscious and rational act of observing, situating and relating. Today's logic of interaction, based on the premise of elasticity and the dynamism of global interconnectivity, places one (religious) identity *in relation to* another (religious) identity. And each religious identity has its own particularity: the tendency for its defining criteria (its dogmatic belief, cult, behavioral expression, religious affiliation) to be representative. After all, do globalization and migration have a relativizing or articulating effect on religious identities? This is a natural question that calls for a theoretical analysis with statistical arguments. I should point out that my analysis is not strictly sociological, although I do use data from specialized studies. I have instead opted for an interpretative analysis that hermeneutically reflects the complexity of the social construct of religious identity.

1. Social identity and religious identity - conceptual-theoretical approximations

Every concept has a history of its theorization and meaningful application. The significance of *identity* in the course of the development of social thought shows how people thought in the past and how people think today according to the contextual reality in which they are situated. Conceptually, *identity* retains a complexity of nuances and meanings. It is difficult to suggest a definition that summarizes the elements that characterize identity. The plurality of definitions under which the concept of *identity* is examined requires an interdisciplinary approach, it laying at the intersection of cultural anthropology, social psychology, philosophy and political studies (Izenberg, 2016).

The conceptualization of *identity* is based primarily on the implicit and explicit answers to the questions: Who am I? Who are you? Identity frames not only „who I/we think I/we are" (individually or collectively), but also „who I/we are acting as a being" in interpersonal and intergroup interactions and how I/we are socially recognized by others. As a consequence, the question „Who am I/are you?" encompasses a range of diverse but related contents and processes, which are in turn highlighted by different theoretical and meta-theoretical perspectives (Vignoles et. al., 2011, p. 2).

From a social point of view, *identity* can be understood as the dynamic outcome of a process of subjective self-awareness that results in a self-constructed resource that satisfies the need for belonging and integration within the tendency of giving meaning to life (Zanetti & Gualdi, 2022, p. 179). The construction of identity is therefore the result of a process that unfolds over time, an experience of transformation shaped by the context in which a man is born, grows up, and matures as a subject aware of himself and of the others. In this sense, identity can be defined as the capacity for self-recognition based on continuity, a persistence that is subjected to the flow of time, of everyday experience and psychosocial commitments. Identity marks the state of being of the self in the continuous or discontinuous vector of the rhythm of the world. Thus, the construction of identity takes into account: (a) the passage through the experience of temporality, time having both an internal-subjective and an external-social dimension suggested by the interaction of several social segments and layers, (b) the inseparability of the relationship with the social environment and the particular relationships that man has in the course of his life. On the premise of these elements that factor in the construction of an identity, theorists have developed the idea that identities are not static, fixed, but fluid, i.e. situated in a constant flux of change (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Social-psychological and discursive approaches to identity suggest that personal and social aspects of identity can fluctuate substantially depending on the context in which an individual finds itself. Discursive approaches to identity suggest that individuals shape their identities as they unfold during social interactions (Potter, Wetherell, 1987).

In a series of multilateral clarifications, M.A. Zanetti and G. Gualdi (2022, p. 180) point out the convergent elements that form the definitional profile of identity: (a) identity claims the idea of equality and difference; (b) identity is not a reality or an entity that is forever immobile, fixed, but a constantly changing reality, which continually evolves and is subject to social and cultural influences and transformations; (c) the process of constructing an identity does not take place within the confines of the human interior, in isolated conditions, but materializes in the relationship with others and in a social and cultural context;

(d) identity is constructed in the dialectic between *equality* and *otherness*, which responds to the need, on the one hand, for the identification in the resemblance to the other, and on the other hand, to the need for the affirmation of uniqueness, by distinguishing oneself from the other, by establishing boundaries between our self and the other. The construction of identity in terms of self-perception in relation to otherness is a progressive experience through which one takes rational, cognitive, emotional note of what gives substance to the uniqueness of the self. In a way, the structuring of identity requires each individual to establish, for his or her own stability, permeable boundaries that can be crossed, but at the same time to differentiate cognitively from the other.

Identity can be defined on three levels: *individual*, *relational*, *collective* and *material* (Sedikides & Brewer, 2001). Although the distinction between these three types of identities can be understood as a distinction between different forms of identity content, it is widely seen as referring to different types of processes through which identities are formed, maintained and changed over time. *Individual* or *personal identity* refers to aspects of self-definition at the level of the individual person. These include goals, values and beliefs, including religious beliefs, standards of behavior and references for decision-making, self-esteem and self-evaluation, desires. *Relational identity* refers to a person's roles in relation to others, framing how these roles are defined and interpreted by the individuals that assume them. In this relational setting, identity is defined and located within interpersonal spaces, family and other social settings (Bamberg, 2004, pp. 366–369). Such an identity requires the recognition of a social group. *Collective identity* refers to people's identification with the social groups and categories to which they belong and the meanings that derive from this identification with them, involving the idea of belonging in terms of ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender (De Fina, 2007). However, I am not wrong if I also bring into the discussion a *material identity*, which is suggested by the frameworks we are provided with in our lives: clothes, cars, houses, etc., but also a *digital identity* projected in the space of online communication on various social media platforms, which does not necessarily correspond to our concrete physical identity. And, to complete the definitional framework of identity, we have to talk about the multiple aspects of a person's identity, aspects that intersect and interact in our day-to-day experience (Amiot et al., 2007). According to A. Sen every individual, as a person, has multiple identities, and the relative importance of a selected identity can change depending on the context or the priorities of the person under changing circumstances (Sen, 2002).

We are now in a better position to understand religious identity, which is at its core a social identity in conjunction with the conformity to the precepts of a religious tradition. According to Sarah Azaransky, religious identity describes how a person or group understands, experiences, shapes and is shaped by the psychological, social, political and devotional aspects of religious membership or affiliation (Azaransky, 2010, 631). Given this plurality of elements that go into the makeup of a religious identity, what is its substance? It is very difficult to formulate an answer to this question.

Religious identity is a molded identity, constitutive of man, but which develops in its content under the influence of a number of factors. Religious institutions and the family are most often mentioned as the structures that play a providential role in the formation of religious identity. These institutions provide several sets of beliefs, moral perspectives through which an individual can understand and legitimize his or her identity from a religious point of view. Cultic acts, social-religious actions, religious communities provide material and concrete opportunities for an individual to confirm and reaffirm aspects of their religious identity. But N. T. Ammerman has insisted that religious identity is never confined to a religious institution or kept within private boundaries. It lies in the tension of expansion, of openness, of communication. Religious identity does not imply rigidity, but an act of presence in relation to an otherness. For this reason, the construction of religious identities is a dynamic process in which a person is shaped by other identities that intersect within his or her life experiences. He concluded that religious identity is the result of an ongoing and fluid negotiation between dominant narratives, institutional authority and individual agency (Ammerman, 2003).

L. Peek identified three stages in the development of religious identity: *religion as ascribed identity*, *religion as chosen identity* and *religion as declared identity* (Peek, 2005). *Religion as ascribed identity* describes the religious identity of most people during childhood and adolescence. In this time frame, religious identity is accepted and represents an everyday norm in behavioral expression. It cannot be debated, as the cognitive and rational resources to understand the relevance of religious identity are lacking. In the course of intellectual development, people come to digest and interpret the relevance of this identity, and therefore come to understand that they have the ability to choose their own religion, which corresponds to the second stage - *religion as chosen identity*. The third stage - *religion as declared identity* - suggests an awareness of the relevance of religious values as a publicly expressed existential and social meaning.

Therefore, the background of religious identity is a complex *system* of psychological, cultural, social, historical, ideological elements, articulated, like any other identity, in a logic of distinction between the universal and the particular. Reflecting on the scriptural text of the *Epistle to the Galatians* (3:28: „There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus"). Miroslav Volf (1996) pleads for emphasizing the religious identity situated in a transition of becoming to the extent of the reconciliation of all identities in which selves are situated at a given moment, concluding that, for a Christian, identity means a shift of allegiance from particular identities to a universal identity in Christ. This kind of religious identity requires the privileging of a transcendental ideal over historical identities or of the universal over the particular. Daniel Boyarin (1994) has interpreted this scriptural text as suggesting a radical call for a non-hierarchical, undifferentiated humanity, given that in the ancient Roman Empire, as well as in the contemporary world, society was organized along hierarchies of nationality, class and gender. Ethnic and political distinctions were recognized by the Apostle Paul, but for those believers incorporated into the horizon of the Christic community, these distinctions no longer mattered.

For Jeffrey Carlson, religious identity is a dynamic process that involves selecting, appropriating and internalizing elements from a wide range of possibilities, even if a person understands themselves to have developed their religious identity from the pool of resources of a single tradition. Religious identity is a composite of various elements brought together in the midst of a cultural and linguistic frameworks that limit and make possible an identity. We thus speak of a syncretic religious identity, elastic beyond its formal, fixed, stable frameworks (Carlson, 2000).

2. Global fluidity and transition from *closed identity* to *open entity*

And yet religious identity has a presence in society. The society of the 21st century also differs radically from the society of previous centuries. The determining factors that have reshaped today's society are modernity and globalization. Somehow, globalization is the consequence of the progress brought forth by modernity. I will not dwell on this issue. What I am interested in is whether or not religious identity is still a fixed, stable, self-centered reality in the context of globalization.

Ronald Robertson (1992) is certainly one of the most renowned theorists of the phenomenon of *globalization*; a phenomenon synthesized in a defining formula as a „compression of the world”, i.e. „the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole”. Interdependence is the global norm that engages all aspects of life. The relationship between time and space has been altered by globalization. Time has another reference in human perception: the instantaneous, the speed with which we move from one place to another, the speed with which we communicate digitally. And space has somehow been diluted in its physical aspect, in the sense that people from different parts of the world take part instantaneously through the internet, the media in global events. What was once at a great physical distance away is now simultaneously accessible and localized, in the sense that the local becomes the experience platform of the global. This, of course, does not imply that the material reality of space and time has changed, but that globalization produces a different kind of perceptual experience. Events, things that take place at great distances on the map of the world, are at the same time condensed into the everyday experiences of man as their observer, but also as their participant. This leads Mark Davis (2008, p. 139) to speak of a „phenomenology of contraction” of space and time through globalization. The rhythm of life is accelerating, which dictates new formulas for adapting to this unfolding of daily experiences. Globalization is the flow that connects cultures of ideas, goods and people with unprecedented speed, scale and quantity, creating a transnational arena in which religious identity is engaged in new experiences of the dual relationship of *I - you, we - you*.

In this context, I find the sociological perspective on globalization put forward by Zygmunt Bauman (2007) to be providential. He introduces the concept of *liquid modernity*, which denotes contemporary reality from a sociological and political point of view and describes the condition of constant mobility and change in relations, identities and the global economy in contemporary society. This metaphor of a „liquid modernity" suggests the re-stratification of the world's population into those who are free to move globally and those who are condemned to a life lived locally. In this dynamic, life itself becomes *liquid* in the sense of prevalent fear and insecurity at both macro and micro levels in the global spectrum. In today's fast-paced society, people enjoy many more facilities to travel, irrespective of the motivations for such travel. Whether they are economically motivated, in order to achieve a better standard of living, or whether they are undertaken for cultural or social entertainment, travel flows reconfigure the status of identity. Regardless of where one is, hundreds or thousands of kilometers away from the geographical space of their birth or where they live, one maintains contact with the familiar space of home and even with multiple places simultaneously. This is achieved through digitized communication, which though virtual, the act of its presence in the communication circuit is real.

For these reasons, these new mobility schemes, in which migration plays a defining role, make the transition from the logic of *enclosed entities*, exclusively circumscribed by their native space and culture, to the flexibility of *open entities*. However, it should be noted that re-localization and implementation in the substrate of a new society entails the immediate consequence of diminishing mobility, as it has become easier to maintain a concrete link with one's country of origin while living elsewhere. It could therefore be argued that national identities and national communities are increasingly becoming *transnational identities* and *transnational communities*. Identity has become somewhat ubiquitous in its virtual aspect projected into the network of digitized communication. Consequently, it is no longer appropriate to conceive the world of the 21st century in terms of „rationally organized hierarchies of sharply bounded territorial containers" (Houtum, 2012, p. 406). Travelling people, migrants/immigrants cross their own borders, both national and cultural, experiencing other geographical spaces, other mentalities, and other cultural ways of life, they being neither here nor only there, but mentally, virtually and digitally in many places at the same time. This process of mobility has important consequences for the conceptualization of borders, identities and nations.

3. Redefining the parameters of identity: from „solid borders" to „liquid borders"

The term *border* suggests the construction of one identity distinct from another. A *border*, in the etymological sense, indicates the end, the extreme limit that separates one domain of any kind, territorial, linguistic, social, cultural, religious, from another (Zanetti & Gualdi, 2022, p. 181). The border specifies the edge of our identity, separating the content of „what is inside" from the sphere of „what is outside", but perceived as a relationship, and similarly marking the distance of particularities and circumscribing the content of that identity, whether we are talking about national, cultural or religious identity. However, the clearly defined demarcation of the world's religions is particularly problematic where eclecticism, syncretism and inclusiveness create a complicated pattern of overlapping and intertwining traditions within the same territorial perimeter, as is the case in the Indian zone, where the experience of religious interaction and pluralism is millennia old (Geaves, 1998). Geopolitical, cultural and social borders can no longer be understood as fixed and dichotomous. This reality has given an impulse to the theoretical re-dimensioning of the concepts of *border*, of *identity* in their new meanings, moving from the study of the delimitation of borders as static, well-articulated geometries to the examination of the continuous construction of borders in the global dynamics of interconnectivity (Parker, 20090.

Thus, the border is, in a theoretical formulation, the framework of the presence and continuity in a space of an identity reality, objectified in everyday social, political, cultural and religious practices. In this order of ideas, the concept of border as a territorial demarcation line has been re-dimensioned in the meaning of border as a differentiation of mental landscapes, identities and socially constructed meanings (Wilson & Donnan, 1998). A border is not a self-contained entity, detached from other territories or societies, but a constructed and ever dynamic socio-spatial configuration of social relations and networks. Today borders are no longer seen as fixed, linear, stable boundaries delimiting identities, territorial frameworks. The conscious and rational experience of man as an *entity-in-relation-with-others* goes beyond the formal framework of identity and territorial boundaries. In the global dynamic, the interconnection that frames the *place-granularity-man* in the same equation is re-ontologised. Territorial boundaries are practically transcended, territorially de-substantialized. They are rethought in terms of man's everyday experience as interferences with otherness, as interfaces between people that reveal themselves contingently.

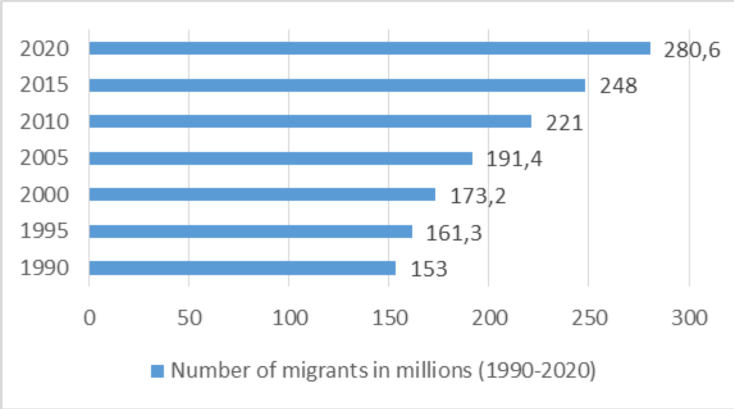
Global dynamics, whether we accept them or not, lead to processes that extend *cultural homogenization* or to processes that create *cultural heterogeneity*, with religion incorporated into the content of culture (Plüss, 2011). *Cultural homogenization* occurs when the cultural characteristics of one region are established in another region, without them being modified as a result of the new cultural environment. This process rearranges the locations of borders by extending them transnationally. Transnationalization leads to the proliferation of new and reformulated borders as spheres of culture, ethnicity, language and religion (Lehman, 2002), but it does not transform the essential substance of culture, ethnicity, language, religion. A double consequence of such a rearrangement of borders can be noted: it intensifies cultural, ethnic, religious diversity in the host space for immigrants (with its positive and negative consequences), and connects people by establishing transnational interactions. *Cultural-religious heterogenization* occurs when the migration of cultural and religious characteristics from one region to another creates new cultural and religious forms that embody the characteristics of several regions simultaneously and creates *hybridity* by combining the cultural-religious characteristics of these regions. *Heterogenization* transforms human beliefs and practices when they come into contact with another religious culture.

In the absence of an accelerated experience of interconnectedness in past centuries, since the 20th and 21st centuries, the pattern of representing spaces and people as separate entities and borders as two-dimensional lines on a map needs to be overcome. The current complexity of transnational reality and the multiplicity of human life calls for a new formulation of borders. Sandro Mezzadra proposes the formula of *liquid borders* as a representation with multiple and ambivalent meanings. This on the one hand, indicates the mobility and heterogeneity of borders, and on the other hand, it suggests their reception today, in the sense that they are rather elusive formations, no longer encapsulated by the solidity of a wall, which is only a possible instantiation of the border. Their multiple components, legal and geographical, political and cultural, linguistic and religious, are not necessarily bound together by a 'line drawn in the sand', but by particularities of identity. „Liquid borders” is a metaphorical construction involving notions such as mobility, flexibility, heterogeneity and even the elusiveness of borders (Mezzadra, 2021).

4. Migration and the construction of a new metamorphosed religious-cultural identity

We have mentioned the fact that the phenomenon of migration is a consequence, but also an agent of globalization, which, together with the modernist tendencies of secularization policies, is prefiguring the visibility of religious diversity. What interests me is to decipher how migration plays a key role in the construction of the identity of young generations, a perishable identity, open to new horizons of reception of religiosity, or rather of spirituality.

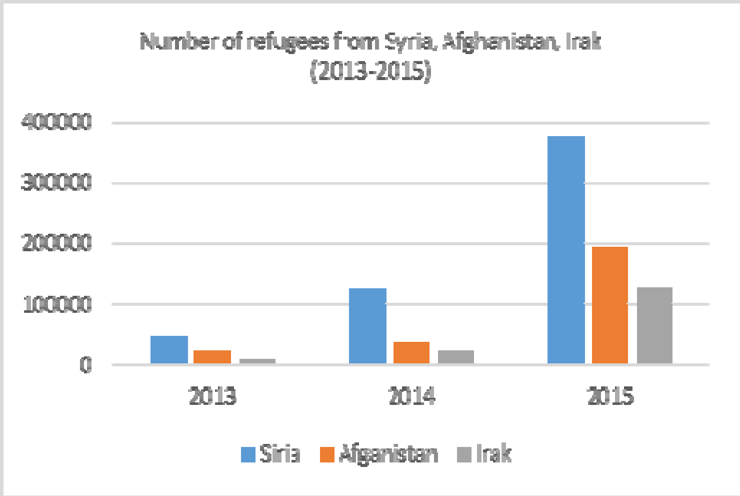
Migration is a reality that is constantly increasing in numbers. According to the *United Nations - Department of Economic and Social Affairs* (UN-DESA) report, there will be 280,600,000 international migrants in 2020.



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2020). *International Migration 2020 Highlights (ST/ESA/SER.A/452)*

Through the flow of migration, the population of each Western metropolis has become „an aggregate of ethnic, religious, lifestyle enclaves in which the borderline dividing the *insiders* and the *outsiders* (foreigners) is a hotly debated issue for political, national, economic, social reasons. Throughout history, migration has been a constant reality. Zygmunt Bauman mentions three different phases in the history of migration in the modern era, which were generated by the dynamics of societal transformations: (a) the first wave of migration followed the logic of the tripartite syndrome: territoriality of sovereignty, *rooted identity*, gardening posture. This was migration from the 'modernized' center. (b) The second wave of migration was generated by the dismemberment of colonial empires, when a number of indigenous people followed their colonial superiors back home. (c) The third wave of modern migration, which is still in full swing, led to what Zygmunt Baumana called the „age of diasporas": „a global archipelago of ethnic/religious/linguistic settlements" articulated by the need for global redistribution of living resources (Bauman, 2011).

We can also mention a fourth wave of modern migration, generated by political and religious conflicts in some Middle Eastern countries. Thus, the *Pew Research Center* (2016) notes that in 2015 the number of applications for political asylum in the European Union reached a record high: 1.300.000. Of these, most asylum applications came from three countries - Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq - where religious conflicts caused by radicalized Muslim militants have led to a major wave of global migrants. Refugees from Syria numbered 378.000 in 2015, accounting for 29% of all asylum seekers in Europe - the largest share. This was up from 125.000 in 2014 and 49.000 in 2013. 193.000 refugees were from Afghanistan (up from 23.000 in 2013 and 39.000 in 2014) and another 127.000 from Iraq (up from 9.000 in 2013 and 24.000 in 2014).



Source: *Pew Research Center, August, 2016, „Number of Refugees to Europe Surges to Record 1.3 Million in 2015" (www.pewresearch.org).*

Migration, as a phenomenon that actualizes a constant new map of people's interaction in different places and different cultures, entails in Kay Deaux's view two theses in the analysis of *identity*: (a) the reality of a *multiplicity of identities*, representing different aspects of the self that may vary in importance/prominence and relevance/evidence for a given time or place; (b) the concern with the processes of choice and change that reveal the flexible and dynamic characteristics of identity (Deaux, 2020). Through migration, identity is taken out of its context and re-located in a foreign space, a land that causes it to change and reformulate its structural patterns. For the immigrant, the questions concerning the definition of the identities with which they relate, the interpretation of compatibility or incompatibility between different identities and the consideration of changes in their own identity structure are inevitable. Most immigrants arrive in their destination country with a strong sense of their national and ethnic identity. This is the first phase of experiencing the new social framework in its complexity. However, once the immigrant is settled in the destination country, a new option emerges for them, namely a new national identity. Existing identities, such as ethnicity and religion, often continue to be essential for the immigrant, but at the same time the meaning and acceptability of those identities may be subject to new challenges and new frameworks for their certitude and legitimation need to be established. Consequently, the immigrant's identity structure may be redefined in the experience of these new conditions. What we have to mention is that the climate of the host country has a major influence on the composition of immigrants' multiple identities (Burke & Stets, 2009, pp. 130-154), or more correctly on the different variables of the same identity, as this climate ranges from expressing discrimination against the immigrant, either ethnically or religiously, to a positive attitude of hospitality that encourages incorporation and adoption of a new national identity.

Here we should point out a clarification that reflects the realities in different countries of the world. For example, in the case of France. Immigrant assimilationist strategies aim to minimize cultural differences in order to maximize social unity at the level of the state. The state is indivisible, secular, ensures the equality of all citizens before the law, regardless of origin, race or religion, and respects all beliefs. If the State, as an abstract entity, can claim to be neutral, it is not self-evident that the people who constitute the State and society will behave in the same way. Discrimination is present in France in all spheres. An example of this is the failure of 'les cités', the apartment blocks built in the suburbs of cities all over France, originally conceived as an area where everyone would eventually become culturally French, but which have turned into ghettos, notorious areas where the law is sometimes unenforceable because of the high crime rates. At the opposite end of the French spectrum are the multicultural strategies in which diversity plays a key role. Cultural communities are allowed to form and flourish. The state does not impose a single model or set of values. It protects the general freedom to live according to one's own cultural and social norms, as long as no one abuses their freedom or interferes with someone else's lifestyle. However, even this project of multiculturalism is showing its limits in countries such as the UK, where terrorist attacks by radicalized British Muslims are evidence of the failure of their integration and of their promotion of pluralism (Zucca, 2009)

After these theoretical clarifications, I would like to focus on one fact: the way in which young generations experience their own identity, and, more articulately, I would like to elaborate on the situation of the young immigrant. This is because tomorrow's generations will relate to religious, cultural and national identity in different ways. Young generations, in this global context that unpacks religious traditions creating a psycho-market of demand and supply of religiosity, a plurality of options, are much more prone to a reinterpretation of the identity and legitimacy of a religious identity. They experience the daily intersection of religious diversity and it is much easier for them to endorse their preference for something that is more transparent, offering, diluted in content than something that has consistency. They perceive the boundaries that mark identities with great difficulty because interaction, experienced at all levels, is the defining trait of our modern society. Why is this the de facto state? The answer is a complex one involving psychological and social factors. Identity formation in immigrants is a much more complex process as they have to reconcile different identity options: ethnic, personal and cultural, which are often in conflict. The construction of the immigrant's identity focuses on the relationship between the individual, their culture of origin and the receiving culture, i.e. the culture into which they come. This is all the more complicated in the case of teenage immigrants, as they undergo a double transition: the transition from adolescence to adulthood, on the one hand, and the experience of a society that is completely alien to the framework in which they were born and psychologically formed as teenagers, on the other. Situated at the junction of two different cultural worlds, they have to define themselves by overcoming the feeling of alienation from their own identity culture and the status of 'stranger' in a world to which they do not belong ethnically, nationally or religiously. In order to adapt interculturally, the young immigrant can use various cognitive resources, assisted by social integration programmes developed by the public authorities, private institutions or human rights NGOs which seek to respond as quickly and as coherently as possible to the immigrant's lack of horizon.

Unfortunately, the encounter of two different cultures in the consciousness and perception of a young immigrant can cause significant transformations. The feeling of stability, of one's self becomes more difficult to identify, as they have to learn to manage dissonant cultural contexts. They become aware of the national and ethnic boundaries that surround them and are therefore required to incorporate more rules, values and expectations according to the 'rules of the house'. All of this leads to a situation of greater instability, which causes and intensifies the conflicts that adolescents experience and which are often not so much attributed to fundamental issues such as moral, political or religious issues, but rather to issues of lesser significance and more connected to day-to-day life.

For these reasons, establishing the religious boundaries of one's identity is a much more complex process, as it involves an experience of reconciliation between two systems of cultural values and beliefs (the new context and their family context of origin) in an act of psychosocial balancing. In this process, there are major risks of slipping towards depersonalization, towards radicalization of young immigrants, as the feeling of uncertainty and non-belonging becomes a filter in the everyday experience. The meaning that identity claims in its structure is suggested, even through manipulation, by negative agents that place the young immigrant in a state of conflict with himself, but especially with the foreign culture, distortedly projected as a reality contrary to his values (Ilie, 2007). This is the situation of many young Muslims who are radicalized by some religious leaders in order to serve a supposed cause of religious justice. Sociological data indicate that most of those who commit terrorist acts in the West are either teenagers or young adults (TE-SAT, 2021, p. 16).

In this context, young immigrants are not only confronted with changes related to their development and cognitive-social maturization, typical of their age, but also with those related to their location and integration in a social organization and cultural tradition very different from those of their family's origin. They find themselves in this condition of „multi-belonging", or rather „combining" different belongings (Valtolina & Marazzi, 2006).This psycho-social situation is reflected in the process of redefining this fluctuating identity between three scenarios: (a) „neither here nor there" - neither identifying with the culture of their new space, but neither connected with the culture of the original space in which they were born; (b) „here and not there" - adapting to the new cultural context, but breaking away from the context of the place from which they left; (c)

„not here, but there” - not adapting to the new social and cultural context, but in a continuous tension with it, and tributary to the culture and context in which they were born. From this point of view, there is a risk that the integrity of their identity being shattered under the pressure of the norms that enter the flow of society, but also under the pressure of fragmentation in terms of discernment, choice, belonging.

5. Conclusions

From what has been presented in the previous sections of this study, we can conclude that identity, and particularly religious identity, is a processual construction engaged in a continuous search for balance and stability between different values, rules, beliefs, patterns of different places. The outer layer of identity, which provides coherence and substance to the sense of self, becomes more permeable and sensitive to external and internal changes and influences in everyday social experiences. The process of constructing identity is relationship-dependent, strongly influenced by social and psychological contexts, all the more so in today's global and liquid society. Migration, the unpacking of local traditions and accelerated mobility create a transnational space that stretches the boundaries of identity. The 21st century human being taking part in this experience is situated between the tension of defining himself in this world and the concrete experience of religious diversity, which offers several religious options. This may imply what Charles Taylor calls the „fragilization” of human identity (Taylor, 2007), in the sense that religious identity is drawn into new social realities dictated by the fluid transition of the rhythm of life, the plurality of cultural-religious versions, the synthesis of the global into the local.

However, identities that are indebted through their belonging to traditional religions remain intact in their structure, although they are socially and humanly „obliged”, in the context of contemporary challenges, to a permeability, a relational elasticity. At stake here is the human potential of each religious tradition to overcome the state of isolation and exclusivity that creates walls and barriers. Dogmatic boundaries can be overcome in their irreconcilable notes through dialogue. Acceptance of difference is a constructive and uplifting aspect of supporting tolerance. If we were to explore the ethical and moral underpinnings of each religion, we would discover the values of unity, fraternity. For example, *love* of one's neighbor (Matthew 22:39) goes beyond the proper boundaries of Christian identity. In practice, Christian identity is not a static reality, but a relational one, and here the dimension of the concept of the person is relevant. Love takes you out of the context of your own boundaries, be they social, political or cultural, and places you inside the experience of humanization.

I conclude with a text that seems to me to excellently punctuate my intentions expressed in this study: „Every discrete identity is marked by boundaries. Some things are in, others are out; if all things were in or all things out, nothing particular would exist, which is to say that nothing finite would exist at all. No boundaries, no identity, and no finite existence. The same holds true with religions. Though necessary, boundaries need not be imper-meable. In encounter with others, boundaries are always crossed, even if only minimally. People and communities with dynamic identities will have firm but permeable boundaries. With such boundaries, encounters with others do not serve only to assert our position and claim our territory; they are also occasions to learn and to teach, to be enriched and to enrich, to come to new agreements and maybe to reinforce the old ones, and to dream up new possibilities and explore new paths. This kind of permeability of the self when engaging another presupposes a basically positive attitude toward the other- an attitude in sync with the command to love the neighbor and, perhaps especially, to love the enemy" (Volf, 2007, p. 278).

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WHEN RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE BUILDS IDENTITY

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Abstract:
Starting from the writings of Félicité de la Mennais, the article aims to analyze religious indifference as an important coordinate of the current identity profile. Finding its roots in the skepticism of humanistic thinking and in the interpretive approaches that try to elaborate rational explanations, religious indifference is, in the end, the consequence of a life choice. It can manifest itself in radical forms and in this sense, we have identified fundamentalist indifference as an expression of an intellectual manifestation that is imposed on society in an ideological way based on an artificial dichotomy between sacred and profane. All this offers a new, objectifying paradigm within which the definition of homo religious is built. Thus, religious difference accumulates a series of behaviors that subscribe to the centrality of personal experience.

Keywords: religious indifference, modernity, secularism, fundamentalist indifference

Résumé:
À partir des écrits de Félicité de la Mennais, l'article vise à analyser l'indifférence religieuse comme une coordonnée importante du profil identitaire actuel. Trouvant ses racines dans le scepticisme de la pensée humaniste et dans les approches interprétatives qui tentent d'élaborer des explications rationnelles, l'indifférence religieuse est, en définitive, la conséquence d'un choix de vie. Elle peut se manifester sous des formes radicales et en ce sens nous avons identifié l'indifférence fondamentaliste comme l'expression d'une manifestation intellectuelle qui s'impose à la société d'une manière idéologique basée sur une dichotomie artificielle entre sacré et profane. Tout cela offre un nouveau paradigme objectivant au sein duquel se construit la définition de l'homo religiosus. Ainsi, la différence religieuse accumule une série de comportements qui souscrivent à la centralité de l'expérience personnelle.

Mots-clés : indifférence religieuse, modernité, laïcité, indifférence fondamentaliste

Rezumat:
Plecând de la scrierile lui Félicité de la Mennais articoul își propune să analizeze indiferența religioasă ca o coordonată importantă a profilului identitar actual. Aflându-și rădăcinile în scepticismul gândirii umaniste și în demersurile interpretive care încearcă să elaboreze explicații raționale, indifența religioasă este, în cele din urmă, consecința unei alegeri de viață. Ea se poate manifesta în forme radicale și am identificat în acest sens indiferența fundamentalistă ca expresie a unei manifestări intelectuale ce se impune societății în manieră ideologică pe baza unei artificiale dihotomii între sacru și profan. Toate acestea oferă o paradigmă nouă, obiectivantă în interiorul căreia se construiește

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definiția lui homo religiosus. Astfel, idiferența religioasă cumulează o serie de comportamente ce se subînscriu centralității experienței personale.

Cuvinte cheie: indiferență religioasă, modernitate, secularism, indiferența fundamentalistă

1. Secularization and religious indifference in society

Despite the fact that, apparently, a time is open to analysis for which religious reflection is no stranger, religious indifference is gaining ground on the background of secularization and intellectual debates of contemporary thinking shape the world in large areas, favorable to irreligiousness.

I will begin by referring to an old author who initiated a lucid debate about religious indifference generated by the secularist tendencies of his own time, and then move on to the mechanisms that generated religious indifference, without avoiding, at least in passing, to take a look at the methodological birth of the study of religion and the way in which it contains in the center of the research the idea of indifference to the sacred, sanctity, transcendence, etc. as levels of reality.

Félicité de la Mennais questioned the world of her time in the famous „Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion „ (1817) about the reasons that compose the religious indifference, denouncing the „lethargia" and the „brutal indifference" of Europe. Invoking the idea of „indifference", de la Mennais saw it not only as a manifestation of the deism, that shaped European humanism, but also as an expression of a thought that, through spiritual laziness (*la paresse*) and convenience works to its own „alienation"(Damour, 2003, p. 390). De la Mennais began his introduction with the following words: „ The sickest century is not the one who is passionate about error, but the century that neglects and despises the truth." (Mennais, 1819, p. 1) For de la Mennais, who saw religious indifference in a relationship of dependence on atheism, indifference cannot be understood as a doctrinal model, but as a state of mind. According to this view,

„People who are really indifferent do not deny anything and do not affirm anything; they do not even have doubts; for doubts, as a state of suspension between opposing probabilities, presupposes a prior examination; it is a question of a systematic ignorance, a voluntary sleep of the soul, which exhausts its vigor to resist its own thoughts, a universal numbness of the moral faculties, an absolute deprivation of ideas in relation to what is most important for a man to know. „ (Mennais, 1819, p. 24)

In reality, for the indifferent, the idea of true or false religion is really irrelevant. It exists as a social fact and its content can be received, at most, in its form as a cultural device. Obviously, the indifference in a century of disinterest in religion has gained in splendor, ending up being trivialized and transformed into a natural attitude. Intellectual debates that highlighted the idea that God is a creation of subjectivity will have themselves transformed into fashions and patterns that spanned the centuries to postmodernity.

In Christian antiquity, St. Paul initiated the debate over the issue of inner removal from any reference that grounded inner identity according to the revealed Truth. Addressing the Romans (Rom. 12: 2) not to conform to historical time, that is, not to conform to the „age” and its axiological consequences, transformed into foundations *viewed as natural*, St. Paul uses the word *saeculum* (a notion that translates the Greek *aiôn* into the Vulgate), indicating precisely *the meaning of the temporal dimension of the present world associated with the progressive and total removal from the Truth*. Pauline’s reflection introduced the idea that thinking or living *in accordance with the age* or, if you will, with empty patterns of the sacredness of time, presupposes folding on its profane dimensions. In principle, Paul suggests that these dimensions, emptying the mechanisms of thought of any possible reference to the transcendent and the sense of the sacred, consequently impose a historical experience in accordance with the meanings that the *profane* imprints on life. For precise identification of what the concept of „profane” implies, it lets us remember that it *refers to what is not consecrated*, more precisely, to what is „in front” (*pro*) of a consecrated place (*fanum*). According to hermeneutics. proposed by Giorgio Agamben, „to profane means the return to common use that which has been removed to the sphere of the sacred” (Agamben, 2007, p. 82).

In a certain way, the experience of the profane „is the counter-device which restores for common use what has been consecrated (*sacrare*)”.(Agamben, 2006, p. 31) Agamben insists on the idea that living to profane is more precisely a

> „restitution which supposes a preliminary subtraction, that operated by the sacralization. A double movement appears, producing an inside-outside: to make the profane sacred - a movement that creates an inside - and to make the sacred profane - a movement that creates an outside. These are the devices which, for the author, remove from the original free use „a pure place freed from sacred names"; it is the devices that confiscates, captures, separates. Any device creates a secular-sacred caesura.” (Charrier, 2010, p. 69)

It has already become commonplace that, from a socio-human perspective, secularization is identified with the exclusion of the gnoseological dimension of faith from social life in favor of other models of knowledge. The dimension of *faith*, as a reality that refers to the idea that the spiritual order constitutes in itself another plane of existence and refers to this plan, is perceived as a notion that does not rationally cover a discernible reality. Following the same model of validating reality, the exercise *of believing*, as an action correlative to faith, is perceived as an epistemological invalid and received in the sense of a subjective tendency of a reason that tends to map reality whenever faced with reaching the ultimate limit of understanding. As a result of the epistemic invalidation of the model based on the exercise of *believing*, taken in the sense of experience that underlies the *faith*, the scientific model (received as the refined solution in terms of which the spiritual reference is useless) will be imposed as the only dimension capable of making hypotheses and conclusions about the nature of reality. In the long term, the practical consequences of the deconstruction of the idea of faith are given the right to homeland until they become natural, insofar as the pursuit of the process that initiates and builds this revolution begins in Christian antiquity. First, the semantic dissolution of the notion of the sacred is operated within the social consciousness and, finally, the natural deconstructive process becomes active which generates indifference in the personal consciousness towards representations that refer to any ontological reception of the idea of sacred.

This process, specific to a modernity that, from the will to think with its own mind, keeps a constant distance from what Jung called „the quest for wholeness and the act of faith"(Tardan-Masquelier, 1998, p. 238-242) and whose stages in the construction of distancing by deconstructing the search for the „act of faith” can be traced from antiquity to modernity ends in the belief that the history and moral evolution of humanity, as well as of any dimension of existence, are (and must be) understood by themselves - starting only from them, by visualizing them as mere cultural devices - and not by reference to the idea of transcendence.

In principle, at the sociological level, secularization and religious indifference, its corollary, enshrines the diminishing influence of religion in society. Obviously, neither secularization nor indifference necessarily presupposes the radical loss of the sense of the sacred, but only its expulsion to the periphery of reflection. In fact, Carl Schmitt saw the emergence of political concepts developed by modernity as secularized theological forms and concepts (Schmitt, 1922). At the level of consciousness, reporting to a certain level of presence of the sacred is an exercise that continues to remain active. The double movement that Agamben invokes, that is, the „inside-outside” movement, to make the profane sacred and to make the sacred profane, does not cease. Secularization involves changing this perspective of the natural slide from the sacred to the profane and from the profane to the sacred, by developing an ideological language that seeks to block the process in a framework of total separation.

In other words, any notion that presupposes the sense of the sacred, that „sends” from a continuum „inside-outside” or „suggests” it would be explained only by itself. Emptying the process of the support of interiority which maintains it through the relation „inside-outside", is expelled the idea of the sacred, understood in a transcendent sense in order to make it disappear even from the notion which contained it. In itself, the process bases its principles on the theory of the ambiguity of the sacred, which finds its first formulation in William Robertson Smith’s *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (1889). Agamben notes that the theory of the ambiguity of the sacred, formulated at the end of the Victorian era and then passed on to French sociology, does not seem surprising „that these *Lectures* correspond to the moment in which a society that had already lost every connection to its religious tradition began to express its own unease"(1997, p. 85, 1998, p. 49).

2. Fundamentalist indifference

The transcendent destiny of the human being and the debate related to the presence of an absolute reference in existence are no longer of interest even at the intellectual level of problematization, of principled interrogation. We are faced with *l'homo indifferens*, whose idea of God or of life seen through the grid of the sacred no longer crosses the questions. The disinterest in this type of issue is visible and when the interest in it exceeds the condition that installed it in the habit, the risk is to reject it with the means of aggression. The belief that there is no transcendent reference to existence, that it is impossible to speak of a transcendent human destiny, turns into a more or less intellectual form of aggression. When indifference transgresses the primary level of what founds it, which is ignoring the idea of transcendence (Brechon, 2020), and ideologically constructing its premises, then it becomes another facet of fundamentalism. In fact, we cannot avoid an obvious aspect, namely that fundamentalism is the manifestation of a belief. Or, indifference is itself an attitude founded on a non-reflective belief, that of believing that you are right without reflecting through an analytical process on the object you deny. Denial can concern God, just as it can target the moral utility of religion, the sense of the sacred experienced within the being's intimate intimacy, and so on.

The idea of the uselessness of this reference turns the one who supports it into a fundamentalist. He imposes his beliefs with the same aggressiveness as his religious fundamentalist imposes his own, even going so far as to exclude those who oppose him. To him, God is an unimportant notion. It is true, we must reflect on the reasons that generated this social indifference that does not necessarily build the daily life of the person who has or does not have reflective, intellectual habits. Let us point out that the religious indifferent can himself be an intellectual accustomed to reflection.

3. Religious indifference and modernity

One might think that the theological adventure of reflecting in various philosophical and hermeneutical ways has generated a problematic process of turning against the faith, understood as the foundation of the one who proposed this reflection. In order to explain the genesis of religious indifference, I do not want to give so much importance to the errors of interpretation of theological modernity that has ventured interpretatively beyond the field of reference specific to theology. They are the subject of historiographical (Ramm, 1970, p. 93-184) research even for the traditional Protestant patterns that have ventured into this space of reflection. However, it should be noted that the theological interpretation was constructed in accordance with interpretive models of the time. The theologian or spiritualist philosopher of the 16th-18th centuries, faithful to the theological space to which he belonged, could reflect theologically only in accordance with the thinking of the century that framed his reflection(Tillich, 1995, p. 23-49). Religious indifference does not, therefore, arise from the misinterpretations of theology (however, this is another subject for reflection), but from the skepticism of humanistic thinking(Moreau, 2001), which had reached its rationalist and anti-ecclesiastical heights in the 17th and 18th centuries and which subtly framed theological interpretation(Goff, 2017, p. 281-397). My conviction is that religious indifference rests on the processes which structure the interpretive mentality of these centuries (Lagrée, 1991). Henri de Lubac saw the rejection of the idea of the natural desire to see God as the source of the divide between the Christian message and the contemporary world, from which, for him, religious indifference stems (Lecuit, 2017, p. 25-50; Lubac, 1998). In fact, the exclusion of the reference of the sacred and the theological from the area of thought, as well as the attempt to find rational explanations for the traditional and personal God of Christian thought, begins in non-theological areas.

Even if religious indifference seems based on a certain type of reflection, it remains, in its fundamental constitution, the consequence of a choice of life within the intellectual history which precedes modernity. The structures of this choice, which gradually became the ideal framework for the man of modernity, can be found fully in the thinking of a whole class of thinkers. In this context, socio-human projects, based on the idea of a freedom that continues to be interpreted, generated a vision as a result, focused on the construction of a model based on the will to find at all costs the solution of „living together" without God. The dominant idea is to find the arguments that underlie the model which excludes any reference to the sacred or to transcendence, fully aware that this remains an impossible social project if man retains in his social conscience the Jungian conviction that living in a „religious attitude" is equivalent to building an *imago Dei* which is a myth of totality accessible to everyone in the interiority of their psyche. „(Tardan-Masquelier, 1998, p. 240)

4. Construction of an artificial dichotomy

One of the great problems raised by the discussion about the sacred is that of its theoretical elimination from the life of the community. The imposition of the distinction between sacred and profane, understood as two absolutely divergent territories of reality, has generated discussions that draw artificial demarcation lines within the world. On the one hand, the profane as a reality opposed to the transcendent, known as realistic, objective, the quintessential source of scientific objectivity, and, on the other hand, the sacred as a dimension representing an imaginary world, a source of human subjectivity. In a way, the sacred begins to be received from the idea of a reason seen as objective, as a notion that refers to possible unfounded representations in the real world. This is where a whole controversy begins, maintained in the literary and philosophical world of the Renaissance, in order to explode with maximum vigor in the anti-religious reflection of the following centuries (Heilbron, 2007, pp. 312-313).

The consequences of this reflection are visible in the thought which has structured the religiosity of modernity. It will be maintained by a class of thinkers who will have imposed their way of thinking and accepted, consequently, by another class of thinkers, by desire to play the game of objective reason. I am referring here above all to theological reflection which has gradually conformed, through weakness, to the tendency to „adapt" to humanist reflection. I would also like to point out an aspect that is not unimportant, namely that metaphysical-theological thinking has constantly tried to play the game of balance, insisting on the forced relationship between reason and faith. This reflection elaborated - despite the initial project that relied on the idea of conciliation - a discourse in which the two will have already become, in theory, incompatible with each other. The two notions had become incompatible in the deist-agnostic-atheist camp, but the incompatibility will have been built with more vigor by those who will have desperately tried to reconcile them. Gradually, this divorce became a reality accepted even by the theological or philosophical world in favor of the idea of transcendence. The way is thus open to the division of the world of thought.

The European school of social sciences had already prepared all the data to pave the way for a practical dichotomy that defined the world in two. The perspective of empirical scientific research, aiming to explain the sacred starting from social behavior, by totally excluding any reference to the transcendent, was already open. The reductionism practiced by Durkheim and, through it, by the socio-human school, has unsuspected consequences, because identifying a religion based on the *criterion of simplicity* (there is no other society simpler than the one studied) and the *criterion of antiquity* (its explanation is excluded by appealing to a previous religion) (Durkheim, 1995, p. 15) a false anthropological premise that is introduced, which turns into a one-way criterion.

In principle, the functioning of a mechanism cannot be identified only in a *certain* element, indicated as *actually paradigmatic* and explanatory for other mechanisms, first of all, because it is unique. Moreover, starting from the hypothesis that there is a certain graduality in the evolution of forms of religiosity (evolved or less evolved religions), *has introduced the temptation to believe* that the religious phenomenon can be explained by starting from the identification of cause and effect in simple things, to be identified later in complex things and to understand by this how religion works as a whole. (Durkheim, 1995, p. 380)

The critical tendency to indicate religion only as an *eminently social phenomenon* (Durkheim, 1995, p. 22) introduces, concretely, an irreducible opposition between sacred and profane, understood as „*the distinctive feature of religious thought.* (Durkheim, 1995, p. 45)" Or, precisely this opposition, which no longer leaves room for the sacred-profane relationship, suggestively indicated by Agamben as the „inside-outside" movement, tends to operate in the space of subsequent reflection, as a kind of infallible criterion, introducing the idea that the religious world it lacks rational support.

By constantly invoking the idea of objectivity, based mainly on the belief that the sacred belongs to the uncertain domain of subjectivity, one arrives at the situation of defining as objective only what is seen, that is, what appears to sight and can be verified by palpable experience. In a way, this whole method ends up giving the object a value that it has only in itself and never by reference to a referent. Following such a perspective does not only eliminate the possibility of reporting to an *trans objective*, but the anaphoric relation disappears to a certain extent, reporting that is expressed from „con-science/ with-knowledge" (*sin-eidenai* [συνειδέναι], *con-stientia*) as a fundamental reference relationship. And because consciousness is, in the phenomenological tradition, always „conscious of something" - that is, of a thing -, even intentionality becomes impossible, more precisely, the fact that there is no consciousness without reference to a content. This thinking mechanism develops a manner of reflection that ends in ideology. Jung suggested avant la lettre the mechanism itself when he stated that „for the man of today the enlargement of life and its culmination are plausible goals, but the idea of life after death seems to him questionable or beyond belief"(Jung, 2001, p. 113). In this sense, the refusal of the referent, the classical dichotomy between *sacred* and *profane*, introducing the incompatibility between the two domains - the profane belonging to reality (hence, domain of reality) and the realm of the sacred (domain of subjectivity) - remain in a hierarchical relationship devoid of fecundity. As long as indifference to the sacred manifests itself as objectivity in relation to the experience of living in the only world that can be objectified, through an analysis suggested with the attribute of „rational" (which excludes the sentimental component of a consciousness that perceives the world from its reflection in the space that contains it, intuition, *intentionality*), then indifference, which turns into attitude, becomes itself a form of fundamentalism. Founding a theory about the world, indifference imposes this theory as the only solution to reflect on reality by even refusing to give importance to another realm of reality, other than positioning itself *as indifference* to sacred reality.

5. The world enclosed in an infinite space

Religious indifference focuses mainly on the issue of man's transcendent destiny. Therefore, religious indifference sees any religion as a mechanism with elements of similarity, in the sense that any religion would propose the same problematic reference, possibly eliminated by its very lack of objectivity. In this sense, God is only a hypothetical explanation of the world that can be eliminated. In fact, the cosmological reflection of the Deist century founded its perspectives by invoking convinced that the „hypothesis of God" could be removed from the calculation. Only the so-called objectivity would be important, generated by the reason able to understand itself and, from this project, to understand through mechanisms of interpretation, defined as „objectives", the other dimensions of the world. The farther away these dimensions are from what is offered to reason, as an objective, thus they lose their importance and become secondary concerns until the moment when they completely disappear from the horizon of the preoccupations. God and the transcendent destiny of the human being are no longer part of these concerns because reason, received as an objective tool for understanding the world, no longer perceives them as objective realities, but as mere assumptions of a mind that has forgotten its focus on objectivity. In fact, this world is closed in its own horizontal dimension that constantly takes into account only what is offered. Within a material globality and an intellectual subjectivism, generated by the feeling of a reason constantly received as objective in understanding the order of the world, which can only be material, regardless of its degree of subtlety. Despite a whole phenomenology that claims the opposite, even the last function of a psychic interior architecture is, in this perspective, seen only as a subtle reality of a material dimension that supports and explains itself.

I propose in the perspective stated above, the evaluation of a paradox that invites reflection: Concentrating in a whole argumentative system the will that accompanies this way of thinking the world, focused, in turn, on indifference to transcendence, when the rationalist indifferent makes its limits known, he focuses, in fact, on the same area as the one he ignores: the spiritualist thinker. He will return to circular arguments, which support each other, but do not support the whole. The inability to support the whole argument paradoxically generates another form of fundamentalism, I would say a kind of despair - forcing from a non-existent objectivity - a contentment mixed with the despair of not being able to convince. The discourse that locks itself in itself is born here. It can be noticed that the religiously indifferent man can enter into a kind of narrative impasse that borders on fundamentalism. Religious indifference intellectually focused can be so aggressive sometimes so that fundamentalism becomes its force of expression and the form of expression typical of intellectual fundamentalism is the socially imposed *ideology*.

In reality, the culture of modernity - understanding here and that of contemporary modernity (avoiding me to call it „post-modernity” because I would not know how to call later models) - is built on models already rooted in the culture of religious indifference.

In this perspective, the pragmatic view of religious pluralism, present in the tendency to give an ideological content to the habit of sustaining, until the fall into idolatry, the preeminence of reason in any kind of construction, which evaluates the objects of thought, translates a „practical agnosticism” modeled, in fact, in what might be called a „dogma of indifference” or „an ignorance of the desire of God”, gradually transformed in a „culture of indifference"(Damour, 2003, p. 393).

Obviously, without considering the quintessential characteristic phenomenon of modernity (Piétri, 2004, p. 206), religious indifference must be related to the significance of the hypothesis of „return of the religious", which signals „the end of a period too soon considered the normal and irreversible evolution of the world to the triumph of the light of reason on the obscurity of the faith” (Donegani, 2008, p. 40). Frédéric Lenoir already finds that the emergence of an „alternative religiosity” is a typical symptom of „post-modernity", which favors, through a non-reflective process, the acceptance of a more or less anonymous deity instead of a personal God (Lenoir, 2003, p. 304-305, 344, 364). In fact, within this process, modernity plays its whole piece because „none of the inventions of modernity is excluded and, even more so, the individualization of elections. What remains important is the will to overcome a rational degraded in rationalism and unleashing the potential of the intuitive, imaginary, and mystical side systematically hidden „ (Piétri, 2004, p. 206).

Thus, the new definitions of *homo religiosus* are built within the mental patterns, shaped by this religious indifference, which remains, paradoxically, religious in its intentions and ideologically unreligious, even of a passionate agnostic order. Obviously, as this new configuration will be imposed in the form of an indifferentism going so far as to reach the form of a rational atheism as an oppositional structure to theistic thinking, gradually its presence will be configured in the form of a true humanism. This is the humanism of which Henri de Lubac studied the dramatic effects(Lubac, 1998).

In fact, the paradox that is built within this structure of thinking is visible even in the birth of a relativism that is not generated by a reflexive intervention, which would consider that all religions are valid and that none can say that it has a monopoly on the truth. Donegani suggests that indifference can be perceived „as a possible implication of contemporary subjectivism that leads everyone to choose the meanings they hold to be true", founded, consequently, „by this respect which enjoys a priori all conviction, his own like that of others „ and transformed into experience „as a response, at least in part, to the contemporary injunction of being oneself.” (Donegani, 2015, p. 231) If at first glance, Donegan's observation does not seem to fundamentally suggest the idea of religious indifference, it is nevertheless the image of a vision that brings to the surface its distance and its consequences from the idea of Truth. In fact, this pattern of thinking is not in search of meaning, because its representative perceives the problem of meaning as irrelevant. If the various religious structures are equalized, the equalization takes place from the perspective of an indifference to what the religious experience implies, which fundamentally refers to the idea of meaning. The religious way of thinking of the indifferent (because indifference has its own mechanism of believing), does not incorporate the idea of "reference to something". The religious indifferent entrusts itself to its own perspectives, which do not integrate and do not relate to a classical system of religiously founded values. For him, any religiously founded system of values is a framework, which founds other frameworks, all centered around a hypothetical meaning, which remains undetectable within the reality he lives. The belief that there is no meaning generates indifference even within this return of the religious, which is, in fact, a hypothetical return.

In principle, the return of the religious and the participation of the religious indifferent in this „fragmented” world is a new form of manifestation of the secularized religious. Religious indifference imposes its way of believing, which, in the view of the actor who practices it, is no less important than any other way of believing. In a way, all forms of behavior of religious indifference are subscribed to the centrality of personal experience. More specifically, from the vital importance of personal experience in a society in which the idea of objectivity (acquired non-reflexively) will have already gained absolute ground, it builds the attitude towards any referent of a religious nature. The religious referent is invalid for the religious indifferent, not because its structures have been analyzed and deconstructed to exhaustion, but because by virtue of the idea of objectivity, in which he often participates, by proxy, he believes that any religious structure is invalid in itself. When he states that all religions are identical, his statement must be seen from this perspective.

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INDIAN CHRISTIAN IDENTITY: RELIGIO-CULTURAL INTERACTION TO MINORITY FRAMING

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Abstract:
Indian Christianity has been an interactive community, living out its faith and traditions in an ambience of spontaneity. It implied moments and dynamics of acceptance, rejections, hesitations, and criticism from the outside others, even while Indian Christianity itself involved in dynamics of exclusions and inclusions towards others. All these religio-cultural dynamics took place in a vein of spontaneity, interactivity, and creativity. However, in the recent past, it has been made to become self-conscious of its identity as the majority's 'other' through a process of 'minority framing'. From being an ancient religious community, which went about its life and activities in an ambience of freedom, the Indian Christian community is now made to become a 'communally conscious minority', concerned about its vulnerable communal identity. This essay narrates the contours of the changes.

Keywords: Indian Christianity, identity, minority.

Résumé :
Le christianisme indien a été une communauté interactive, vivant sa foi et ses traditions dans une ambiance de spontanéité. Cela impliquait des moments et des dynamiques d'acceptation, de rejets, d'hésitations et de critiques de l'extérieur, alors même que le christianisme indien était lui-même impliqué dans des dynamiques d'exclusions et d'inclusions envers les autres. Toutes ces dynamiques religio-culturelles se sont déroulées dans une veine de spontanéité, d'interactivité et de créativité. Cependant, dans un passé récent, il a été amené à devenir conscient de son identité en tant qu'« autre » de la majorité à travers un processus de « cadrage de la minorité ». D'être une ancienne communauté religieuse, qui menait sa vie et ses activités dans une ambiance de liberté, la communauté chrétienne indienne est maintenant faite pour devenir une 'minorité communautairement consciente', soucieuse de son identité communautaire vulnérable. Cet essai narre les contours des changements.

Mots-clés : christianisme indien, identité, minorité.

Rezumat:
Creştinismul indian a fost o comunitate interactivă, care îşi trăieşte credinţa şi tradiţiile într-o atmosferă de spontaneitate. A implicat momente şi dinamici de acceptare, respingeri, ezitari şi critici din exteriorul celorlalţi, chiar dacă creştinismul indian însuşi implicat în dinamica excluderilor şi incluziunilor faţă de ceilalţi. Toate aceste dinamici religio-culturale au avut loc într-o venă de spontaneitate, interactivitate şi creativitate. Cu toate acestea, în trecutul recent, a fost făcut să devină conştient de identitatea sa ca

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„celălalt” al majorității printr-un proces de „încadrare a minorității”. De la a fi o comunitate religioasă străveche, care și-a desfășurat viața și activitățile într-o atmosferă de libertate, comunitatea creștină indiană este acum făcută să devină o „minoritate conștientă comunitar”, preocupată de identitatea sa comunală vulnerabilă. Acest eseu povestește contururile schimbărilor.

Cuvinte cheie: creștinism indian, identitate, minoritate.

1. Situating the Debate

Not one but several factors of the contemporary global world bring up the concern and debate on minority identity to the fore. Migration that was growing faster during the last quarter of the twentieth century is indeed a crucial factor to the emergence of the now-prominent identity discourse. During the 90ies of the twentieth century, faced with the advent of different migrant communities in their liberal political polities, the Canadian and North-American Governments were discussing 'multiculturalism' as their standard liberal political practice so as to do justice to different identities. If we go back a little further in time to the post-war era, we find yet another important factor in the formation of independent nation-states in southern and eastern hemispheres, freeing themselves from the erstwhile colonial powers. Different cultural identities had to contend with the nation-states which were constructing unified national identities for their states. We find that the minority identity came to the fore in this context. As Will Kymlicka observes, the post-colonial and post-cold war era brought to the fore questions of relationship between States and minorities, between minorities, and within minorities themselves (Kymlicka, 2005, p. 3). He identifies two broad categories of minorities: one, 'national minorities' who had pre-existed the colonial States and continue to exist inter-generationally in post-colonial States too with certain common denominators of language, religion, culture, etc.; and the other, 'ethnic minorities', most often immigrants, who have formed into minorities in their countries of settlements. What is a relevant point to draw out from Kymlicka's large oeuvre on the liberal theory of multiculturalism and minority rights is the emergence to the fore of the question of minorities – their identities, rights, cultures, etc., within the framework of the contemporary post-colonial democratic States. Immediately after the attainment of independence from colonial powers, the newly emerging democratic States drew together the different cultural communities into the common project of nation-building. Now, after about half a century or more, these States have to deal with problems arising from identity politics, majority-minority conflicts, and so on.

Against this background, the discipline of *minority studies* has emerged as an important field of research today (Robinson, 2012), and minority identity discourse has obtained significance in these studies. It is heartening to see that several higher educational institutions, especially in the western hemisphere, have established centres for minority studies. Unfortunately, the Indian academia is yet to reckon with it and contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon with researches and debates.

2. Contemporary Indian Context

Indian context, however, is debating the issue vigorously at the practical realms of politics. India, as an independent nation-state, is emerging today to play a prominent role in the global world, based apparently on its expansive consumerist base (in terms of the huge population), and it constructs, overtly and covertly, its specific identity in the international arena. Major political players feel that India has to emerge not only as a unified powerful political and economic entity, but also as a cultural and religious universe, having its specific identity cut out for negotiations at various global fora.

In this context, India is witnessing to the danger of 'majoritarianism' in political, cultural and religious fields; and it goes with a hegemonising dynamic of the dominant in the Indian hierarchical society. Those who construct majoritarianism adduce several reasons for their project:

a) India has been under foreign or alien rule for centuries together, and it is but legitimate that the majority of Indian population aspire for their own nationhood;
b) India has a spiritual and religious core which has withstood the vicissitudes of history (as proposed by Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan and the neo-Hindu philosophers) and this should become the core of Indian polity, if not the global polity for the benefit of humanity.

With these and other reasons, the political players are endeavouring to construct a majoritarian religio-cultural identity for a sub-continent that has 1.35 billion people, speaking 22 official languages, 122 major languages and 1599 minor dialects, and following such distinctly diverse religious traditions as Saivism, Vaishnavism, Sakthaism, Jainism, Buddhism, Zorastrianism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, along with hundreds of Guru-specific and folk religious traditions. An attempt is being made, as aptly pointed out to by Manjari Katju, as professor of political science, to refashion the secular democracy into that of a 'Hindu'[2] democracy, with its own specific philosophy of nation, citizenship, ethical ideals and so on (Katju, 2017).

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[2] A name that has come handy for this project is what is being addressed today as 'Hinduism'. Etymologically a word that stood for the geographical region beyond the river Sindhu, as addressed by the Persians, the word 'Hindu', with a very gradually evolving usage through the centuries, has come to stand for a religious universe today, and there is a strenuous political effort being made to construct this unified religious identity to go in support of Hindutva, an ideology of political Hinduism. As perceptively pointed out to by Romila Thappar, a noted Indian historian, there is an effort at work to construct a 'syndicated Hinduism', after the model of the Semitic religions. For more on this debate, *cf.* Thappar (2003); Lal (2009); Oddie (2006); Jaffrelot (2013).

3. Indian Christianity: Origins and Developments

Indian Christianity is feeling its feet through the challenges posed by the situation today. As per the 2011 Indian census, Christians in India constitute 2.34 % of the Indian population, which in absolute numbers would be about 31.66 million, which supersedes the total population of some European countries. Christians are the second largest minority in India, after the Muslims. Their number has not shown any increase during the last two decennial censuses.[3] While their presence in southern and North-Eastern States are significant, the northern region of India has only a thin presence.

Indian Christianity, though it stands out as a single religious tradition in relation to others, is internally diversified in terms of denominations, rites, and cultures. It consists of the Catholic Church, which is constituted by the three Rites (Latin, Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara), Protestant Churches, Oriental Orthodox Churches, and Pentecostal Churches (mainline and independent). Historically speaking, one could speak of several 'springs' (Fernando & Gispert-Sauch, 2004) of Christianity which emerged across the centuries. From the very early centuries of the Christian Era, India had the presence of those who are called today as St. Thomas Christians. As per a vibrant tradition, this spring of Christians came to exist with the mission of St. Thomas, [4] an apostle of Jesus, and was further augmented by the arrival of a contingent of Syrian Christians during the fourth century. Since they used the Syriac language in their liturgy, and were united with the ancient churches in Syria, they were known also as the Eastern Syrian Christians. These Christians, mostly traders, seem to have gotten integrated with the native 'higher caste' communities of the southern western

[3] The reasons for the stagnation of Christian population are many. Though India has a liberal secular Constitution which underscores the freedom of religion, there are laws which indirectly dissuade the people from converting to Christianity. The Hindu Marriage Law, for example, denies the right to inheritance to someone who has converted to a religion other than Hinduism; moreover, a few States have positively brought about anti-conversion laws which act as deterrent against conversion. In addition, the Christians, generally being educated, prefer to have smaller families, a factor that inhibits the growth of the number of Christians. There are some unofficial accounts which claim that the numbers of Christians in actuality are much more than the number given by the census data. Because, several Christians do not divulge their religious identity to the census enumerators, fearing the denial of benefits of certain affirmative action implemented for the socially backward sections of the Indian society.

[4] The exact period from which this community came into existence is a point of dispute existing for a long time among historians. The popular 'belief' here in India is that the community came into existence with the evangelization of Thomas, one of the apostles of Jesus, who arrived here in the year 52 AD. Historians have held differing and contradicting views as regards this 'belief'. However, a conclusion to which majority of Church historians from India veer around is that, due to multiple cumulative indications, the arrival of Thomas the apostle to India cannot be denied, and it is high probability. For a recent work that discusses comprehensively about the issues involved, *cf.* Nedungatt (2008).

Malabar region and continued to live on as the only Christian community in India for about sixteen centuries.

The next spring arose at the instance of the *padroado mission* of the sixteenth century. This mission was eventful in different ways: first of all, there were 'mass conversions' to Christianity due to the missionary activities of the Jesuits in the Coromandel coast; secondly, these missionary activities, supported by the Portuguese power, spread to areas other than those wherein Christianity remained confined until then; and, thirdly, the Roman Catholic Christianity spread by these missionaries came into a conflict-ridden relationship with the existing Eastern Syrian Christianity, and the integration or otherwise of the latter with the former has become an enduring part of history until this day. As of now, there are two Syrian Christian communities (Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara) existing within the Roman Catholic fold, while a relatively lesser number of Syrian Christians formed under different Churches like Orthodox, Jacobites, Mar Thoma, etc. exist by themselves. The Roman Catholics of the *Padrado Mission* continued to spread from the coastal regions to the hinterland of the southern Tamil region, encompassing different strata of the Tamil society under its fold through the fervent missionary efforts of the Jesuits down the centuries. There were also other Catholic missionary agencies who entered the field during later centuries, and have together contributed to the formation of a Catholic Christian community in South India (Hambye, 1997).

The third spring of Christianity emerged from the early part of the eighteenth century with the efforts taken by the Protestant missionary agencies. Lutheran missionaries landed here first to be followed up by Baptists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and others. Their missionary agencies, consisting of some European powers and independently formed missionary societies, created Protestant Christian communities in South and North Indian territories. Bartholomew Ziegenbalg, the Protestant missionary to India, landed and worked at Tarangambadi, a Danish settlement along the south eastern coast. Ziegenbalg translated the New Testament of the Bible into Tamil so as to enable the native converts read, understand and preach the Gospel. He ventured also into an understanding of native religious traditions, and brought to light the deep religious visions present among the native people. His publications (Jeyaraj, 2006) initiated a deep exploration and dialogue between Christianity and native religious traditions. Subsequently during the end of the eighteenth century, the setting up of a mission at Srirampur, near Kolkata, by the trio – William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward, took up the translation of the Bible into several Asian languages and strengthened the presence of Christianity in India. During the nineteenth century, the works of missionaries sponsored by the London Missionary society took Anglican Churches to the southern tip of India. And several other missionary agencies followed up with their endeavours. It must be noted that their missionary endeavours, coinciding with the rule of the British in India, contributed very significantly to the making of the modern India.

The next spring of Christianity is what the twentieth century has witnessed to: spread of the Pentecostal Churches. These Churches, emergent in the North-American soil from the early part of the twentieth century, began to cross over and exist as mainline and independent Pentecostal Churches in the Indian soil. Mainline Pentecostal Churches are federated with international networks of leadership, while the independent Churches exist independently, though a broader network of solidarity is present among them too. It needs be noted that a considerable section of people attending Pentecostal Churches are drawn from the economically poor and the socially marginal communities of India.

Sociologically speaking, Indian Christians hail from different 'caste' groups, whose relationship with one another is not so harmonious and egalitarian as one would expect. There are instances of discrimination, denial of civic rights, jostling for power, and even of violent manifestations of 'caste pride' between different groups. The caste composition of Indian Christianity has been explored much (Massey & John, 2013) and it is a general consensus that about 65 per cent of the Indian Christian population hails from the subaltern communities of Dalits and Tribals; the rest belong to the most backward, backward, other backward and forward 'castes'. In spite of constant rhetoric and well-meaning efforts being made, the religious leadership does not yet represent the composition of the people, and there are discriminatory practices still existing within the Churches as regards occupation of ritual spaces. While such is the reality within Indian Christianity, the treatment meted out to Christians by the external others is no less characterised by an isolating tendency.

In terms of gender justice, there is a long way to go before the Indian Christian community experiences freedom and justice to every gender. Patriarchal domination is the ruling ethos within the Churches, in spite of the fact that Indian Christians fare better in sex-ratio (1023 women per 1000 men according to 2011 census) and conscious efforts are being made to address the question of gender justice.

Educationally, thanks to the missionary efforts made during the nineteenth century for mass education, Indian Christians have become the community with high literacy (Indian Christians have about 80 per cent literacy according to 2011 census) and with the ability for individual capabilities in terms of life-skills and occupations.

Politically speaking it would not be an exaggeration to say that Indian Christians make a rather quiescent community, and their political assertiveness and visible participation are yet to emerge on to the horizon. They do not have politically active individuals proportionate to the levels of education they have obtained during the recent centuries. This could be due to several factors: one could be that in the traditional Indian context wherein economic power had been the salient factor behind the rise of politically assertive individuals, Indian Christians, in general, are on a disadvantage; another reason could be that a strand of world-negating theology and spirituality which have been propounded within Christianity for a long time has possibly inhibited the Christian individuals from emerging into the wider public; yet another reason could be that Indian Christians had been, at least during the colonial era, got used to becoming dependent upon the 'protective' colonial powers that they have lost for a while the prowess for their independent political assertiveness. There could be many more such reasons. However, it should be noted that Indian Christians are indeed beginning to be politically assertive today against the obtaining reality of anti-Christian violence and majoritarian democracy. It is in place to note that several ecclesial leaders are out in the public domain voicing their concerns upon their security and freedom. Oswald Gracias, the president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India, met with the Home Minister in 2018 to express the concern of the Indian Christian community as regards their security. Other leaders like the archbishop of Delhi, Anil Couto and archbishop of Goa, Filipe Nerri Ferrao are voicing their concerns regarding the secular constitution and secular politics. Emergence of this voice has to do not only with the incidents of violence against Christians being reported today, but also with the corrosion of religious freedom guaranteed in the Indian Constitution. Indian Christians have now come to realise that they have to defend the spirit of freedom enshrined in the Constitution.

4. Contours of Indian Christians' Religio-Cultural Interactions

Indian Christianity, though embodying a religious tradition distinct from native ones, was less concerned about projecting its different identity, while interacting creatively with other traditions in an ambience of religio-cultural freedom. In its early days, Indian Christianity of the Syrian Christian tradition seems to have merged relatively more thickly with the native religio-cultural traditions. Being a mercantile group, having been accommodated into the 'high' castes by marital ties, the Syrian Christian tradition interacted and entered more deeply into the religio-cultural terrain of the people living in the south west coastal region. These Christians seem to have taken in several cultural elements like aesthetics, architecture, art-forms, and, folklores; they had taken in also the lineaments of the caste-system; however, they seemed to have continued to be non-vegetarians, as distinct from the vegetarian 'high castes' who lived in joint families. Moreover, they nurtured the Christian faith through a worship or liturgy, which was conducted in Syriac language and which centred round a sacramental theology of human regeneration through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Practice of this religion went with several features of socio-cultural accommodations, and the Christian community was apparently 'respected' by others, and enjoyed freedom to be on their own, in their own way. The religio-cultural face of this early Christian tradition, therefore, was a unique formation.

During the early modern era, an event-filled missionary era, beginning with the Portuguese missionary endeavours of the sixteenth century (as mentioned above), Indian Christianity inaugurated, so to say, a new phase of interaction. Headquarted in Goa, the *padroado* mission agency, supported by the Portuguese colonial power, undertook its mission along the western as well as the eastern coast and witnessed to a good number of native people becoming Christians. Along the western coast, it met with the existing Syrian Christians whom it befriended for a while before breaking off, even violently, on account of an attempt at co-opting them into the Roman Catholic fold headed by the Pope (Mundadan, 2001). The zeal of Francis Xavier, a prominent Jesuit missionary of the time, took Christianity to the people living along the Coromandel Coast and the southern tip of the erstwhile Travancore kingdom. Liturgically, architecturally, theologically, and cosmologically, it was a version of Portuguese Catholic Christianity that began to exist in the Indian soil. The then missionary paradigm, informed by an overarching religious zeal to save the souls of the entire humanity, went also with an exclusive ecclesial-centric soteriology of 'No salvation outside the Church', and it introduced a discourse of radical difference, hurtingly though to different religious others. There were reactions from the native people, who appreciated less the religion of the meat-eating and wine-drinking food habit of the Portuguese. But for an initial bout of conversion to Christianity, the natives kept aloof from the missionising religion, tagging the latter with an ambiguous but apparently derogatory term '*Paranghi* religion' (*paranghi margam*), which attributed a very lowly identity to Christianity. The term *paranghi* stood for the Portuguese, who, according to the perception of the high caste natives, „did not wash or bathe frequently, who ate beef, drank liquor, and communicated freely with persons of the most despised castes" (Thekkedath, 2001, 212).

The label, and the resistance to Christianity, became a major concern for an upcoming missionary of the *padrado* mission. Robert de Nobili, a Jesuit of Italian origin, who came to serve in a parish in Madurai, was intrigued by the labelling of Christianity as *Paranghi Margam*, and endeavoured to present a respectable picture of Christianity as a religion followed by dignified people in Europe. He adopted a method of adaptation of Christianity to the socio-cultural behaviours of the Brahmins, and made a distinction between Christianity as a religion as different from the socio-cultural system. While proclaiming the Christian religion in terms of doctrines and beliefs, in dialogue with Agamas, Upanishads, and other Indian theistic traditions (which he studied rather deeply in Sanskrit and Tamil), he presented himself in the attire of and with the markers of a Brahmin Sannyasi (Brahmin ascetic, generally considered to be learned), taking to strict vegetarian food, prepared by a Brahmin cook. All these efforts were to make himself and his religion acceptable to the 'learned and religious' sections of the Tamil region. A very small section of people showed interest in De Nobili's endeavours, and the method of adaptation did not bear much fruits. The imposed identity as *Parangi Margam* was not to be erased so easily. It remained in the consciousness of the local people for a very long time to come.

The Jesuits then embarked upon a new path to reach Christianity to the people. They adapted themselves to the religious world of the people beyond the

Brahmins, at further layers of the Indian caste system. They identified that those who were catering to the religious needs of these people were known as *Pandarams* (religious leaders of the castes, next in ladder after the Brahmins)and therefore, they presented themselves as *Pandarasamis*. Starting with Balthasar da Costa, the first *Pandarasami* to be initiated in the year 1640, Jesuits missionaries adopted the attire and markers of *Pandarams* to preach Christianity. Their efforts seemed to have brought in more people into Christianity, but not without further conflicts and resistance. Those at the next layers of the caste system (beyond the Brahmins) were not ready to accept those who were further down the lane or those beyond the pale of the system of caste to worship together with them, lest they too 'defiled themselves'. The ensuing struggle seemed to have made the Jesuits introduce yet another category of *Pandarasamis* who served the further sections of people in the layers of caste. Handling the caste factor in relation to the identity of Christianity was a continuing struggle for the Jesuit missionaries. They had to face it even during the period of the new Madurai Mission.[5]

It should be noted here that the Jesuits' missionary efforts branched off to other domains as well. We find, and a vast majority of Tamil people recognise until today, that the Tamil literary contributions (Meenaskshisundaram, 1974) made by the scholar Jesuits from the seventeenth century onwards have a lasting impact and abiding value. Though the corpus of Tamil literature that they produced went beyond the framework of the typical Christian mission of the day, some of their writings have introduced the Christian faith-tradition to the Tamil literary field in an effective way. The corpus of Tamil Christian Literature is being studied and drawn inspiration from until this day, not only for literary interest but also for inter-religious and even political inspiration. Thus, the literary strand of Tamil Christianity has had an enduring impact upon the consciousness of the Tamil people. It may well be stated that the stiff against Christianity on account of its being a *parangi margam* was 'compensated' by the reception of the literary output of the European Christian scholars.

While the Portuguese missionary efforts continued, the Protestant missionary era began in the early part of the eighteenth century, as mentioned above, with the Lutheran mission founded by the first Protestant missionary Bartholomew Ziegenbalg in a south Indian Danish colony along the eastern coast at Tarangambadi. Later during the end of the same century, again as noted above, the founding of yet another mission by the Baptist missionaries at Srirampur near Kolkata introduced the Protestant Christianity to north India as well. And the subsequent eventful missionary work during the nineteenth century by missionaries sponsored by the then emergent European missionary societies like London Missionary Society, Church Missionary Society, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, etc., contributed much to the introduction of the

[5] The old Madurai Mission came to a halt due to the suppression by the Pope of the Jesuits Congregation in the year 1773. When it was revoked again after forty years, the new Madurai Mission by the Jesuits came into existence.

Christianity among the subaltern people of Indian society, and made an enduring presence in political and civil spheres of India in terms of its 'civilizing mission' (Ingleby, 2000). The Protestant mission, unlike the earlier Catholic missionary efforts, focussed upon the reading and understanding of the Bible, as a prerequisite of which they embarked upon the project of educating the people in modern education, providing them with health care, sensitizing them upon their civil liberties, etc., which as a whole came to be addressed later as the 'civilizing mission'. The Protestant missionary presence was active among the subaltern sections of India, and it gave subaltern identity to Indian Christians. It empowered them to assert their rights, and even undertake struggles to do away with certain unmeaning social evils of the time.

The British colonial power was more interested in trade which could go on well without 'disturbing the political stability' of the country. And so, they adopted a policy of religious neutrality, though an evangelical section in the British Parliament sought to legitimise the colonial presence in India in terms of the 'civilizing mission'. The Protestant missionaries heartily involved in the civilizing mission, presuming it necessary for the Indian mind to grasp the message of the Gospel. The salvation offered through the Gospel was presented to be far superior to the liberation offered in any Indian religion. Their work, however, combined with the modern education, engaged several spiritually inclined Indian intellectuals of the time, and it inspired the emergence of the socio-religious movements like Brahma Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and Arya Samaj. The Christianity of the time inspired also a corpus of writings which attempted to integrate the Indian philosophical-religious vision into Christian theology. The result was what came to be known later as the Indian Christian theology, and it was, unlike the earlier effort to adapt to the native socio-cultural systems, an effort at the plane of theologising with Indian categories. Such an integrative initiative could be pursued in an ambience of relative freedom.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, in the context of the struggle for Indian independence combined with a discourse on Indian nationalism, Indian Christianity increasingly became conscious of its Indian identity. Indian Christian missionary societies, Ashrams model of inculturation and dialogue, participation in nation-building with socio-economic contributions, etc., became the new initiatives. Indian Christians were shaping up an identity of a religious community, self-confident and open-minded, interacting with and contributing to the wider society through their service-oriented institutions and initiatives. Minority rights enshrined in the Indian constitution recognised the need of the religious and linguistic minorities to nurture their distinct cultural identities, and provided for freedom to run educational and welfare institutions (Article 30 of the Indian Constitution). Indian Christian leaders seemed to have argued for these rights in lieu of the communal award that had been granted earlier by the British power (Fernando & Gispert-Sauch).

Indian Christians began also to address some of the age-old internal issues, like that of the prevalence of caste-based exclusions within Indian Christianity.

With the growing realisation that the majority of Indian Christians were drawn from the Dalit and Tribal communities, Christianity in India, existing in its different denominational Churches, was addressing the questions of social justice within the boundaries of the Churches.

The idea of being a 'minority religious community' did not gain salience in the Indian Christian mind until the onset of the discourse on Indian nationalism. Since the religio-cultural terrain had remained open and expansive, relatively less bounded, - and not the least around a single organising political idea of nation, the sense of being a majority or a minority did not emerge into the consciousness of the people until the time of nationalism. Indian nationalism was the project of the time, serving a meaningful cause of Indian independence from foreign colonialism, and eventually, through sacrifices and trauma, gave birth to the political entity of an independent nation called India. Needless to say that the political nationhood of the post-colonial era, as Kymlica pointed out, brought in the discourse of minorities and their rights too.

5. Contemporary Challenges

Today, Indian Christianity is facing up to the politics of majoritarianism and its cultural nationalism. The issues and concerns that they are facing today are changing them over from being a 'religious community' to a 'communally conscious minority', with increasing concerns over security, freedom of religion, cultural rights, rights to partake of the civil society, etc. Indian Christians are treated in terms of multiple not-well-meaning identities: colonial, western, proselytising, 'low caste', culturally alien, politically divisive, and so on:

1. Colonial – Western: In spite of the fact that Christianity in India has existed from very ancient times, and has been part of the Asian religious landscape; despite the fact that those who practise Christianity in India are people of the Indian types (Dravidians, Dalits, Tribals, etc); and in spite of the fact that the cultural dimension of Indian Christianity has to do more with native indigenous cultures than the western ones, Christianity in India is still being identified with the colonial powers and western cultures.
2. Proselytising Agent: Indian States have gone about legislating upon 'anti-conversion' laws, under the pretext of banning conversion by 'force, coercion and fraudulent means'. Some of them have had such legislations right from the very early days of independent India. The reasoning behind these legislations was that conversion is unduly disturbing the fabric of Indian society, and playing a divisive role in the wider society. Though this reasoning has been prevalent for a long time, it has become very vocal today. In an ambience of majoritarianism and cultural nationalism, conversion is countered with violent outbursts today. Since 1990 when religious nationalism emerged boldly, the number of violent acts against the Christians has increased. Christian personnel – pastors,

nuns, priests, etc., are humiliated publicly, tortured, and even killed by rightist fanatics.

3. 'Low-caste' Social Identity: The subaltern face of Indian Christianity is what seems to emerge in the public. There is a certain 'untouchability' that goes with the Christian identity, when looked at from within the ideology of purity and pollution that goes with the caste-system of India. While this being the case, the social strife and discrimination between the small minority of 'higher caste' Christians and the majority of 'low caste' Christians are continuously being reported even until this day. Indian Christianity, sociologically speaking, is indeed an internally strife-ridden community until this day.
4. Culturally Alien: For a very long time in the Indian films, Christian characters are depicted as villains, womanisers, and drunkards. We used to be indignant about this. Why do Christians get such roles? It has a colonial legacy, coming from Portuguese times onwards. But, do simple ordinary Christian folks today deserve to be depicted like this? Apart from such visible instances, Christians continue to suffer the identity of cultural aliens on other cultural dimensions as well. One of the recent issues being debated in the public centre round an old age home run by a Christian missionary. The home was closed down for a period due to allegations that it was selling the dead bodies of old people, using unwholesome methods of disposing of the bodies, etc. A fact-finding team which went into the issue reported that there was a cultural incompatibility between the Christian concern for the dead and the cultures of the surrounding people. Taking care of the old at the time of their death is not congenial to the Indian ethos, despite the fact that they appreciated the works of Mother Teresa and her missionaries.

The experience of Indian Christianity is not so typical of being a minority 'other' in the global world today. Even in its vicinity, minorities of different religions in South Asian countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Indonesia, etc., are facing up to similar struggles. We are in need of a healthy enlightened political system that can address the concerns of religious minorities effectively. There is a lot of thinking going into the treatment of minorities in liberal democratic politics of the world today. There is unanimity in defending and safeguarding the rights of the minorities for any liberal democratic system to mature and bear fruits. It is indeed a challenge that there is a retreat of the liberal political doctrine as the guiding principle of political practice. In a volume titled, *The Retreat of Western Liberalism*, Edward Luce demonstrates with examples as to how our political practice is moving away from principles of liberalism. In its place, we have political practices which draw their legitimacies from ethnic, cultural and civilisational identities and traditions. It is an era of the dialectics of the very idea of democracy, about which political philosophers starting with Plato had much doubt. People speak today of 're-traditionalisation' of polities. In this context, majoritarianism, overt and covert, tends to become the dominant political practice.

What would it be like being a minority in majoritarian polities? Would minorities shrink and stagnate in terms of their culture, public engagements, religious practices, etc? Or, would they turn to reactionary measures? Or, would they find creative avenues of interactive existence? – are important questions today. A phenomenological study and a narrative account of the experience of being a minority would unearth the pathos of living a life framed by a minority identity. A person of minority identity lives in a vulnerable position of being incessantly called into question, and that person is always required to 'prove his / her patriotism' in front of a self-righteous majority. Will Kymlicka made a fine distinction between patriotism, the feeling of allegiance to a state, from nationalism, the sense of membership in a group. Kymlica's distinction dwells upon the distinction between an allegiance to the State, in terms of fostering citizenship, from nationalist sentiments which envelop the people in terms of their identities. Recognition of such a distinction would indicate the quality of democracy that might exist in a given political unit. Unfortunately, in the Indian case, the national identity is wilfully being conflated with the majoritarian Hindu identity by a politically vocal section upon the ideology of Hindutva, and that conflation is further conflated with patriotism to reap political mileage. A minority has to prove oneself against these multiple yardsticks, and failing in one would be seen as failing in another.

Conclusions

Going by the hint given by Emmanuel Levinas, it needs be recognised that an oppressive unity, forged regardless of the participation of different others, will not take a community towards 'transcendence in sociality'. Minorities need to face up to the situation in an open-minded manner. They need to engage the public and the political polity in a manner of fine and substantive negotiation, premised upon the ideals of justice, dignity, freedom and civil rights. It is in place to note that some well known Indian Christian thinkers point to meaningful ways of Christian existence or life in the emerging scenario. For example, Felix Wilfred, a very perceptive Indian Christian scholar, who integrates insights of social sciences with theological education, endeavours to creatively imagine a dynamic identity for Indian Christians (Wilfred, 2014). Such an identity is multi-dimensional, interactive, and pro-active, especially with an ethical sensitivity, oriented towards the empowerment of the subaltern people of India.

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RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES IN LIQUID MODERNITY: POSTISLAM

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Abstract:
Postislam has been regarded as a new concept in need of a dire delineation. Basically, a Postislamic tendency is a paradigm of thought (philosophical, scientific, mystical, religious, theological[2], etc.) that excessively transcends at least one of the three sources of Islam's juridical Canons (i.e. Quran, Sunna, Ijma' or consensus of Scholars). This paper provides a definition for the founding principles of Postislam. It shall examine this concept from a generic point of view. It will equally suggest a constellation of some central problems structuring an emergent system: Postislam. This tendency is positively inherent „in potentiality" (*dunamis*), in an Aristotelian sense, according to multiple forms of enunciations and semantic variations throughout the history of theology as well as the history of philosophy, theology, Islamic mystique and science. Postislam represents a potentiality devoid of a preexisting concept within Islam; it is an unnamed historical tenant, disseminated throughout a complex combination of theological and mystical first faltering steps.
I will examine some of these instantiations, expressed essentially in Islamic theology (Avicenna's Metaphysics of Emanation) and mystical tradition (i.e. Sufism in a general acceptance, and the nodal case of Al-Hallâj, in particular). Then, by isolating the essence of Islam's theological mystique (the structural duality between Sharīʾa and Haqīqa, Law and Truth), in order to construct a synthetic deconstruction identified to the concept of Postislam as pure mysticism, or the possibility a of a permanent theophany, indefinitely experienced throughout ecstatic theopathy. We ought to, at this step, enunciate divers axioms based on this concept. As a sequel, I will discuss further philosophical counterpoints and limits to this construction.

Keywords: Postislam, Islam, theology, philosophy.

Résumé:
Postislam a été considéré comme un nouveau concept nécessitant une délimitation précise. Fondamentalement, une tendance postislamique est un paradigme de pensée (philosophique, scientifique, mystique, religieux, théologique, etc.) qui transcende excessivement au moins l'une des trois sources des canons juridiques de l'Islam ou consensus des Savants). Cet article propose une définition des principes fondateurs de Postislam. Il examinera ce concept d'un point de vue générique. Il proposera également une constellation de quelques problèmes centraux structurant un système émergent : Postislam. Cette tendance est positivement inhérente « à la potentialité » (dunamis), au sens aristotélicien, selon de multiples formes d'énonciations et variations sémantiques

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[2] The Postislam, essentially exposed here, is a *theological excess.* Thus, it represents a special case of excess, a *genre* of tendency.

tout au long de l'histoire de la théologie comme de l'histoire de la philosophie, de la théologie, de la mystique islamique et de la science. . Postislam représente une potentialité dépourvue d'un concept préexistant au sein de l'Islam ; c'est un locataire historique sans nom, disséminé à travers une combinaison complexe de premiers pas hésitants théologiques et mystiques.
J'examinerai certaines de ces instanciations, exprimées essentiellement dans la théologie islamique (Métaphysique de l'émanation d'Avicenne) et la tradition mystique (c'est-à-dire le soufisme dans une acception générale, et le cas nodal d'Al-Hallâj, en particulier). Ensuite, en isolant l'essence de la mystique théologique de l'Islam (la dualité structurelle entre la Chari'a et la Haqîqa, la Loi et la Vérité), afin de construire une déconstruction synthétique identifiée au concept de Postislam comme pur mysticisme, ou la possibilité d'un d'une théophanie permanente, indéfiniment vécue à travers la théopathie extatique. Nous devons, à cette étape, énoncer divers axiomes basés sur ce concept. Dans la suite, je discuterai d'autres contrepoints philosophiques et des limites de cette construction.

Mots-clés : Postislam, Islam, théologie, philosophie.

Rezumat:
Postislamul a fost privit ca un nou concept care are nevoie de o delimitare clară. Practic, o tendință postislamică este o paradigmă de gândire (filosofică, științifică, mistică, religioasă, teologică etc.) care transcende excesiv cel puțin una dintre cele trei surse ale canoanelor juridice ale islamului (adică Coran, Sunna, Ijma'). sau consensul savanților. Această lucrare oferă o definiție pentru principiile fondatoare ale Postislamului. Ea va examina acest concept dintr-un punct de vedere generic. De asemenea, va sugera o constelație a unor probleme centrale care structurează un sistem emergent: Postislam. Această tendință este inerentă în mod pozitiv „în potențialitate" (dunamis), într-un sens aristotelic, conform multiplelor forme de enunțuri și variații semantice de-a lungul istoriei teologiei, precum și a istoriei filosofiei, teologiei, misticii islamice și științei. Postislamul reprezintă o potențialitate lipsită de un concept preexistent în islam; este un chiriaș istoric fără nume, răspândit printr-o combinație complexă de primii pași ezitanți teologici și mistici.
Voi examina unele dintre aceste instanțieri, exprimate în esență în teologia islamică (Metafizica emanației a lui Avicenna) și tradiția mistică (adică sufismul într-o acceptare generală și cazul nodal al lui Al-Hallâj, în special). Apoi, prin izolarea esenței misticii teologice a islamului (dualitatea structurală dintre Sharī'a și Haqīqa, Legea și Adevărul), pentru a construi o deconstrucție sintetică identificată la conceptul de Postislam ca misticism pur, sau posibilitatea unei de o teofanie permanentă, trăită la nesfârșit de-a lungul teopatiei extatice. Ar trebui, la acest pas, să enunțăm diverse axiome bazate pe acest concept. Ca o continuare, voi discuta alte contrapuncte și limite filosofice ale acestei construcții.

Cuvinte cheie: postislam, islamteologie, filosofie

Introduction

In this presentation, I will attempt to lay the ground for a tentative definition, or should I say an assemblage of guiding Ideas towards what I designate as „Postislam". The endeavour will consist of a first overview of the constellation of some central problematics structuring an emergent system (i.e.

Postislam), positively remaining „in potency", in an Aristotelian sense, in multiple forms of enunciations and semantic variations throughout the history of theology as well as the history of philosophy and science.

The main target of this work does not coincide with the *closure* of a theologico-philosophical system, namely Postislam, the consistency of which is, *in fine*, established[3]; it is, however, an enterprise of *naming*[4] or *repairing* a mystical „unthinked"[5] within the Islamic tradition, which is able to be generalized, formally and objectively, in a special case of theology. This means that we are constructing a concept of Postislam from an ontological point of view, relatively to the fundamental question „What is X?" More precisely, the „unthinked" in question takes more the form of a *retreat* in front of its own *systemization* – or implementation as a philosophical concept – in a satisficing manner, than an absolute blind spot never formulated as such in Islamic mystical history. It might have been localized as a *name* in the mystical *genre* of literature, but it remains a philosophically vacant syntagm, an object without a concept.

We use the term „unthinked" as opposed to „experimented": retroactively, Postislam was experimented in an intermittent way; it may be conceived as a singularity, or to use Deleuze's terminology, *„une experience-limite"*, (a limit-experience), isomorphic, for instance, to the poetical *oeuvre* of Antonin Artaud: a limpid case of „crowned anarchy" (anarchie courronnée[6]) (Lapoujade, 2014, p. 160). To spin the metaphor, and by the same means, to engage it literally, the

[3] Since the enunciation of the "Incompleteness theorem" of Gödel, the consistency of a "formal system" cannot be proven within itself and according to its immanent resources.

[4] Naming it is not contradictory with the fact that such an orientation is existing in potency without name or concept. For instance, as Ignaz Goldziher discusses it, the lack of nomination of the notion of *conscience* in Quran, is not, according to him, equivalent to a lack of "meaning". As he argues, "a lack in language does not imply necessarily a lack in the heart" (Goldziher, 2005, pp. 14-15). The same situation is operant at the dawn of sufism: it was practiced without a concept or a name of it until the eighth century. It is the question of a system, baring, unnamed within it, its own negation (or ruin) that is apparently fundamental, from a logical point of view. This remains a crucial problem in axiomatic theories or formal systems. Gödel's incompleteness theorems show that any sufficiently strong recursively enumerable theory of arithmetic cannot be both complete and consistent. The completeness means the closure of the theory with respect to its inferences. Consistency is the criterium that a theory is coherent i.e. dos not imply, at once, the propositions ϕ and $\neg\phi$.

[5] Unthinked and not unthinkable as we will see, from an Islamic point of view.

[6] "C'est une autre manière de définir l'univocité de l'inconscient dans la mesure où elle se confond chez Deleuze avec 'l'anarchie couronnée' comme affirmation des disjonctions incluses de *Différence et repetition*". This is, roughly speaking, the main formal operator that will be convoked in this presentation. As we will discuss it in the last paragraph, the structural duality of Islam, deconstructed *via* a Deleuzian "disjunctive-synthesis-like" method, opens the horizon of Postislam. However, what will be mobilized concretely, is the Laruellien idea of an "unilateral duality".

„usage" of this „unthinked" is no more no less than a suspension of the „Law regime" or Sharī'a, to render mystically practicable what remains from such a subversion, an anarchic residue, ontologically reduced to a transitory state, dedicated to being resorbed each time and instantaneously into the prosaic „state of affairs", governed by Islam's juridical canons. The Idea is to give the so-called residue the dignity of the concept, theologically speaking, i.e. *Postislam.*

As we will see, this „unthinked state" remains, to a greater or lesser extent, inherent to the sphere of Islam. The possibility of its expansion or *genesis* into an independent concept, causally (historically) induced by Islam but ontologically separated from it, is the foremost posture of Postislam. In a word, Postislam represents a *potency without a concept* within Islam; it is an unnamed historical gesture, disseminated throughout a complex combination of theological and mystical first faltering steps.

I will examine some of these instantiations, expressed essentially in Islamic theology and mystical tradition (i.e. the Sūfism in a general acceptance, and the nodal case of Al-Hallāj, in particular). By isolating, then, the *essence* of Islam's theological mystique (the *structural duality between Sharī'a and Haqīqa*), we will be able to construct a synthesis identified with the concept of Postislam. We ought to, at that step, enunciate diverse axioms based on this concept. As a sequel, I will discuss further philosophical counterpoints to this construction.

I insist on the fact that this presentation be eminently a philosophical interpretation mobilizing philosophical tools; the claim is, in the last instance, theological. I will not dwell on the philosophy/theology[7] dialectics, operant since the dawn of Greek philosophy; what I develop here is, at some point, a task of *philosophy applied to mystique*, which would lead to, I hope, a theological sketch, or, at least, will admit a theological implication. Thus, the rank of speculative thematisation will exceed the *stricto sensu* historical démarche.

Another remark concerning the references of this text: the main philosophical and mystical inspirations are written originally in French - for instance the monumental study of Louis Massignon, *La passion de Hallāj*, in four tomes (Massignon, 1975) - and Arabic. Thus, unless otherwise specified, all translations are mine. I would like to thank my colleague Mohamed Amine Khedhiri for proofreading this text and translating some quotes of Avicenna. Furthermore, I would like to thank my colleagues Quentin Morel-Mottet for his remarks on the perspectivism of Postislam, Douja Mamelouk and Lamia Benyoussef for their reading.

1. Postislam *in general*: excess and concordism

In its more general acceptance, a Postislamic tendency is a regime of thought (philosophical, scientific, mystical, religious, theological[8], etc.) which

[7] Mythe et philo thèse/ théologie et philosophie de la religion?

[8] The Postislam essentially exposed here is a *theological excess*. Thus, it represents a special case of excess, a *genre* of tendency.

affirms an excess with respect to at least one of the three sources of Islam's juridical Canons (i.e. *Quran, Sunna*, authentic compilation of words and acts of Muhammad, and *Ijmā'* or consensus of Scholars). The excess in question simply reflects a tendency that, even though being grounded in the Islamic texts – as objectifying them, oriented „intentionally" towards them in the first instance –, does not incorporate, a priori, hermeneutical „souci" (concern) of coincidence or concordance with the canons listed above.

One might argue that a *Postislamic excess* might be recomposed as such within the Islamic matrix, by means of a precise hermeneutics[9]: thereby, its irreducibility would be apparently compromised; however, the *self-awareness* of Postislamic thought would be consciously or unconsciously conceived in the foremost original intimacy, not conducted teleogically[10] by a concern for concordance in relation to Islamic *Law* (Sharī'a) or *Faith* (*Aqīda*), regardless of the interpretative posture – as heterodox as it can be – adopted retroactively in order to reduce it to an occurrence of *Islam's horizons of possibilities. Stricto sensu*, from the Islamic point of view, the '*Aqīda* is resorbed into the Sharī'a in the sense that faith is prominently a legal prescription.

The Islamic concordism is a radical reductionism: when a problem (political, scientific, social, economic, theological, etc.) emerges with a fundamental novelty, its „resolution" from the philosophical point of view that we are applying is invariable within the Islamic framework: since the ontological closure of Islam is islamically insured (because this religion marks, supposedly, the end of the revealed Law and Faith „forever and ever", the problem in question can be recomposed and annihilated by the means of Islamic dogma. A concordant interpretation will reduce any category of problematicity, through a chain of inferences rooted in the „axioms" of the three Canons, to a resolution, negatively or positively inherent to the Law.

Let us briefly study a concrete case. The Quran (chapter 4) stipulates that the brothers inherit the double share of their sisters from the property of a departed parent. Let us consider that a problem of some legislative reforms inducing a perfect equality emerges (last summer in Tunisia for instance). The „misery" of concordism takes here its full scale. In fact, the conflict of interpretations, between the literalist conservative (faithful to the „letter" of the Qur'ānic Law) and the progressive reformists (struggling for equal rights between man and woman) is *stricto sensu* epiphenomenal. *In fine*, both of them tend to

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[9] The duality of «التفسير و التأويل» (explanation and interpretation) is primary in the Islamic tradition (see *Quran* 2: 7). While the "tafssīr" is a formal explanation of terms, the "ta'awīl" is a semantical resorption of apparent (logical) contradictions. In the *Quran* 17:35, etymologically speaking, "ta'awīl" might be seen as equivalent to the "final cause" (see below) of a movement. A Postislamic tendency is beyond "tafssīr and ta'awīl" in the sense that it ignores the final (hermeneutical) cause of Islamic discourse if the latter aims to concord with Quran, Sunna, or Ijmā'.

[10] In *Physics II, 3,* Aristotle defined four causes responding to the question "why?". The final cause, or *telos*, is the aim or finality of a movement.

construct a hermeneutical concordant system of arguments for or against the equality. While the first group consider this as a profound subversion of the „sacred" revelation, the second group argues that equality is not contradictory with the Law under a certain exegesis. Both of them seem to be so far from each other but, in fact, they are so close insofar as they actualize the same structural position: a deep step in concordism. They share the same plan of reference to the Canons. Both of them are evolving within the same Islamic matrix.

Postislam is a radical abolition of this ground since it is indifferent to the sterile conflict of interpretations since it is *a force oriented to the elsewhere*; what it suggests remains a vital paradigm shift. From the invariant background of the „*becoming-same*" (progressive) or the „*same-resting*" (reactionary) of the Law, Postislam presents an alternative *conatus*: striving to persevere in its detachment from the concordist striving to persist under the realm of Law. We will discuss further hermeneutical problems in the fourth paragraph.

Since the main „cheval de bataille" of Islam's reformists, let us say from the end of the nineteenth century[11], is eminently hermeneutical (i.e. centered on the „false problem": what modern interpretation could or would Islam support with respect to its „essence"[12] ?), a Postislamic *refonte* - A deconstruction in Derrida's sense - (remoulding, recasting) is *fundamentally indifferent* to interpretational dilemmas insofar as its *final cause* in any way whatsoever is *concordist.*

Conversely, one might consider a thought experiment in which a system „demonstrates", according to immanent qur'ānic interpretation, that, in fact, Islam represents a latent atheism (!)[13]. Roughly speaking, since this position assumes a singular (or paradoxical) concordism, it will not be considered as Postislamic. In the end, if the motion of thought is caused by a final canonic cause (Quran, Sunna, Ijmā'), and even though if this same motion will seem as incommensurable with the tradition, it would be rejected from the Postislam's realm. We can call it sur-Islamic, hyper-Islamic or anti-Islamic but under no circumstances „Postislamic": the latter is an excess beyond the concordism/anti-

[11] The axis al-Tahtawî-al-Afghani-Abdou is representative of what is called "Islamic Renaissance" (الصحوة الاسلامية): "It [the reform] means the liberation of thought from the mimetic tie, and the comprehension of religion according to the predecessors' (*salaf*) understanding [...]. [My purpose] is *different* from those of the two great categories of our nation: religion scholars and defenders of modern arts [i.e. modern western thought and science]" (Abdou, 1993, pp. 183-184). It is evident that this self-proclaimed *third position* represents, *in fine*, and despite its importance, a *synthetical rebranding* of an essentialist posture, a modern reformulation of the old scholastic theme of "reason and faith complementarity", declined in a hermeneutical concordism.

[12] Some traditional illustrations of Islam's essence could be found in the jurisprudential study of "Maqāsid" i.e. the general *purposes* of the Law, such as the conservation of reason, of progeny, of wealth, etc. (Tahar Ibn Achour, 2001).

[13] There is some echoes of *this inexistence* in the Jewish Kabbala. In fact, the retreat of God or his *contraction*, namely the *Tsimtsum*, is the condition of possibility of immanence (the result of Creation) "after" the absolute transcendence of the Creator.

concordism dialectics. Mathematically, the fundamental relation of Postislam to Islam should not be captured by *elementary set-theoretical* tools ($\in, \notin, \subset,$ etc., namely the „in" operator) – which is the case for all concordist theories[14] –, but precisely in virtue of a *differential* paradigm (a certain $\frac{dy}{dx}$, namely the „by" operator, functioning as a *tangent* to what would be the „Islam's curve"). Basically, what I am reporting here is a fundamental Deleuzian construction – pursued since *Différence et répetition* (1969) – that aims at redefining the „problematicity" in philosophy beyond the model of identity, negation and recognition (Rabouin, 2012). More abstractly, or more geometrically, in relation to Islam, Postislam represents a sort of *tangent bundle* of the Islamic *manifold.*

2. An archetypal instantiation: Avicenna's metaphysics

Before thematizing the Postislamic framework in the particular sense of referring to *mystical excess*, let us focus on the general case of the philosophical one; thus, I will try to briefly explore an archetypal posture of what could be considered as philosophically Postislamic: it is indeed the case of Avicenna's metaphysics.

Avicenna (980-1037), „chief and prince of philosophers" according to Roger Bacon, is probably the most important philosopher in the history of Islamic thought. Eminent commentator of Aristotle, his book of al-*Shifa'a* (*The Cure*) is a decisive masterpiece of medieval thought and culture. Indeed, the Middle Ages would not be the same without Avicenna. One could be easily convinced of such a statement by reviewing the rays of Avicenna's influence through the eras (*see figure 1*). I will not present an exposé of Avicenna's system. In fact, the literature is abundant on this question (McGinnis, 2010).

However, what I will briefly highlight is the Postislamic scope of Avicenna's Metaphysics, its irreducible excess. Considering that „*Dicemus igitur quod ens et res et necesse, talia sunt quae statim imprimuntur in nima prima impressione, quae non acquiritur ex aliis notioribus se* [...]."[15] (*Metaphysics of al-Shifâ*, tract.1, chap. 5), which represents, in fact, a fundamental invariant logged in the History of Philosophy, from Parmenides to Heidegger, Avicenna elaborates, earlier than Anselm of Canterbury, a proof of the existence of God (known as „the Proof of the truthful", *برهان الصديقين*) based exclusively on the notions of existence, necessity and possibility (Adamson, 2013). The totality of Being *proceeds*, according to a „theory of emanation", from the First Principle,

[14] A theological proposition (for example the creation or the eternity of Quran), a faith act (in the Judgement Day, or in a special paradigm of paradisiac delights), a social phenomenon (heritage) is Islamic if it is *in the result of a (re)composition, throughout a hermeneutical precise procedure*; it is non-Islamic if it is not in it. It is *in* if it concords and *out* if it does not.

[15] فنقول : إن الموجود ، والشيء ، والضروري ، معانيها ترتسم في النفس
ارتساماً أولياً ، ليس ذلك الارتسام مما يحتاج إلى أن يجلب بأشياء أعرف منها .

neither intentionally, nor purposely - i.e. not a temporal emanation -, but as a *necessity of its being qua being* (Rashed, 2002)[16] (*wâjib al-wujûd*).

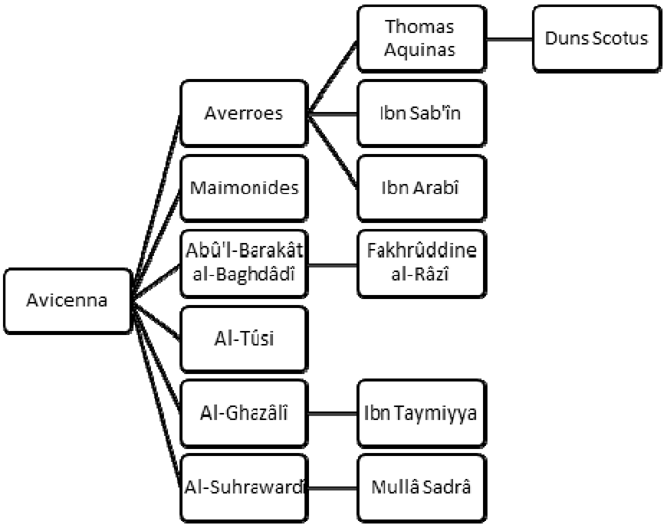

Figure 1. Rays of Avicenna's influence[17]

3. Hermeneutical problems

To what extent can we consider the foundational issues of this Metaphysics as a non-concordist Postislamic excess? The answer is, at the same time, simple and complex.

The first answer could be formulated as following: Avicenna's system has exclusive philosophical finalities. The essential *souci* of the theory of emanation, and of Avicenna's thought in general, is in excess with respect to the Canonic Texts, insofar as its means and purposes are purely philosophical; even though it may enter in conflict with the revealed *Law*[18], the conception fluxes towards

[16] It is important to consult the article of Rashed (2002) to have a clear idea on the Postislamic tendency of Mathematics. Rashed describes, according to al-Tûsi, the combinatory calculus that the latter mobilised to deduct the number of elements of the "third order of effects", obtained by adjoining the *intellects and celestial spheres* of the "second order of effects", emanating from the First Principle or the Pure Intellect, etc. Al-Tûsi used explicitly the summa $\sum_{k=1}\binom{n}{k}$. Rashed concludes that it is the foundation of combinatory calculus that is implied in al-Tûsi's work.

[17] The influence is both positive and negative. For instance, Ghazâli was a violent critique of Avicenna's thought. Nevertheless, in the history of philosophy, the notion of influence is deterministic: it would have been necessary that there was Avicenna so that Ghazali was (al-Rahim, 2003).

[18] Clearly, for instance, Avicenna's eschatology is not concordant because it rejects the resurrection of bodies *and* souls together (Jaffer, 2003, p. 170).

some kind of „philosophical consistency”, obtained by logical inferences. As Adamson (2013, p. 177) stresses, commenting the Avicennian proof of uniqueness of God, that „[...] Avicenna signals the relation between his project and Islamic conceptions of God. But philosophical considerations also make it pressing to show that there is only one necessary existent”. We can easily see that this relation is secondary considering that the *final cause* of Avicenna’s thought movement is independent from the Revelation and therefore in *philosophical excess* according to it. Thus, the Avicennian theses are enounced regardless of their Islamic affinity; they are conducted *causally and not ontologically* by the Revelation - this distinction is central in John R. Searle’s philosophy. Moreover, a radical excess is expressed within the theory of emanation in the sense that the proceeding of Intellects and Celestial Spheres from the First Principle has, extensively, neither echo in Quran and Sunna. It is a metaphysical parallel and independent model, purely Hellenistic[19] that might be, downstream, read as conform to the Islamic referential. Conversely, the major themes of *Mutakallimun* (Islamic Theologians) joined to their methods and above all their purposes, are essentially concordist. For instance, al-Mu’tazila corroborate their thesis of the „creation of the Quran” by… Quranic means or verses (39:62[20] and 43:3[21]). This posture is diametrically opposed to Avicenna’s program: the former purpose is to conceal theology and reveled Law, in the last instance, by revelation’s means while the latter starts and finishes his proof inside the theologico-philosophical framework[22] regardless of the concordance with the Canonical Text. Thus, the former represents the Islamic thought[23] in its purest form (without any excess, see figure 2) while the latter, as it is indifferent to concordist issues, must be considered as Postislamic (with the excess that it engages, always tangential to Islam; see *figure 3*).

[19] The resonances to a Plotinian systematic core are evident. The procession of the Hypostases is no more no less a form of emanation.

[20] اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ الزمر: من الآية. **God is the Creator of all beings.**

[21] إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآناً عَرَبِيّاً الزخرف: من الآية

[22] The Plotinian One or Good is the supreme object of theology which is, for its turn, the highest category of science: Henology, the science of the One.

[23] I highlight the fact that I am not devaluating the subversive positions immanent to Islamic thought, as it is the case for the issue of the creation of Quran. Fortunately, there are multiple instantiations of Islamic subversion, that remain, in fact, according to our definition, pre-Postislamic. It is, furthermore, an excellent illustration of our method, purely speculative, that consists in separating the political contexts from the abstract theology synthesis. One might think that the orthodoxy is systematically correlated to the regimes. It is not so. In fact, under the Abbasside Caliph al-Ma’mūn, the heterodox (in relation to the three Canons of Islam’s jurisprudence) theses of Mu’tazila were adopted by the Regime. Thus, any form of concordism, no matter how subversive potential it may exhibit could always be incorporated and pacified. By cause of its *souci* of coincidence, Islamic postures (orthodox or heterodox) are condemned to stand still in the matrix.

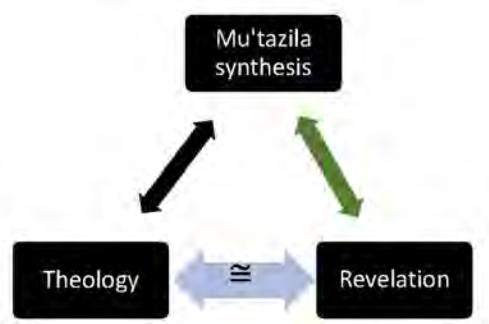

Figure 2. Example of Islamic archetype: Mu'tazila.

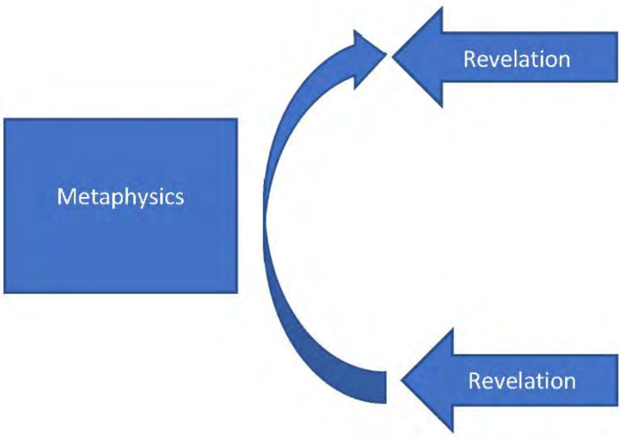

Figure 3. Example of Postislam archetype: Avicenna.

The previous discussion will lead us to the core problematic of this paper: to what extent one can rigorously assume that a philosophical system (the Avicennian for this first part), given as text, does not purposely intend to be concordist with the trinity Quran-Sunna-Ijmā'? In other words, by affirming that the hermeneutics that Avicenna affects spontaneously to the canonic text does not include the goal of coincidence with its *maqāsid* – which implies a certain „epistemology" of the author intentions, i.e. an extreme case of concordism –, wouldn't we immediately apply to the author *one* possible interpretation, and, as a corollary, we are condemned to repeat a hermeneutic gesture that is, as discussed above, the pole of indifference in every Postislamic excess (i.e. to be, precisely, beyond any hermeneutics of concordance)? In the end, elucidating the meaning and the limits of the hermeneutical „method" will render the problematic more accessible. This leads us to the second point.

Now the second answer. With Paul Ricœur, hermeneutics occupies an ambiguous position, different, at the same time, from the structuralist effusion of impersonal meanings as well as from the classic position of intentional signification, the tyrannical presence of the author. Ricœur stresses that „what the text wants to say is to put us in its 'meaning', its own 'direction' To interpret is to take the path of thought opened by the text, to move towards the *east* (*l'Orient*) of the text" (Ricoeur, 1986, pp. 137-159, 156). A hermeneutic implies directly a *meta-hermeneutic* centered not on the investigation oriented towards the intentions of the author, but rather to the *pointed out* in the text considered as an independent entity, a *being qua being*. Avicenna would not have to say *meta-textually* a statement like: „my system is not concordist in its purpose", so that we can affirm it, with him. The work of the hermeneut consists precisely in isolating the direction, in our case of the philosophical system, in what it conceals of the purest form. By this means, we can conclude that, in its structure, Avicenna's Metaphysics is not oriented towards concordism; it points to pure philosophical motives, *by-Islamically* and therefore not *in-Islamically* constructed. In the end, Avicenna's theory represents a form of *excess*. It is a postislamic model: a metaphysical postislamic archetype. Other indications of the peculiar non-concordism of Avicenna's metaphysics is attested in one of his authenticated letters where he establishes a criterion for the „truthful religion": That you enter into the realm of impiety, and that you quit the appearance of Islam; you must aim your intellectual gaze beyond the three objects (created, of vulgar belief: paradise, hell and traditions), and thus stop being Muslim and impious at the same time (= stop pronouncing the two terms, negation and affirmation, from the shahāda [creed] and renounce telling yourself you are 'muslim' or 'ungodly' (= enter into the pure and one being, without specification).

4. Directive ideas of Postislam *in particular*

Let us recall the general characterization of a Postislamic tendency: it is a tendency that, even though being grounded in the Islamic texts – as objectifying them, oriented „intentionally" towards them in the first instance –, does not incorporate, *a priori*, a hermeneutical purpose of concordance with the Revelation. This definition is applicable in philosophical, scientific and theological fields, as I illustrated it for Avicenna's Metaphysics. What would be the Postislam in particular? Frugally, it will be the result of applying the main characterization to Mystical Theology. In its more general acceptance, Mystical Theology is the foundational theory of the dialectics between the Supreme Being (Allah, The Trinity, etc.) and ascetic, reflexive practices. In Islam, the mystical tendency is dominated by the history of Sūfism. I will not dwell on the complex development of this practice. In fact, the literature is abundant on this question[24].

[24] For the foundation and the directive ideas of Sūfism, see: al-Qûshayrî, A. 2007. *Al-risala al-qûshayrîya* (*Epistle on Sūfism*). Garnet Publishing Limited. See also Massignon, L. 1997. *Essay on the origins of the technical language of Islamic mystique*. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press. For a sketch of history of Sūfism, see Goldziher, I. 2005. *Le dogme et la loi dans l'islam. Histoire du développement dogmatique et juridique de la religion musulmane*. Gale: Making of Modern Law (chapter IV, pp. 111-156).

I will directly develop a crucial theological discovery of Sūfism, i.e. the structural duality of Islam.

Roughly speaking, the essence of Islamic thought and theology is the synthesis of two opposite notions: Haqīqa (Truth, Reality) and Sharī'a (Law) As Mark Soileau summarizes it, „the concept [of Haqīqa] has also been taken up by Sūfis, for whom Haqīqa is so important that it can be considered the ultimate purpose of the mystic path, which is attainment of true knowledge through experience of the divine mysteries. It usually refers to hidden, as opposed to manifest meaning, and is often used in contrast with Sharī'a, the formal outward practices and laws of Islam. While Sūfis often focus on the inner meaning (Haqīqa) of a practice, most agree that the formal practice should not, however, be neglected. Sharī'a and Haqīqa have, in fact, been compared to the body and spirit of religion and *are said to operate together as two sides of the same coin.* Other Sūfis have made these concepts stages in a series of mystical development, beginning with *Sharī'a* (formal practices of Islam), moving through *Tarīqa* (mystical practices of Sūfism), leading to *Ma'arifa* (divine knowledge, wisdom), and culminating in Haqīqa (immediate experience of the essential reality), though the exact order of these may vary for other Sūfis" (Soileau, 2009).

Schematically, Islam is no more no less than a fragile equilibrium inherited from Jewish Law and Christian Grace. Thus, its inner essence has been crystallized by this Sūfi duality. Islam is, *in fine*, the area of interference between these two opposed sides, and stands in virtue of their coexistence (see figure 4).

Figure 4. Structural duality of Islam

It is Mansûr al-Hallāj[25] (858-922) that was the first to break the structural duality of Islam, opening it to the horizon of excess, of Haqīqa upon Sharī'a, of theopathy upon theology. In one word, *the transcendence of the ecstatic intuition of the Transcendent, in relation to the conceptual Law.* By his locution, „I am the Truth" or „I am the Real" (Anā Al-Haqq), through his extraordinary innovative *Kitab al-Tawasīn* (al-Hallâj, 1913)[26], and, in the end, by his tragical martyrdom, Hallāj was *the condition of possibility*, in a Kantian sense, of a coincidence between the Islamic heritage and Transcendent ecstatic experience. Since this „conversion" does not remain inherent to Islam in the sense that it resorbs it in a

[25] It is a hard task to summarize the life and the oeuvre of Hallâj. The ultimate reference is the four volumes of Massignon, L. 1972. *La passion de Hallâj.* Paris: Gallimard.

[26] See the annex for *Tasîn al-azal wa al-iltibess* (*Tasîn of Eternity and Ambiguity*) one of the most emblematic texts in the history of Islamic mystique.

pure Haqīqa (as we discussed it, $Islam = Sharia + \varepsilon.Haqiqa$) which leads to the radical subtraction of Sharī'a. Postislam is the name of such a resultant. Thus, Hallāj is the first post-muslim in the particular meaning of Mystical Theology.

I will not find better than this magnificent passage of Louis Massigon, summarizing one the most emblematic of Hallāj's writings, *Tasîn of Eternity and Ambiguity*. This passage inscribes Hallāj's *evental* part in the history of Islam. There was indeed *a before and after Hallāj*:

> Two beings, it is said, have been predestined to bear witness to the fact that the One essence of God is inaccessible (by law and in actual fact): Satan (= Iblis) before the Angels in Heaven, and Muhammad before Men on earth; they are heralds, the first of pure angelic nature, commanded to rule an „inferior" material world, the second of pure human nature, committed to a superhuman witnessing of the heart (over and beyond the intellect: *amana*). And this being accomplished, both stopped midway; they reversed the thrust of their zealous love of God's glory, their fondness for the pure idea of a simple Deity. Their proclamation of the *shahada* remained external, they did not assimilate it by uniting with the unifying will of God. At the first Covenant. Iblis refused to consider the idea of a divine Presence's wrapping itself in the lowly and material form of Adam (a prefigure, thus, of the Judgment). At the time of the Nocturnal Ascent, Muhammad, being loo virile, stopped at the threshold of the divine fire, without passively „becoming" Moses' Burning Bush; and Hallaj, who served as a substitute for him after his third *waqfa at* 'Arafat, urges him to go further, beyond the *Qab Qawsayn*, to enter the divine Will's fire even to the point of dying, like the mystical butterfly, and „to fulfill himself in the Object of his love. Muhammad, on his last pilgrimage, at 'Arafat, restored the '*Umra* in the hajj," renewed and cased the prohibiting Law; though he took pity on men not daring to impose on them the heroism of self-sacrifice, which fulfills the Law and Islam, he nevertheless decreed the abolition of the *diya* (and *riba*), and he knew (and said) that the symbolic Sacrifice of Abraham, which he reestablished, gains forgiveness for the multitude only through the intercession of self-sacrificing souls (from 9 *Hijja*, prior to the ritual sacrifice of 10 *Hijja*), who are the apotropaic pillars (*abdal*) of his community. These souls, daring to take issue with the Merciful One (Who offers them for the admiration of His angels), would in the end bring about the unification of men's different forms of worship, not only in spirit, but in actual practice (Hallaj adhered to the material pillar of the rituals, the resurrection of the body), the fulfillment of Islam in a complete gathering together of forgiven humanity. By stopping to return. Iblis brought on the sins of men. And he presides over the disintegration of the material universe; and Muhammad delayed the hour of the destruction and Judgment of men that he was sent to announce.

> And yet Iblis, by suffering the unpardonable damnation of his angelic legalism, arouses humanity to go beyond this threshold of supreme diselection to find Love (Hallaj understands that it is the Law of nature itself that stopped him; he admires its true beauty, which comes from God: that terrible ambiguity of grace, that divine temptation which the heart (not the intellect) must enter in order to find [Love]) (Massignon, 1994, p. 222).

5. Fragments of meditations on Postislam

5.1. First aphorism: Islam versus Postislam

What does it mean to be a Muslim? If it were necessary to condense the formula, one could argue that, symmetrically to the syntagm „to have faith" (*avoir la foi*), one would have to invent a „to have the law" (*avoir la Loi*), no more no less, where the only possible faith in Islam would solely be a legal prescription.

As a corollary, and contrary to a famous passage from the *Epistle to the Romans*, grace (*kharis*) ceases to be superabundant, given sharī'al replacement, exhaustively prescriptive and coercive. Strikingly, a purely restorative counter-revolution. Saint Paul never took place, one would say. The massive psychoanalyses of the Muslim subject, seizing the terrorist horror, miss the essence of his/her mundane manifestation: a disintegration of the Muslim desire in a broad sense. For every theory of the subject engages a theory of desire; and every theory of desire is articulated, dialectically or anti-dialectically, with respect to the law (in this case, the Law = Sharī'a). However, the alienation of the Muslim desire is hardly a phenomenal contingency. To be strictly under the yoke of the Law, fully under the Law, only under the Law − it is so for Islam − the Muslim evades the reign of grace − itself supposed to be subtractive, because *evental*, at least in the Paulinian sense, and generates at the same time the ruin of his/her desire (of his/her 'concupiscence').

Blunted, so it would be, the universalizable singularity of the resurrection of Christ; and restoring a strong form of so-called universal communitarianism: that Muslims have the Law simply implies that the knotting of the *Common* is no longer the race but the void repetition of the Law vis-à-vis its subjects. Here is very briefly the post-Islamic diagnosis. The deconstruction of Islam is nothing other than a reflection on the possibility of grace, or a prototype of grace, patent in the Islamic tradition as a *ε-state*. Postislam tends to expand this *ε-state* to a legitimate and sedimented theory and praxis. In addition, it is exactly the Hallajian point of no return, which is the systematisation and the deduction emanating from the concept of Haqīqa, which inscribes the solution. Grace, in Islam, is the Haqīqa.

5.2. Second aphorism: grace and haqiqa*: a christo-hallajian synthesis*

In the end, what is the essence of Postislam? A re-writing of grace from the standpoint of Haqīqa and *vice versa.* In fact, *the time of the Gospel* is an intermittent suspension of the reign of the Law. Symmetrically, Theopathy acting in the heart of the word springing ineluctably from the Haqīqa. Recall that the Haqīqa, the truth, is classically described (according to Saint Thomas Aquinas, for instance) as an *adequatio rei et intellectus*, that is, in the Sūfi context, the fulgurant divine presence over its dead „impresence" that the letter of the Law presents. This is an adequacy between the enunciated locution of sub-ecstasy (*shat'h*) and the „empirical" reality of the divine mysteries revealed in communion or illumination not mediated by the Law. Because when Hallāj pronounces his creed, „Ana-al-Haqq" ("I am the truth"), he announces the event, the occurrence of such a fragile *adequatio rei and intellectus*, once registered in potency and presentially and immediately effective in act. Grace (*kharis*) suspends the Law by completing it in the gift; the Haqīqa updates the *epoche* (in the Husserlian sense) of the Law by opening it onto the horizon of its closing always revived (by a resurgence of the Law), and whose sense takes shape only by a form of eclecticism or election that is reminiscent of the „free" gift of grace. The son of man becomes son of God in Christian grace; and the servant becomes master or God in the Islamic Haqīqa, as proclaimed by Ibn 'Arabī (2015, p. 58):

> At one time the servant is a lord without a doubt/and at another he is really a servant without a lie.
> If he is a servant, he encompasses the Real/and if he is a lord, he is in a poor state.
> Through his being a servant, he beholds the essence of his self/and with no doubt hopes overflow from him.
> Through his being a lord, he beholds the whole of creation/making demands on him through the domain of Ownership and Kingdom.
> Because of his essence, he cannot answer their demands/for this reason, you see some gnostics weeping.
> So be a servant of a lord and not a lord of his servant/lest you fall, melting in the Fire.

In either case, it is the erratic abrogation and abolition of the Law that initiates the possibility of grace or Haqīqa. Thus, that Jesus could have, *hic et nunc*, purified the paralytic of his sins, in a famous passage from the Gospel according to Mark (2: 1-12). This was considered a heresy by the contents of the Law (the scribes); whereas it was, ultimately, the illumination of grace eternally overhanging the regime of the Law and operating a paradigm shift, an „epistemological break" according to Bachelard / Althusser, or, should we say, a „theopatic break":

> And when he came into Capernaum again after some days, the news wen about that he was in the house.

> And a great number had come together, so that there was no longer room for them, no, not even about the door: and he gave them teaching.
> And four men came to him with one on a bed who had no power of moving.
> And when they were unable to get near him because of all the people, they got the roof uncovered where he was: and when it was broken up, they let down the bed on which the man was.
> And Jesus, seeing their faith, said to him, Son, you have forgiveness for your sins.
> But there were certain of the scribes seated there, and reasoning in their hearts,
> Why does this man say such things? he has no respect for God: from whom does forgiveness come but from God only?
> And Jesus, having knowledge in his spirit of their thoughts, said to them, Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?
> Which is the simpler, to say to a man who is ill, You have forgiveness for your sins, or, Get up, take up your bed, and go?
> But so that you may see that the Son of man has authority for the forgiveness of sins on earth, (he said to the man,)
> I say to you, get up, take up your bed, and go to your house.
> And he got up, and straight away took up the bed and went out before them all, so that they were all full of wonder, and gave glory to God, saying, We have never seen anything like this.

It is in this sense, also, that in the *Epistle to the Romans* (3: 21-30), St. Paul subsumes the regime of the Law to that of universal grace:

> But now without the law there is a revelation of the righteousness of God, to which witness is given by the law and the prophets;
> That is, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, to all those who have faith; and one man is not different from another,
> For all have done wrong and are far from the glory of God;
> And they may have righteousness put to their credit, freely, by his grace, through the salvation which is in Christ Jesus:
> Whom God has put forward as the sign of his mercy, through faith, by his blood, to make clear his righteousness when, in his pity, God let the sins of earlier times go without punishment;
> And to make clear his righteousness now, so that he might himself be upright, and give righteousness to him who has faith in Jesus.
> What reason, then, is there for pride? It is shut out. By what sort of law? of works? No, but by a law of faith.
> For this reason, then, a man may get righteousness by faith without the works of the law.
> Or is God the God of Jews only? is he not in the same way the God of Gentiles? Yes, of Gentiles:

> If God is one; and he will give righteousness because of faith to those who have circumcision, and through faith to those who have not circumcision.

The same structure is manifest in the Haqīqa insofar as, contrary to the Law which is indefinitely attested (in the *shahāda*, testimony) within the Islamic creed (There is no god but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God), faith is lived in the intimacy of the burning presence, and that no *logos* can account for it, except, perhaps, in the form of *traces* that crystallise, on the lips of the Sūfi Alpha, the presence of God coupled with his legal absence. *Mysticism is none other than the theory of the practice of the illegal presence of God.* The universal monotheism and monism of Hallāj and Saint Paul echo this idea that the *regional* aspects of the Law lack the archetype of an absolute democratisation of the divine presence, which can potentially be experienced without mediation, rites or submission. This is how Alain Badiou, in his *Saint Paul. The Foundation of Universalism* summarises Paul's orientation, which is thoroughly consonant with that of Al Hallāj:

> The ontological structure underlying this conviction (though Paul has no interest whatsoever in ontology) is that no evental One can be the One of a particularity. The universal is the only possible correlate for the One. The general apparatus of a truth contains the One (divine transcendence, monotheism, according to the Pauline fable), the universal (the whole of humanity, both circumcised and uncircumcised), and the singular (the Christ-event). The particular, which pertains to opinion, custom, law, cannot be inscribed in it.
>
> What can measure up to the universality of an address? Not legality, in any case. The law is always predicative, particular, and partial. Paul is perfectly aware of the laws unfailingly „statist" character. By „statist" I mean that which enumerates, names, and controls the parts of a situation. If a truth is to surge forth eventally, it must be nondenumerable, impredictable, uncontrollable. This is precisely what Paul calls grace: that which occurs without being couched in any predicate, that which is translegal, that which happens to everyone without an assignable reason. Grace is the opposite of law insofar as it is what comes *without being due.*
>
> This is a profound insight of Pauls, which, through its universal and illegal understanding of the One, undoes every particular or communitarian incorporation of the subject, as well as every juridical or contractual approach to its constitutive division. *That which founds a subject cannot be what is due to it.* For this foundation binds itself to that which is declared in a radical contingency. If one understands man`s humanity in terms of his subjective capacity, there is, strictly speaking, nothing whatsoever like a „right" of man (Badiou, 2003, p. 76).

6. Critical horizons

Considering the equation: $\boldsymbol{Postislam = Islam - Law = Haq\bar{\imath}qa}$, the most difficult task consists in the elaboration of a *theory of praxis* of Haqīqa, unleashed from Law's injunctions, even though, practically speaking, they persist at funding the framework of faith. If Postislam is an integral mystique, based on the *possibility of a permanent theophany*, indefinitely experienced throughout ecstatic Theopathy, it might appear lightly strong to assume such a possibility without the establishment of a concrete *modus operandi* leading to theophany, especially in the case of mystical experience which is, by definition, fuzzy and ineffable. Briefly, the possibility of Postislam as a theory is conditioned by a rigorous formulation of an *epistemology of revelation and incarnation*. In fact, this coincides with some purposes of the innovative systematical project of Jean-Luc Marion (2008).

Furthermore, the *deconstruction* of Islam's structural duality promoted by the Postislamic project might reboot, formally and objectively, anti-immanent themes (the form of transcendence of the Sūfī's Theopathy, the dialectical definition of the problem, etc.). This fog could be overcome by *non-philosophical tools* developed by François Laruelle. The core of Postislam, i.e. the integral mystique, would have to formally define its machinery (isolating non-dialectically the Haqīqa) and, ontologically, to *dualyze* correctly its theology of the One. According to Laruelle, the dual – as it differentiates itself from the double–, is the „fundamental matrix of non-philosophy that defines a general order founded upon the being-foreclosed of the One; source of irreversibility and unilaterality between the experience of the immanence of the One and the object to which it is foreclosed, the World. Whereas the dual is still not unilateral duality (which sets cloning in play), it is opposed par excellence to philosophy's form as mixture founded upon reversibility and reciprocity" (Laruelle and al., 2013, p. 55.). Postislam must be an immanent theory of the possibility of non-dialectical – and thus subtracted to Sharī'a – access to the One.

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PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN A FLUID PANDEMIC CONTEXT. MEASURING ACADEMIC WORRIES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: INITIAL VALIDATION OF A SCALE

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Abstract
The aim of the paper is to test the validity and highlight the psychometric properties of a scale about the academic worries of students in the pandemic context (Pandemic Academic Worries among University Students scale - PAWAUS scale), following a quantitative research study consisting of a self-administered questionnaire within a university in north-eastern Romania in May 2021. The sample comprised 282 undergraduate and master students in the Social Work field. The factor analysis performed shows an initial validity of the PAWAUS scale. Generally, the findings of this study indicate that the students adapted rapidly and (relatively) fluidly to the new context but reported worries related to their academic and professional path. The premise from which we started was the following: the Social Work students follow, in the pandemic context, a speciality where the combination of theoretical knowledge with practical skills even from the undergraduate period is essential, which may contribute to the formation of their professional identity. The second objective of the paper consisted of analysing the emotional impact of the pandemic among the Social Work students using a recently-developed tool – PEIS (Ballou et al., 2020). Through the specific analysis of the relationship between the two scales, we have identified that the worries of the Social Work students are influenced significantly by the emotional impact generated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Social Work students, academic concern, professional identity, Covid-19, fluid identity

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Résumé
L'objectif de l'article est de tester la validité et de mettre en évidence les propriétés psychométriques d'une échelle sur les inquiétudes académiques des étudiants dans le contexte de la pandémie (Pandemic Academic Worries Among University Students scale - PAWAUS), à la suite d'une étude de recherche quantitative consistant en un auto-questionnaire administré dans une université du nord-est de la Roumanie en mai 2021. L'échantillon comprenait 282 étudiants de premier cycle et de master dans le domaine du travail social. L'analyse factorielle réalisée montre une première validité de l'échelle PAWAUS. De manière générale, les résultats de cette étude indiquent que les étudiants se sont adaptés rapidement et (relativement) avec fluidité au nouveau contexte mais ont signalé des inquiétudes liées à leur cheminement accadémique et professionnel. La prémisse initiale de laquelle nous sommes partis était la suivante: les étudiants en travail social suivent, dans le contexte de la pandémie, une spécialité où la combinaison de connaissances théoriques avec des compétences pratiques même dès le premier cycle est essentielle, ce qui peut contribuer à la formation de leur identité professionnelle. Le deuxième objectif de l'article consistait à analyser l'impact émotionnel de la pandémie sur les étudiants en travail social à l'aide d'un outil récemment développé - PEIS (Ballou et al., 2020). Grâce à l'analyse spécifique de la rélation entre les deux échelles, nous avons identifié que les inquiétudes des étudiants en travail social sont influencées de manière significative par l'impact émotionnel généré par la pandémie de Covid-19.

Mots-clés: Etudiants en travail social, préoccupation académique, identité professionnelle, Covid-19, identité fluide

Rezumat
Obiectivul central al articolului este de a testa validatatea și de a evidenția proprietățile psihometrice ale unei scale despre îngrijorările pe plan academic, în context pandemic, în rândul studenților (scala PAWAUS), în urma efectuării unei cercetări cantitative, prin intermediul unui chestionar auto-administrat, în cadrul unei universități din partea de nord-est a României, în mai 2021. Eșantionul a cuprins 282 de studenți care urmau programe de studii de licență și masterat în domeniul Asistenței Sociale. Analiza factorială efectuată arată o validare inițială a scalei PAWAUS. La nivel general, rezultatele acestui studiu indică faptul că studenții s-au adaptat rapid și (relativ) fluid la noul context, raportând însă îngrijorări legate de traseul lor academic și profesional. Premisa de la care am pornit a fost că studenții de la Asistență socială urmează, în context pandemic, o specializare în care îmbinarea cunoștințelor teoretice cu abilitățile de ordin practic încă din perioada studiilor universitare este esențială, fapt care poate contribui la formarea identității lor profesionale. Un alt doilea obiectiv al articolului a constat în analizarea impactului emoțional al pandemiei în rândul studenților de la Asistență socială, apelând la un instrument recent construit – PEIS (Ballou et al., 2020). Prin analiza particulară a relației dintre cele două scale am identificat faptul că îngrijorările studenților de la Asistență socială sunt influențate semnificativ de impactul emoțional generat de pandemia de Covid-19.

Cuvinte cheie: studenți la asistență socială, îngrijorare academică, identitate profesională, Covid-19, identitate fluidă

1. Introduction

The pandemic COVID-19 is unprecedented in what concerns the impact on the education system because it imposed the forced and very rapid passage to online learning. To ensure the students' safety, the senate of „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Iași (UAIC) decided on March 12, 2020, to have all didactic activities (course and seminar and final evaluations online. This decision led to a significant deviation from the typical educational experience of the students by giving up an essential component of Social Work training: the direct work with the beneficiaries performed during the practicum/volunteering hours.

Though essential to control the infection and protect the population, the measures taken to manage the pandemic worldwide produce economic, social, and psychological effects (Brooks et al., 2020; Pfefferbaum & North, 2020; Taylor et al., 2020a, 2020b; Taylor & Asmundson, 2020, Farris et al., 2021), are still not fully understood and investigated.

Clinical research and observations suggest that during pandemics, many people display manifestations associated with stress or anxiety, including fear of getting infected, fear of getting in contact with possibly contaminated objects or surfaces, fear of foreigners potentially carrying the disease (disease-related xenophobia), fear of the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic, traumatic stress symptoms related to a pandemic or compulsive data collection regarding possible threats related to the pandemic (Taylor et al., 2020a, 2020b). Concerning the last aspect, the World Health Organisation (2020) features the current situation of the Covid-19 pandemic as a „massive infodemic" characterised by an over-abundance of information – some accurate, others misleading – making it harder for people to find reliable sources of information when they need it. It may influence considerably the perception of dangers associated with diseases, on the one hand, or minimise them alarmingly, on the other hand (i.e., even ignoring the condition or being indifferent to it (Simon & Camargo, 2021). Lack of information and misinformation, often escalated by the sensationalistic titles in the media has been shown to fuel health-related fears and phobias (Taylor & Asmundson, 2004).

The closure of university campuses – a measure necessary to mitigate the spread of the virus, protect the students and the teaching and auxiliary staff – had negative effects on the didactic process, amplified by uncertainty regarding their reopening. Students had to adapt to a new learning way rapidly during the semester, which required the quick acquisition of technical skills, the purchase of computers, audio-visual equipment and Internet services. Another effect generated by the closure of campuses was moving back home. Hence, students changed the learning setting with an inadequate one in many cases (i.e., poor Internet connection, lack of personal space adjusted to study in the shared family area, worries related to their health state and that of the loved ones, without access to libraries and reading halls) (Driessen et al., 2020, Baltà-Salvador, 2021). Furthermore, students are also lacking the opportunity to build a professional community of social workers through practical activities and social interaction.

The degree and way in which the Social Work students effectively coped with these changes have been little studied, despite acknowledging that understanding how personal experiences and affective reactions influence judgment and professional conduct represent a fundamental skill in Social Work (Apgar & Cadmus, 2021).

Indeed, even during non-pandemic periods, young adults going through a transition period marked by instability are more prone to depression, anxiety, and stress than the general population (Arnett, 2007, Beiter et al., 2015). Developing to adulthood is a period dominated by uncertainties and unpredictability. When we add uncertainties and worries related to health, social and economic stability, their effects may impact negatively on the youth's wellbeing (Glowacz & Schmits, 2020, APA, 2020). Though they may develop creative solutions and new skills to cope with the pandemic, youths are still the most affected psychologically (APA, 2020). Communication via digital media causes anxiety, and it can never replace face-to-face communication. Distance learning and remote exams may increase the level of uncertainty and stress, either because they involve new and unknown teaching and assessment methods for students or because remote monitoring and communication (i.e., with and by teachers) have not been straightforward and structured enough (Glowacz & Schmits, 2020).

The first studies carried out on students during the pandemic indicate that the primary sources of anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic have been academic activity delays, loss of social support, economic pressure (i.e., loss or reduction of family income) and the fact that the family have or may have contracted the SARS-COV2 virus (Cao et al., 2020). It negatively impacted the educational development and the psychological well-being of millions of students worldwide (Paluszek et al., 2020; Taylor & Asmundson, 2020).

Students face significant worries and uncertainties regarding the potential consequences of online learning on their educational development in the medium run, and employment opportunities after graduation in the long run. These worries may cause anxiety (Cao et al., 2020) and are exacerbated to a certain extent by economic challenges like financial instability and fears related to income loss. Unstable family income and/or job loss by one or both parents can be very worrisome for students (Cao et al., 2020).

Social workers are considered essential or first-line workers during crises (Alston et al., 2018). During this pandemic, social workers had to adapt quicker than ever to face all challenges. However, as the world keeps on fighting against the COVID-19 difficulties, the literature includes only a handful of studies on the degree and way in which Social Work students, especially those who seek employment during the pandemic, manage their adjustment process. Our investigation wishes to highlight the primary worries affecting university students as future Social Work professionals. Research has shown that students face high levels of stress and are more likely to develop stress-related physical and mental disorders (Hirsch et al., 2019; Leppink et al., 2016). The perceived risk may have a significant influence on the involvement of youths in the educational process (Shi, 2019).

The most invoked risk factors for students include transition towards a new environment far from home, family and friends, the pressure generated by the volume of earning tasks, financial and future-related concerns, namely the transition towards labour market (Shi, 2019). The „COVID Stress Syndrome" (Taylor et al., 2020a) is a proposed construct reflecting the multiple and varied dimensions of the suffering caused by the SARS-COV2 virus. Researchers who describe psychological disorders associated with COVID-19 wonder whether anxiety is correlated with the effects of the pandemic on the progress of the learning process and the professional path, career opportunities and transition towards labour market or caused by social distancing because of generalised quarantine (Cao et al., 2020).

2. Brief considerations about fluid identity and professional identity formation among Social Work students

Being a Social Work student means, among others, covering a preliminary stage of professional socialisation (Paterson et al., 2002), training and acquiring skills necessary for working in multidisciplinary and interprofessional teams, which also reflects on professional identity formation. In addition, the scientific literature concerning this aspect has developed significantly in recent years (Best & Williams, 2019). When discussing professional identity overall, we can analyse „the sense of being a professional" (Paterson et al., 2002, p. 6) alone, without detailing the multivalence of the concept.

While debating the aspects characterising the professional identity of social workers, Webb (2016) pointed out that „professional identity is not a stable entity; it is an ongoing process of interpretation and customisation which is shaped by contextual workplace factors". Starting from this idea, we may consider professional identity as a „fluid" identity, thus supporting the statements of Du and Chan (2021), who pinpointed that „identity is not static, but fluid as it is constantly changing and modified in different interactive relationships" (p. 303). Furthermore, the same authors highlight that the concept of identity „is often fluid, as different individuals will have different interpretations about their own expectations and practices, which will produce different results, such as degree of satisfaction, frustration, or self-reconciliation." (Du & Chan, 2021, p. 303). Whereas other studies focus on the analysis of professional identity among social workers already activating in the field and having faced the pandemic context (González et al., 2021, Du & Chan, 2021), we believe it is essential to focus on the university students, in the middle of their professional identity formation. Moreover, Webb (2016) stated, in this respect, „identity formation is viewed as more interactive and more problematic than the relatively straightforward adoption of the role or category of *professional social worker*". Not least, we can view the Covid-19 pandemic as a highly fluid period at the society level, marked by deep changes in our opinion of all elements making up the social life.

Other related theoretical guidelines emphasize the role of a social identity as a resource for managing psychological health issues and also to professionally integrate in an organizational setting (i.e., social identity theory, organizational identification Tajfel, 1978; Asforth & Mael, 1989, van Dick, 2001). More specifically, there are several ways in how the development of a complex academic and professional identity can affect young students in the Social Work domain, both socially and psychologically (Leach et al., 2008). For example, research results emphasize that a specific identity with a group can intensify identification (i.e., with the academic and professional group of students) and in return this allows them to easily and naturally develop prosocial behaviours, increase well-being, and can help ensure the psychological need of being valued and increase self-esteem (Cruwys et al., 2014). Other similar resources emphasize theoretically and empirically that the lack of social identity and social identification can thwart the knowledge about social relations and increase existential anxiety (Haslam, Jetten, Postmes, & Haslam, 2009; Sani et al., 2012).

3. Participants, research methods and procedure

We conducted the investigation featured in this paper within „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Iași (UAIC), the Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences (FPSPS), the Department of Sociology and Social Work, in the period 17 May 2021 - 30 May 2021. We collected the data in the last two weeks of didactic activity of the second semester (the academic year 2020-2021) before the weeks dedicated to final assessments. In addition, the study started approximately a year after the end of the lockdown generated by the spread of COVID-19. The emergency state period in Romania lasted between 16 March 2020 and 15 May 2020. We also point out that the didactic activity of the second semester within the academic year before the study (2019-2020) began on-site in the first three weeks. However, the UAIC Senate decided on 12 March 2020 to organise the courses, seminars, and final assessments online. From that moment until the present, successive decisions made by the faculty or university management have kept the online regime; the pandemic context and the health crisis have not allowed the safe reprisal of on-site didactic activities.

Given this background, we collected the data online using the self-administered questionnaire method (on Google Forms); the participation of students was voluntary, based on informed consent, without any material and/or symbolical benefits. At the same time, we observed the research ethics and deontology principles; the answers were confidential and anonymous; we did not collect various data allowing the individual identification of the subjects. Additionally, we reassured the participants that we would analyse their answers globally, not individually.

The study sample, whose characteristics are featured in Table 1, comprised 282 students (n) following study programmes in the Social Work field (SW), both bachelor's studies - BSW (n = 213, 75.5%), and master studies - MSW (n = 69, 24.5%). Among all students, 20 were males (7.1%) and 262 females (92.9%). The participants' age ranges between 18 and 59 (a mean of 22.55 and standard deviation of 5.95). Among the undergraduate students (BSW), the age mean was 20.35 years old (std. dev. = 0.95), while among the master students within our study - MSW the mean was 29.33 years old (std. dev. = 9.03). Concerning the sample distribution by the year of study, 37.6% (n = 80) were in the first year BSW and 40.6% (n = 28) in the first year MSW, 32.4% (n = 69) in the second year BSW and 59.4% (n = 41) in the second year MSW – final year of the master studies, while 30% in the third year BSW – final year of the bachelor's studies (n = 64). Hence, considering the findings and in relation with the general characteristics of the population studied, we note that the sample may be considered representative for undergraduate and master students in the Social Work field, within UAIC Iași, FPSPS.

Also, we have measured the academic achievement among the SW students in the last semester prior the research has been conducted by using a ratio scale. Thus, most respondents obtained in the first semester means ranging between 9 and 10 (n = 133, 47.2%), followed by those with means between 8 and 8.99 (n = 103, 36.5%), between 7 and 7.99 (n = 37, 13.1%), between 6 and 6.99 (n = 6, 2.1%), and under 6 (n = 3, 1.1%). Concerning the residence area, over half of the students reported living in urban areas in the past year (n = 156, 55.3%), while 44.7% lived in rural areas (n = 126). Approximately two thirds of the respondents reported living with their family in the last 12 months (n = 187, 66.3%), while 19.5% lived in a rent-based system (n = 55). In exchange, the weightings of those who continued living in students' dorms (n = 19, 6.7%) or in their own place – excluding living with the family or in students' dorms, in a rent-based systems (n = 21, 7.4%) were significantly lower. The mean of monthly income available to students for various expenses, scholarships, wages or received amounts included, was Lei 1418 (n = 236, std. dev. = 1176.26).

Table 1.
Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	*N*	*% or Mean (Std. dev.)*
Gender		
Male	20	7.1%
Female	262	92.9%
Cycle of studies		
Bachelor's degree (BSW)	213	75.5%
Master studies (MSW)	69	24.5%
Age of respondents	282	22.55 (5.95)
Age of respondents BSW	213	20.35 (0.95)
Age of respondents MSW	69	29.33 (9.03)
Year of study BSW		
First year	80	37.6%
Second year	69	32.4%
Third year	64	30%
Year of study MSW		
First year	28	40.6%

Second year	41	59.4%
Area of residence in the last year		
Urban	156	55.3%
Rural	126	44.7%
Residential status in the last year [a]		
With the family	187	66.3%
In students' dorms	19	6.7%
In a rent-based system	55	19.5%
In their own place (excluding family, students' dorms, or rent-based systems)	21	7.4%
Academic achievement in previous semester [b]		
Between 9 and 10 grades	133	47.2%
Between 8 and 8.99 grades	103	36.5%
Between 7 and 7.99 grades	37	13.1%
Between 6 and 6.99 grades	6	2.1%
Below 6 grades	3	1.1%
Income	236[c]	1418 lei[d] (1176.26)

Notes. [a] **Q**. Where have you lived mostly within the past 12 months? Check the box with the space where you have mostly lived during the past year.
[b] **Q.** In what interval was your grade point average in the previous semester?
[c] 46 respondents provided no answer
[d] Approx. 287 €
Std. dev. = Standard deviation
Source: Authors' own work

We analysed the data statistically using IBM® SPSS® Statistics Version 20.

4. Tools and data analysis

In the following lines, we feature the tools used within our investigation and data analysis.

a. Pandemic Academic Worries among University Students. An analysis on Social Work students

To analyse the level of students' worries from an academic and professional perspective, we developed a scale of Pandemic Academic Worries among University Students (PAWAUS scale) comprising five items, measured through a Likert scale, structured on five levels: from 1 (= „to a very great extent") to 5 (= „to a very small extent"). We designed and structured this scale on one dimension; subsequently, we assessed its psychometric properties. In the aggregate interpretation of data, the scores obtained ranged between a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 25. Low scores indicate a high level of worries, while high scores highlight a low level of worries. Table 2 features a series of descriptive statistical data concerning the PAWAUS scale.

A certified translator transposed the scale into English; hence, any other researcher interested in the topic may use it (Appendix 1).

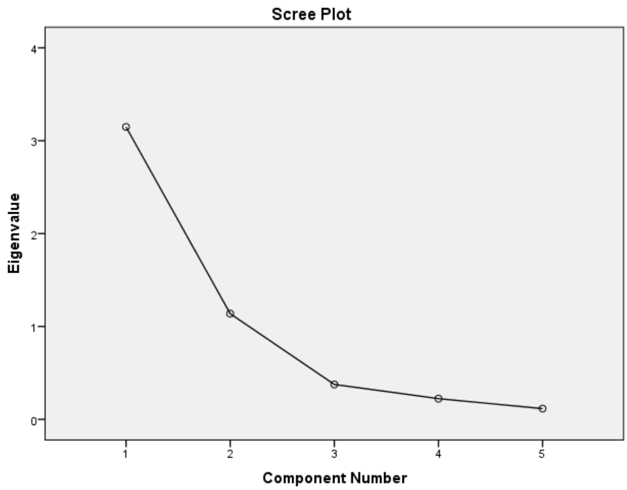
Table 2.
The descriptive statistics of the PAWAUS scale

Item[a]	Mean[d]	Std. dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis	Minimum	Maximum	ITC[b]
Social Work University students (n = 282)							
1.Finalisation of the study year	2.70	1.32	0.21	-1.09	1	5	0.786[c]
2.Finalisation of undergraduate/master studies	2.52	1.37	0.44	-1.03	1	5	0.805[c]
3.Decrease in the academic training level	2.25	1.18	0.77	-0.25	1	5	0.836[c]
4.Lack of possibilities to exercise practical skills	2.02	1.21	1.14	0.38	1	5	0.814[c]
5.Finding a job in the training field	1.99	1.31	1.17	0.14	1	5	0.718[c]

Notes. [a] **Q.** Given the pandemic situation of the past year, on what extent are you concerned about the following aspects?
[b] ITC = Item Total Correlation [Pearson Correlation]
[c] $p < .000$
[d] The lower the score means (close to 1), the higher level of students' concern level regarding the aspects measured
Source: Authors' own work

b. Exploratory Factorial Analysis, Reliability and Validity of the PAWAUS scale

To underline whether in the PAWAUS scale one may identify one or more subscales, we performed an exploratory factorial analysis with varimax rotation. By applying, initially, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy (= .712) and a Bartlett`s Test of Sphericity ($\chi2$ (10) = 936.41, p = .000), we concluded that the exploratory factorial analysis can be applied. As the Graph clearly shows (Graph 1), the scale can be structured on one dimension, featuring one factor with Eigenvalue exceeding 1 by far.



Graph 3: Scree plot of the exploratory factorial analysis of PAWAUS scale.

Source: Authors' own work

Furthermore, as illustrated in Table 3, the extraction of data was performed using principal component analysis, which pointed out that a factor is highlighted (the variance score is 62.96%, much higher than the second variance score – 22.75%).

Table 3.

Factorial Structure Analysis for the PAWAUS Scale (n = 282)

Component	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.148	62.964	62.964	2.250	44.993	44.993
2	1.138	22.757	85.721	2.036	40.728	85.721

Source: Authors' own work

Moreover, as we have shown in the correlation matrix (Table 4), all the five items are correlated, the coefficients obtained are statistically significant, which confirms a linear relationship between the variables.

Table 4.

Correlation matrix between the variables of the PAWAUS scale (n = 282)

Item	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5
Item 1		0.881[a]	0.530 [a]	0.393 [a]	0.266 [a]
Item 2			0.524 [a]	0.428 [a]	0.307 [a]
Item 3				0.726 [a]	0.569 [a]
Item 4					0.720 [a]
Item 5					

Note. [a] p < .000

Source: Authors' own work

After processing the data, we have concluded that the coefficients concerning the factor loadings are high (Table 5). We conducted scale rehabilitation by analysing internal consistency; Cronbach's alpha score (α) for the unidimensional PAWAUS scale was high (Cronbach α = 0.849).

Table 5.
Factor loadings and communalities for the PAWAUS scale (n = 282)

	Factor Loadings	Communalities
Item		
1.Finalisation of the study year	.77	.937
2.Finalisation of undergraduate/master studies	.79	.925
3.Decrease in the academic training level	.85	.756
4.Lack of possibilities to exercise practical skills	.82	.858
5.Finding a job in the training field	.71	.809
Eigenvalues	3.14	
% of variance	62.96	

Source: Authors' own work

c. Pandemic Emotional Impact among Social Work University students – PEIS

The second tool used in the investigation is the Pandemic Emotional Impact Scale (PEIS) developed by Ballou, Gray & Palsson (2020). Initially, they validated the tool on a sample of 1500 subjects, representative for the population of the United States of America (Ballou et al., 2020). The scale includes 16 items, structured by the authors on two dimensions (Factor 1 – „Emotional Effects" and Factor 2 – „Pragmatic Worries"). Compared to the proposal of the PEIS authors, who measured the items using a 5-level Likert scale from 0 (= „Not at all") to 4 (= „Extremely"), we applied a number system from 1 (= „Not at all") to 5 (= „Extremely"). Furthermore, in the text of the question, we did not relate to the „last four weeks", like the authors of the tool (Ballou et al., 2020, p. 6), but to the „last months", thus not imposing a strict timeframe. On this background, following our approach, the total, global scores obtained ranged between 16 and 80; low scores indicate the lack of the emotional impact of the pandemic among the study participants, while high scores show high, extreme emotional impact. A certified translator transposed the items into Romanian (Appendix 2). Consequently, by applying this tool, we wished to measure the emotional impact generated by pandemic on a specific subgroup of population (i.e., the Social Work students). Table 6 comprises a descriptive analysis of the items within PEIS.

Table 6.
The descriptive statistics of the PEIS

Item[a]	Mean[b]	Std. dev.	Factors[c]
Social Work University students (n = 282)			
1.More worried about your finances	2.74	1.11	F2
2.More anxious or ill at ease	2.59	1.26	F2
3.More difficulty concentrating	2.82	1.23	F1

Item[a]	Mean[b]	Std. dev.	Factors[c]
4.Being less productive	2.88	1.26	F1
5.More worried about your personal health and safety	3.10	1.23	F2
6.Being more bored	3.08	1.34	F1
7.More difficulty sleeping	2.91	1.46	F1
8.Feeling more lonely or isolated	2.77	1.38	F1
9.Feeling more down or depressed	2.69	1.34	F1
10.More worried about getting necessities like groceries or medications	2.19	1.14	F2
11.More worried about the health and safety of family members or friends	3.26	1.29	F2
12.Feeling more frustrated about not being able to do what you usually enjoy doing	3.22	1.26	F1
13.More worried about possible breakdown of society	2.92	1.25	F2
14.Feeling angrier or more irritated	2.71	1.32	F1
15.Feeling that the future seems darker or scarier than before	2.83	1.31	F2
16.Feeling more grief or sense of loss	2.56	1.32	F1

Notes. [a] We have used the following formula **Q.** How much has your wellbeing and functioning been different in the following ways in the last months, compared to the way it was before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic?
[b] The lower the means (close to 1), the lower the impact emotional of the pandemic
[c] F1 = „Emotional Effects"; F2 = „Pragmatic Worries"
Source: Authors' own work

The reliability analysis performed on PEIS regarding all 16 items, as well as the two subscales making up the tool – „Emotional Effects" (9 items) and „Pragmatic Worries" (7 items), indicate high Cronbach's alpha coefficients, as illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7.
Reliability Statistics on PEIS scale and PEIS subscales (n = 282)

Scale/ subscale	Cronbach`s alpha	N of Items
PEIS	0.942	16
PEIS/ Emotional Effects	0.926	9
PEIS/ Pragmatic Worries	0.862	7

Source: Authors' own work

d. The relationship between the PAWAUS scale and PEIS

Subsequently, we analysed the association between the scale regarding the students' academic and professional worries and PEIS, with the corresponding subscales, calculating the coefficients of Pearson's Correlation. Hence, we identified low but statistically significant correlations (Table 8).

Table 8.
Pearson correlations between variables of the study (n = 282)

Scale/ subscale	1	2	3	4
1.PAWAUS		-0.341[a b]	-0.315 [a b]	-0.338 [a b]
2.PEIS			0.966 [a]	0.923 [a]
3.PEIS/ Emotional Effects				0.793 [a]
4.PEIS/ Pragmatic Worries				

Notes. [a] $p < .000$
[b] The coefficients obtained are negative because the low scores from the scale concerning the professional and academic worries (PAWAUS scale) indicate a high level of worries recorded among students, while the low scores related PEIS indicate a low emotional impact of the pandemic on the population studied.
Source: Authors' own work

Given how the measuring scales were designed (as described above), the Pearson's correlation coefficients that we have obtained suggest the existence of statistically significant correlations between the variables studied. Hence, students who report high levels of worry experience a high emotional impact generated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the same students face emotional effects generated by the pandemic (i.e., they are sadder, depressed, anxious, bored; they have a hard time focusing, are less productive; they feel increasingly alone and isolated). They also report high pragmatic worries (i.e., they are more worried regarding financial aspects, health state, personal security, the health and safety of family members and a potential collapse of the society).

5. Conclusions, discussions, and future directions

The forced shift from on-site to online education had significant repercussions on the higher education specialities and fields where the applicative side dominates. Such an example is Social Work, on which we have focused in our investigation because it is a field where students have to combine the theoretical and practical skills even from the undergraduate period. In addition, our concerns as authors and researchers, dedicated to analysing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on university students in general (Apostol, 2020, Apostol & Netedu, 2020) and Social Work students (Rădoi et al. 2021, Apostol & Vasiliu, 2021) are salient.

As they were building an academic and professional identity, university students had to face sudden changes in their view of life. They had to adapt to all these changes rapidly (to continue their social and educational path) despite all obstacles and challenges generated by the pandemic. For almost four semesters in a row, Social Work students have had to observe the rules set for preventing and stopping the spread of the SARS-COV-2 virus, which has involved (almost implicitly) the transfer of all didactic and practicum activities in the online setting. In such a tremendously fluid context, we have wondered about the extent to which Social Work students are concerned with their professional and academic future (i.e., the process of building their professional identity).

Thus, we created the Pandemic Academic Worries among University Students scale (PAWAUS). Through this paper, we tested the initial validity and highlighted its psychometric properties. As the data analysis has revealed, the scale proposed by us is valid, with good internal consistency, thus recommending its configuration on one dimension. Given the relevant difference between the two variance scores on the two components of the scale (Table 3), we believe it is more efficient to design a unidimensional PAWAUS scale. As the descriptive data analysis has underlined, another argument refers to the high coefficients obtained by correlating the items with the total score (Item Total Pearson Correlation – Table 2). Thus, we found a high similarity between them, which shows that the PAWAUS scale may be structured on one dimension. When configuring the items, we measured both the academic and the professional worries. An explanation is that students are in the middle of forming their professional identity in the academic context, marked in the last two years by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Therefore, we recommend the application of the scale to various populations of students (to test its validity in other educational contexts, too) to any other researcher interested in the topic. Furthermore, we suggest applying the scale during the semester, but not in the period of final evaluations or exams (students are more likely to report acute academic and professional worries).

The second significant objective of our paper consisted of analysing the emotional impact of the pandemic among the Social Work students using a recently validated tool – PEIS (Ballou et al., 2020). Though we only performed a reliability analysis, obtaining a similar score to that reported by the authors Ballou, Gray & Palsson (2020), pen the future, we wish to study the factor structure of PEIS, too. In this paper, we used the version proposed by the authors, who dimensioned the scale on two factors (Emotional Effects & Pragmatic Worries). Whereas we made minor adjustments to questions and scale numbering, we did not observe any modifications of the psychometric properties of PEIS. After correlating PEIS and PAWAUS, we have identified that the worries of the Social Work students are influenced significantly by the emotional impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The findings of this study indicate that university students have adapted rapidly and (relatively) fluidly to the new context. However, students report worries related to their academic and professional paths. The Social Work students have mentioned significant concerns regarding their capacity of providing adequate social care services, considering the challenges generated by the shift towards the online learning system.

As a future direction, we propose to get a better insight into the students' academic and professional worries and the correlation with their wellbeing. At the same time, we consider approaching this research topic through a qualitative endeavour, following the model of existing studies performed among Social Work professionals.

Appendix 1

PANDEMIC ACADEMIC WORRIES AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS scale

(PAWAUS scale)

PAWAUS scale in Romanian language

In conditiile situatiei pandemice din ultimul an de zile, in ce masura va ingrijoreaza urmatoarele aspecte?

	În foarte mare măsură	**În mare măsură**	**Nici în mare, nici în mică măsură**	**În mică măsură**	**În foarte mica măsură**
1.Finalizarea anului de studio					
2.Finalizarea studiilor de licență/ masterat					
3.Scăderea nivelului de pregătire academică					
4.Lipsa posibilităților de exersare a abilităților practice					
5.Găsirea unui loc de muncă in domeniul de pregatire					

PAWAUS scale translated in English language

Given the pandemic situation of the past year, on what extent are you concerned about the following aspects?

	To a very great extent	**To a great extent**	**To a moderate extent**	**To a slight extent**	**To a very small extent**
1.Finalisation of the study year					
2.Finalisation of undergraduate/master studies					
3.Decrease in the academic training level					
4.Lack of possibilities to exercise practical skills					
5.Finding a job in the training field					

Appendix 2

THE PANDEMIC EMOTIONAL IMPACT SCALE – PEIS (Ballou et al., 2020)

PEIS Translated in Romanian language

Cât de mult vi s-au schimbat starea de bine și rutina zilnică în ultimele luni din punctele de vedere de mai jos, în comparație cu starea de dinainte de pandemia COVID-19?

	Deloc	**Puțin**	**Moderat**	**Mult**	**Extrem de mult**
1.Mai îngrijorat/ă în legătură cu banii					
2.Mai neliniștit/ă; nu reușesc să mă adun					
3.Îmi este mai greu să mă concentrez					
4.Sunt mai puțin productiv/ă					
5.Mai îngrijorat/ă în legătură cu sănătatea și siguranța personale					
6.Sunt mai plictisit/ă					
7.Stau mai prost cu somnul					
8.Mă simt mai singur/ă sau mai izolat/ă					
9.Mă simt mai trist/ă și deprimat/ă					
10.Mai îngrijorat/ă în legătură cu procurarea nevoilor de bază, precum cumpărăturile sau medicamentele					
11.Mai îngrijorat/ă în legătură cu sănătatea și siguranța membrilor familiei sau prietenilor -					
12.Mai frustrat/ă de faptul că nu pot face tot ce îmi place să fac de obicei					
13.Mai îngrijorat/ă în legătură cu un posibil colaps al societății					
14.Mă simt mai furios/oasă sau mai iritat/ă					
15.Cred că viitorul pare mai întunecat sau mai înfricoșător decât înainte					
16. Mă încearcă, mai mult decât înainte, un sentiment de durere sau de pierdere					

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IDENTITIES AND CRISES. THE SOCIAL WORKER, A PROFESSIONAL OF SOCIAL INTERVENTION

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Abstract
The global crisis caused by the spread of COVID-19 disease is a difficult period for humanity, apart from other catastrophes, such as floods, fires, the refugees' conditions etc. The social effects are immediate, such as: major changes in people's relationships, lifestyle and the quality of their lives. Prolonged isolation becomes extremely stressful to people and it can reach serious mental illnesses .The mass media points out that in a pandemic, many parents turn to counselling sessions because their children have became neurotic. The online courses have a major effect on pupils' psyche, with the risk of emotional disturbances that may occur due to overexposure to the screen, isolation, repressed emotions and not discussing with parents or friends. This article reveals effective interventions of the school social worker in order to get out of the crisis.

Keywords: crisis intervention, school social worker, online school, cyberbullying, suicide.

Résumé
La crise mondiale causée par la propagation de la maladie COVID-19 est une période difficile pour l'humanité, en dehors d'autres catastrophes, telles que les inondations, les incendies, les conditions des réfugiés, etc. Les effets sociaux sont immédiats, tels que : des changements majeurs dans les relations, le mode de vie et la qualité de vie des gens. L'isolement prolongé devient extrêmement stressant pour les gens et peut atteindre de graves maladies mentales. Les médias de masse soulignent que lors d'une pandémie, de nombreux parents se tournent vers des séances de conseil parce que leurs enfants sont devenus névrosés. Les cours en ligne ont un effet majeur sur le psychisme des élèves, avec le risque de troubles émotionnels pouvant survenir en raison d'une surexposition à l'écran, d'isolement, d'émotions refoulées et de ne pas discuter avec les parents ou les amis. Cet article révèle les interventions efficaces de l'assistante sociale scolaire pour sortir de la crise.

Mots-clés: intervention de crise, travailleur social scolaire, école en ligne, cyberintimidation, suicide.

Rezumat
Criza globală provocată de răspândirea bolii COVID - 19, reprezintă o perioadă dificilă pentru omenire, la care se adaugă și alte catastrofe, precum inundațiile, incendiile, situația refugiaților, ș.a. Efectele sociale sunt imediate, precum: schimbări majore ale relaţiilor interumane, ale modului de viaţă şi ale calităţii vieţii lor. Prelungirea izolării devine

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extrem de stresantă pentru unii oameni, care pot ajunge la stări grave ale unor boli psihice. Mass media semnalează faptul că, în pandemie, mulți părinți apelează la ședințe de consiliere, întrucât copii lor au devenit nevrotici. Cursurile online au un efect major asupra psihicului elevilor, existând riscul apariției unor tulburări emoționale care pot apărea pe fondul supraexpunerii la ecran, al izolării, al emoțiilor reprimate și al nediscutării cu părinții sau prietenii. Prezentul articol relevă intervenții eficiente ale asistentului social școlar pentru ieşirea din criză.

Cuvinte cheie: intervenție în criză, asistent social școlar, școală online, cyberbullying, sinucidere.

"Life is one crisis after another"
RICHARD M. NIXON

1. Introduction

Professional identity can be characterized as the way we perceive ourselves in the occupational context and it can evolve through socializing in the workplace, observing others, and developing a common expertise. The profession of social worker has a clear identity, being a nationally recognized qualification, with job descriptions and well-defined developmental skills. The professional social worker establishes the identity of their profession, building on the standardized requirements of the job.

The current global crisis is a difficult period for people, and the risk of falling ill has made us much more concerned about our health, which has made us accept all the restrictive rules. The long period of forced isolation can be a source of inner tension that can lead in time to behavioral disorders and serious mental illnesses. There may even be pathological forms of loneliness: from transient states of dissatisfaction, boredom in the presence of others, to a chronic feeling of mental isolation, the lack of communication and trust in others, which can lead to serious mental illness, even the decision to commit suicide (Zamfir, Zamfir, 2020, p. 11).

During the conference organized and presented by Alexandrescu Gabriela ("Save the Children" Association) entitled „Dramatic consequences of the pandemic", it is revealed that anxiety is becoming more common among pupils, there are more and more cases of aggression in schools and in the online environment. There have recently been many suicide attempts in children who do not see another solution to get rid of bullying and/or cyberbullying but to take their own lives. It is the case (that was also presented in the media) of a sixth - grader, a victim of bullying, who threw himself out of the window at school, and some of his classmates even encouraged him to do so. The mentioned conference presents the study „*The impact of the pandemic on the children's social-emotional health*", conducted by „Save the Children" Association, which reveals that more than 90% of diagnoses given by psychologists last year, are generated by the pandemic context, and marginalized children and the ones living in poor economic conditions are very affected, especially since the same context has led to the suspension of social and medical services. The same study reveals that primary school pupils felt the negative impact of isolation more strongly whereas adolescents felt lonely, sad or angry (Alexandrescu, 2021).

School staff may face potentially traumatic events that go beyond everyday experience and the ability to cope with them and that require response to the crisis. Pupils may experience death situations, death threats, or even be witnesses to them; they may even be marked by news of such major events (Smallwood, Williams, Monahon, 2016, p. 553).

A constant concern of school social workers is to keep a good, balanced mental state of pupils.

2. Characteristics of the intervention in crisis situations

The word „crisis” is used to refer to the event itself and the individuals' reaction to it; the crisis includes acute and prolonged disturbances that may occur in the emotional or social sphere as a result of „emotional danger". Possible emotional risks that pupils may face are: starting to be teenagers, losing a beloved person, the departure of parents abroad etc. Children certainly react differently to such events: for some the effects may be low, sometimes even absent, while others need the specialists' support. Pupils in crisis find it difficult to perform their daily tasks, they become confused, depressed, or hyperactive, whereas the learning process becomes difficult, or even impossible, for them, not complying with class rules and lacking resources to solve problems. There occurs the psychological imbalance that is associated with irrational behaviour and withdrawal from normal contacts (Alexiu, 2011).

The theory of the crisis intervention was conceived according to studies conducted in communities, groups and individuals who went through disasters or situations of maximum tension, such as floods, earthquakes, refugees, mourning or injured people etc. When a crisis situation occurs, beneficiaries must be taught how to identify other ways than those commonly used, in order to keep balance (Alexiu, 2011, p. 347).

The crisis intervention is a permanent concern of specialists in the field of socio-human sciences. The words „*crisis situation*” refer to a potentially traumatic event that exceeds the individuals' normal ability *to cope* and that is extremely negative, uncontrollable and unpredictable (Smallwood, Williams, Monahon, 2016, p. 553). The crisis has an uncertain duration that will pass, and the normal problems of life will return at some point, but it will certainly affect people's quality of life.

The crisis is defined as „a violent rupture of the evolutionary process, and its direction is suddenly masked, changed or reversed", which marks a profound discontinuity, the notion is beyond the impressions experienced by the individual who fails to overcome a conflict (Larousse, 2006, pp. 288). The crisis situation is characterized by the disturbance of the balance in which the solutions that the individual or the family usually has for solving problems, end up not being sufficient and effective in certain situations.

Predictable crises, such as maturity crises, are often neglected as they are considered normal as their basis has biological, psychological and social components. They occur when the individual goes through a stage and starts a new phase of life, by going to kindergarten, to school, high school or work, by changing home, by getting married, the birth of the first child, changing jobs, the children leaving their families, retirement, etc. All these are events that can cause a series of predictable crises, but in a person's life there are also unpredictable crises, triggered by factors that can threaten physical and mental integrity, such as abandonment, divorce, absence, death, catastrophes such as floods, fires, pandemics etc. The support of social services is generally sought by vulnerable people for whom crises usually result in other repeated failures that amplify and cause feelings of inadequacy, inability and incompetence, which makes them unable to cope with further difficulties, even if they are minors. These people have low self-esteem and do not have confidence in their own ability to solve problems, therefore social workers need to know that a person who had a series of repeated failures becomes practically „conditioned" to consider themselves incapable and knows particularly what factors are likely to trigger a crisis, what are the signs by which beneficiaries manifest themselves in such situations. For example, intense pain caused by the sudden death of a beloved person has psycho-somatic symptoms that may occur immediately after the event occurred, or are delayed, exaggerated, or seemingly absent (Alexiu, 2011, p. 349-350).

The specialty literature (Payne, Vrasti, etc.) reveals intervention principles in crisis situations that must be adapted according to its type and specificity. The school social worker must support the pupils' attempts to regain their balance after a reaction to a dangerous situation. Such situations interfere with the children's learning process in schools, whereas school social workers have emotional and behavioral reactions, in parallel with the beneficiary going through a crisis, but it is essential to act properly in order to support pupils adapting to stress (positive coping) .

H. Parah points out that, when social workers intervene in a crisis, they enter the life of a person, a family or a group, in order to reduce the impact of the stress that caused it, in order to help mobilize resources of the directly affected individuals, but also those around (Parah, 1965, p.2). The goal of social workers who intervene in such situations has a double impact: to reduce stressors and to use the situation of those in crisis, to help them solve their current problems and control possible similar problems that may occur in the future, by using appropriate coping mechanisms (Alexiu, 2011, p. 347).

3. Applications regarding professional practice in crisis situations

By pointing out the counseling skills required of a social worker, Professor D. Șoitu PhD. reveals that „the profession of a social worker means social change, solving the problems of human relationships, empowering and liberating people in order to increase their well-being. By using theories of human behavior and social systems, social assistance intervenes at the moment where people interact with their environment" (Șoitu, 2012, p. 44).

The work of the school social workers requires flexibility as they are often required to intervene in situations that are the result of a crisis or trauma. Violent acts in school and in the community can cause trauma to children and adolescents. Witnesses of domestic violence may have similar traumas as those caused by direct physical abuse; behavioral, cognitive, social problems can occur, such as: aggression to colleagues, family members, vandalism, impulsivity, hyperactivity, sleeping problems, depression, cruelty to animals, tantrum, pregnancy or delinquency. The school social worker must establish a therapeutic relationship with pupils who are victims of neglect and domestic violence whereas school should be the place where children should not feel ashamed or threatened, but the place where they should feel protected and safe (Openshaw, 2008, p. 178-179).

Crisis intervention combines a working methodology that can be used in situations which require emergency interventions while revealing the possibilities of short-term interventions. H. Parad was one of the psychoanalytic theorists who adapted the model of ego psychology to the needs of crisis intervention, initially using this therapeutic practice to help beneficiaries solve traumatic situations that exceeded their ability to adapt, such as: natural disasters, the death or departure of a beloved person, the loss of livelihood, serious illnesses or accidents. Subsequently, G. Caplan developed the model of crisis intervention to support families in such situations. Crisis intervention aims at restoring the beneficiaries' ability to adapt and cooperate, whereas social workers make efforts to assess the client's resources, seeking to enable their efforts to overcome the moment. Social workers offer beneficiaries in crisis situations support to regain their strength and self-confidence, to develop adaptive behaviors, which are vital to regain a functional level equal to, or even higher than the one which preceded the crisis. Thus the beneficiary has the opportunity to learn new action mechanisms in social life, which will contribute to the personal development. Therefore, the crisis situation can be turned into an opportunity for growth and development for the beneficiaries of social assistance (Roth, Rebeleanu, 2011, p. 316).

4. Social worker and group counseling in crisis situations

One of the most important activities of the school social worker is to provide support to several pupils at the same time. He/She can perform individual and group counselling, in the second situation it is necessary to plan ahead, establish the size of the group and the time limit. They happen to organize a group successfully, without having too much time to plan and organize members or complete the curriculum. Sometimes the school social worker is asked to provide group counselling in predetermined situations or for an entire class but, as he/she does not know the group of pupils, it is wise to ask the teacher to stay in the room and assist (Openshaw, 2008, p. 162).

The short-term group counselling has rapidly turned into an important and widely used therapy format, with WHO plans, constantly moving to shorter, less expensive and more effective intervention forms. Structured and homogeneous groups are favoured as a problem. A group facing an acute life crisis, such as parental divorce or bereavement, can benefit from eighteen to twenty-four counselling sessions. If the aim is to change persistent problems in short-term counselling, the school social worker may intervene in sixty or seventy sessions. Research shows that members with a milder disorder need fewer counselling hours to achieve significant improvements, as the return to morale can occur quickly and therefore eight or fewer sessions are sufficient to bring beneficiaries back to the pre-crisis levels. Also, if confidence is deteriorated early in the development of the individual, if a loss or trauma has been suffered, it is very likely that short-term counseling will be insufficient (Yalom, Leszcz, 2013, pp. 292-293).

If groups are formed quickly, in order to support pupils in crisis, group members must be assured of the confidentiality principle. Even in crisis situations, it is necessary to obtain the consent of the parents who must be notified that the school offers group counseling to children. When children have been exposed to traumatic situations, such as violence, natural disasters or the suicide of a classmate, the school social worker should advise children who face the fear and insecurity generated by such experiences. In group counseling for pupils, it is necessary for them to be the same age whenever possible, and the group should not be more than ten pupils, to ensure that each of them has the necessary time to speak and to express their feelings. When the school social workers deal with crisis and trauma situations, they must give pupils the opportunity to tell their stories repeatedly, in order to adapt in time to traumatic events. Also, their feelings generated by these events will lose their intensity in time, and the fact that they listen to the other colleagues' stories helps them to accept their own feelings more easily. Most crisis groups probably need to meet once or twice (Openshaw, 2008, p. 163).

Conclusions

The complicated situations of children and young people from disadvantaged/ poor backgrounds are a problem that will affect the future of the whole community, and its seriousness is ignored by the responsible public institutions. Lack of qualified staff, financial resources and vision to solve difficult situations for children and young people continues to be a permanent concern of public social policies. There is a need for reorientation of the social policy from individuals to communities, as we face the risk of transforming social communities (who lived on the margins of society) to evolve into organized crime groups, generated by lack of job opportunities, decreased attendance and the quality of schooling, the lack of perspective to integrate into the community, the lack of opportunities along with the expansion of pathological strategies of survival in poverty and marginalization, which lead to deviant ways of life and keep people prisoners in their own community. Especially children and young people are at risk of getting trapped in communities of „the culture of poverty and learned helplessness”, which reproduce their marginality and underdevelopment by passing them on from one generation to the next one. Social intervention must focus on the change and development of the community, on the change of those social systems that risk consolidating in their own „culture of marginality” (Zamfir, Zamfir, 2020, pp. 30-31).

We mention that a good collaboration between the school social worker, who must coordinate the multidisciplinary team that intervenes to solve social problems, and the family social worker, the school safety officer, the school counselor, the pediatric psychiatry specialist, would ensure the partnership between school, family and community, with beneficial effects on students' mental health and school integration. It is extremely necessary for each educational unit to have a school social worker, as an agent of social prevention and immediate and effective intervention, when problems and /or crisis situations occur.

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IDENTITY AND GENDER EQUALITY IN ROMANIA A QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the paradigm in which international organizations, UN member states, national, regional and local authorities act together to solve the concrete problems facing the world today. Although women and girls represent more than half of the world's population, they do not enjoy the same rights and freedom everywhere. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 of the 2030 Agenda proposes to empower women by promoting equal opportunities for women and men around the world, facilitating women's access to education, training and careers, ensuring participation in political decision-making and in the management positions of companies, providing solutions to accommodate the time spent for childcare and family with the work schedule, preventing and combating all forms of violence against girls and women, improving their access to health and reproductive services. Starting from the targets and indicators associated with SDG 5, this study proposes a quantitative assessment of the quality of life of women in Romania. In this regard, we used data provided by Eurostat, the National Institute of Statistics, the National Commission for Strategy and Forecasting, as well as data from the reports of the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men and the European Institute for Gender Equality. To verify the working hypotheses (research questions) we used descriptive statistical analysis with SPSS, Pearson correlation and linear regression processed with the XLSTAT program, graphical representation techniques with PHILCARTO software.

Keywords: quality of life, women, gender equality, sustainable development, 2030 Agenda

Résumé

L'Agenda 2030 pour le développement durable est le paradigme dans lequel les organisations internationales, les États membres des Nations Unies, les autorités nationales, régionales et locales agissent pour résoudre les problèmes concrets auxquels le monde est confronté aujourd'hui. Bien que les femmes et les filles représentent plus de la moitié de la population mondiale, elles ne jouissent pas des mêmes droits et liberté partout. L'Objectif de développement durable (ODD) 5 de l'Agenda 2030 propose de

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capitaliser le potentiel des ressources humaines des femmes en promouvant l'égalité des chances pour les femmes et les hommes dans le monde, en facilitant l'accès des femmes à l'éducation, à la formation et aux carrières, en assurant la participation à la prise de décision politique et dans les postes de direction des entreprises, en apportant des solutions pour adapter le temps passé à s'occuper des enfants et des familles avec l'horaire de travail, en prévenant et en combattant toutes les formes de violence contre les filles et les femmes, en améliorant leur accès aux services de santé et de reproduction. À partir des cibles et des indicateurs associés à l'ODD 5, cet article propose une évaluation quantitative de la qualité de vie des femmes en Roumanie. Pour cet objectif, nous avons utilisé les données fournies par Eurostat, l'Institut national de la statistique, la Commission nationale pour la stratégie et la prospective, ainsi que les données des rapports de l'Agence nationale pour l'égalité des chances entre les femmes et les hommes et de l'Institut européen pour l'égalité des genres. Pour vérifier les hypothèses de travail (questions de recherche), nous avons utilisé l'analyse statistique descriptive avec SPSS, la corrélation de Pearson et la régression linéaire traitées avec le programme XLSTAT, des représentations graphiques réalisées avec le logiciel PHILCARTO.

Mots-clés: qualité de vie, femmes, égalité des genres, développement durable, Agenda 2030

Rezumat

Agenda 2030 pentru Dezvoltare Durabilă este paradigma în cadrul căreia organizații internaționale, state membre ONU, autorități naționale, regionale și locale acționează pentru a rezolva problemele concrete cu care se confruntă lumea de astăzi. Deși femeile și fetele reprezintă mai bine de jumătate din populația planetei, nu peste tot se bucură de aceleași drepturi și libertăți. Obiectivul de dezvoltare durabilă (ODD) 5 al Agendei 2030 propune valorificarea potențialului resursei umane feminine prin promovarea egalității de șanse între femei și bărbați peste tot în lume, facilitarea accesului femeilor la educație, formare profesională și carieră, asigurarea participării în funcțiile de decizie politică și în pozițiile de management ale companiilor, oferirea de soluții pentru acomodarea timpului destinat îngrijirii copiilor și familiei cu programul de lucru, prevenirea și combaterea tuturor formelor de violență asupra fetelor și femeilor, îmbunătățirea accesului acestora la servicii de sănătate sexuală și reproductivă. Pornind de la țintele și indicatorii asociați ODD 5, lucrarea de față propune o evaluare cantitativă a calității vieții femeilor din România. În acest sens, am utilizat date furnizate de Eurostat, Institutul Național de Statistică, Comisia Națională pentru Strategie și Prognoză, precum și date din rapoartele Agenției Naționale pentru Egalitate de Șanse între femei și bărbați și de la Institutul European pentru Egalitate de Gen. Pentru verificarea ipotezelor de lucru am utilizat analiza statistică descriptivă cu SPSS, corelația Pearson și regresia liniară procesate cu programul XLSTAT, tehnici de reprezentare grafică realizate cu softul PHILCARTO.

Cuvinte cheie: calitatea vieții, femei, egalitate de gen, dezvoltare durabilă, Agenda 2030

1. Brief introduction to the paradigm of sustainable development

The issue of sustainable development has become an international concern since the 1970s. The United Nations (UN) Conference on the Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, put on the map of international debates the issue of socio-economic development related to the need to protect the environment. On this occasion, issues related to industrial pollution, depletion of natural resources, the danger of extinction of plant and animal species, the need to increase living standards and to reduce inequality between people were analysed. After decades in which economic growth has been the priority goal of countries, it has been recognized for the first time that this does not mean well-being for all, as development based on the irrational exploitation of natural resources often irreparably endangers the environment.

The best-known definition of sustainable development is set out in the *Brundtland Commission Report*, based on the work of the UN World Commission on Environment and Development in Stockholm in 1983: „development that seeks to meet the needs of the present without compromising the future generations to meet their own needs". This Commission, chaired by Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, set out the first principles that guide sustainable development: (1) development is not just about growth and the pursuit of profit at all costs; (2) the irrational exploitation of natural resources with all its effects on life, people and ecosystems must be rethought in such way that we do not jeopardize the chance of future generations for a healthy, dignified and prosperous life. Therefore, sustainable development combines three key dimensions of development in a balanced formula: social, economic and environmental. The states of the world must continue economic development, for the benefit of as many people as possible, without irreparably affecting the environment.

The conclusions of the Stockholm Conference were resumed and reinforced at the UN Development Conferences in Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, in the Millennium Declaration adopted by the United Nations in September 2000, at the World Summit in New York from 14-16 September 2005, during the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio + 20) in 2012, and culminated in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - *Transforming Our World*, adopted by 193 heads of state and government at the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015. All these documents emphasize that sustainable development paradigm include a series of stipulations that focus on women's quality of life in relation to gender equality (United Nations, 1992-2015).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the paradigm in which international organizations, United Nations member states, national, regional and local authorities act to address the concrete problems facing the world today. Scientists, practitioners, state and non-state actors are engaged in designing working methodologies, strategies, public policies to address challenges related to poverty and hunger, ensuring access to health services, gender equality and women's empowerment, clean water and sanitation, clean energy at affordable prices, growth and decent jobs, the development of environmentally friendly industries and infrastructures, smart cities and sustainable communities, responsible consumption and production, resilience in the face of climate change and the demands of terrestrial and aquatic life, peaceful and inclusive societies, partnerships to achieve sustainable development goals.

The European Union is a world leader in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The European Commission's projections show that empowering women in socio-economic development would lead to an increase in EU GDP per capita of 6.1% to 9.6%, which means an increase of 1.95 trillion Euros to 3.15 trillion Euros. Of the top 20 countries in the world that have achieved the best results in promoting gender equality, 14 countries are EU members. In the ranking on the gender equality index in the EU for 2019, the Member States obtained on average 67.4 out of 100 points, the highest score being assumed by Sweden. In this gender equality ranking, Romania obtained 64 points.

Regarding equality between women and men, the European Union has adopted six directives on equality in the workplace, self-employment, access to goods and services, social security, pregnancy and maternity, family and flexible working arrangements for parents and caregivers. These directives are now a true legal standard among EU member states. The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 ensures the coordination of the European Commission's work on gender equality, with the general objective of creating a European area of equality between women and men, in which gender-based violence, all forms of discrimination and structural inequality become an issue of the past (European Commission, 2020a, b, c).

At the end of 2018, the Government of Romania launched the 2030 National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania (NSSDR). Within the Government operates the Department of Sustainable Development and the Advisory Council for Sustainable Development that brings together university professors, specialists, practitioners with multi-trans-interdisciplinary approaches of the issues covered by the 2030 Agenda to work together on the national implementation plan of the NSSDR. In July 2019, at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development held in New York under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Romania was co-organizer of the related event „Governance of the SDGs: Learning from country experiences and defining an agenda for the future”. The conference was initiated by the Government of Romania through the Department for Sustainable Development in partnership with the Government of Iceland and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Romania climbed two positions in one year, ranking 42nd out of 100 countries in implementing sustainable development goals, performed by the team of renowned economist Jeffrey Sachs.

The sustainable development paradigm concerns each of us, not just international organizations and governments. Transforming our world begins with changing everyone's behaviour: informing and raising awareness of local community issues, environmentally friendly behaviour that can begin with waste selection and recycling, integrating digital solutions in public management, enhancing people's integration who do not have digital skills. The COVID-19 pandemic will radically change the world we live in, accelerating transformation towards the digital solutions offered by information technology and communication (IT&C).

Although women and girls represent more than half of the world's population, they do not enjoy the same rights and freedom as men everywhere. In some regions and countries around the world, women and girls cannot fully participate in education and training programs, even in primary education, they do not enjoy the same employment opportunities as men; women receive lower wages for the same work as men; women in management positions are facing discrimination; women do not have the right to get involved in politics and to be elected to leadership positions. In these circumstances, the humanity cannot realize its full potential if women do not enjoy the same rights and freedoms as men, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2. Concepts, data sources, statistical indicators

Quality of life research aims to describe and analyse the living conditions of the population (standard of living, family life, living conditions, health, education, environment, etc.), people's satisfaction with living standards, evaluation of different dimensions of quality of life, public policies that propose well-being improvement. In Romania, concerns regarding the quality of life research date from the ’80s, having as reference the quality of life indicators, a research coordinated by the sociologist Cătălin Zamfir. After 1990, with the establishment of the Quality of Life Research Institute, preoccupations in this field took a considerable boost as a response to the demands of Romanian society to increase living standards. It was a transition period with great expectation, complicated by social and economic problems (Mărginean, 2004; Mărginean and Precupețiu, 2019).

Quality of life is an evaluative concept, which can be investigated by two types of methods: (1) sociological methods (questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, tests, scales) through which the subjective dimension of quality of life can be assessed (self-perception of living standards) and (2) statistical methods (selective, sample-based statistical surveys) that target its objective dimension (Mărginean, 2019; Iftimoaei, 2021).

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 of the 2030 Agenda proposes to improve the quality of life of women by eliminating all forms of discrimination between women and men (economic, social, political, cultural), reducing gender disparities in social life and economy, strengthening institutions and promoting active policies in preventing and combating violence against women and girls, facilitating women's access to education, integration and professional empowerment, reducing the gender pay gap.

As of 1 January 2016, the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda have entered into force, and UN Member States have begun to develop strategies, policies and measures to implement them. Eurostat and the national statistics institutes committed to develop methodologies for measuring and evaluating the progress made in implementing the SDGs by reporting them to the targets and indicators allocated, as set by the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2016.

On the occasion of the 48th meeting of the United Nations Statistics Commission in March 2017, for the implementation of the 17 SDGs, a global list was approved containing 169 targets to be achieved and a number of 244 indicators. Currently, data are available for about 1/3 of the indicators. The European Union is the most advanced region in the world in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Monitoring and evaluation of sustainable development goals and their associated targets are carried out by Eurostat. The following table summarizes the targets and statistical indicators for SDG 5 - gender equality, which essentially aims to improve the quality of life of women.

Table 1. SDG 5-Gender Equality: targets and indicators

<table>
<tr><td>5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere</td><td>5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation</td><td>5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age</td></tr>
<tr><td>5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation</td><td>5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18</td></tr>
<tr><td>5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age</td></tr>
<tr><td>5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate</td><td>5.4.1 Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">5.5 Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life</td><td>5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments</td></tr>
<tr><td>5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions</td></tr>
<tr><td>5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and</td><td>5.6.1 Proportion of women aged 15–49 years who make their own informed</td></tr>
</table>

reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences	decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care
	5.6.2 Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education
5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws	5.a.1 (*a*) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (*b*) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure
	5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control
5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women	5.b.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex
5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels	5.c.1 Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment

***Source:* Global indicator Framework for SDG and targets for 2030 Agenda:**
https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/

Under the coordination of Eurostat, the European Commission established a set of statistical indicators (EU SDG Indicator Set) to be developed for monitoring and evaluating the progress in implementation of the SDGs in the European member states. The EU indicators selected for the SDG monitoring meet the „RACER" conditions: relevance, acceptability, credibility, ease of monitoring and robustness against biased or misinterpretations. The Indicator Set proposed by the EU is structured on the 17 SDGs and includes 100 different indicators. The practical experience has proven that this number of indicators is reasonable for analysis and dissemination to the general public and the media. Each SDG is covered by a number of 6 statistical indicators, with the exception of SDG 14 and SDG 17, each target being allocated a number of 5 indicators. Of the set of 100 statistical indicators, 41 indicators are multi-objective which, although designed to monitor a specific objective, can also be used to analyse the level of implementation of other SDGs. According to Eurostat, each SDG can be monitored and evaluated through 5-12 statistical indicators. Of the set of 100 indicators established by Eurostat, 88 indicators are updated annually, 12 indicators with a lower frequency; 69 indicators from official EU Statistics, 31 from other sources; 51 indicators from the set of one hundred are common to Eurostat and the United Nations Statistical Commission.

On 22 June 2020, Eurostat published a paper entitled „Sustainable Development in the European Union - Monitoring Report on Progress towards the SDGs in the EU Context - 2020 Edition", which provides a statistical overview of progress towards the 17 objectives sustainable development of the 2030 Agenda in the European Union. The Eurostat Report shows significant progress on the „No Poverty", „Health and Welfare", „No Hunger" and „Decent Working Conditions and Growth" objectives. A progress has been made in achieving „Sustainable Cities and Communities", „Quality Education", „Partnerships for Objectives", „Responsible Consumption and Production", „Affordable and Clean Energy", „Reducing Inequalities", „Earth life" and „Industry, innovation and infrastructure „. More efforts are needed to achieve the SDGs on „Climate Policy" and „Gender Equality" (Eurostat, 2021).

In Romania there is a National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (NAEO). Within the Government of Romania functions an inter-ministerial working group called The National Commission for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (NCEO) in order to identify the best solutions for the development and implementation of public policies for equal opportunities between women and men. NCEO is composed of representatives of ministries and other specialized bodies of the central public administration subordinated to the Government or of the autonomous administrative authorities, trade unions and employers' associations at national level, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations, with recognized activity in the gender equality field. NAEO prepares annual reports on the participation of women and men in elections, the situation of women and men in decision-making positions in public administration, Romania's position in the online database of the European Institute for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, the national situation on domestic violence.

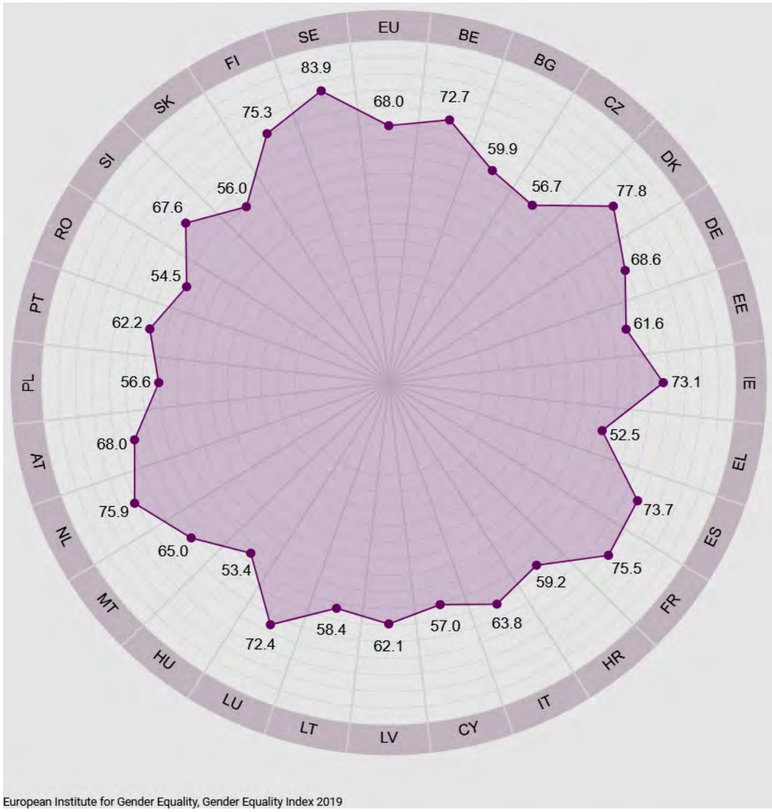
The evaluation carried out by NAEO based on the candidacies submitted on the electoral lists in the elections for the Romanian Senate in 2020 showed that 2477 people registered (from political parties, minorities and independents), of which 764 (30.84%) women and 1713 (69.16%) men. Following the election, 136 senators were elected, of which 25 (18.38%) women and 111 (81.62%) men. A number of 4657 people (from political parties, minorities and independents) registered on the electoral lists for the Chamber of Deputies, of which 1341 (28.80%) women and 3316 (71.20%) men. Following the election, 330 deputies were elected, of which 60 (18.18%) women and 270 (81.82%) men (NAEO, 2020a).

In 2020, in the central public administration there were 693 management positions decision-level 1 (secretary general, deputy secretary general, director general, deputy director general) and decision level 2 (director, deputy director), of which 122 vacancies, the rate of occupation of positions being 82.4% (571 positions occupied). Out of the total positions held, 310 (54.3%) belonged to women and 261 (45.7%) to men. Compared to 2019, the female percentage increased by 0.8 percentage points (from 53.5% in 2019 to 54.3% in 2020). Throughout the period 2016-2020, it can be seen that in 2018 the percentage was at the lowest level (49.6%) and in 2020 it was the highest, respectively 54.3 %. Also, in 2016, 2017 and 2019 the female percentage was over 50%. Romania has a better position than the European average. (NAEO, 2020b).

The latest national study on domestic violence conducted by National Agency for Equal Opportunities between women and men shows that, in the first half of 2019, a number of 6731 victims of domestic violence were reported, of which 4,167 (61.91%) were female and 2564 (38.09 %) male. The distribution of family aggressors, at national level, by sex and area of residence is as follows: 4143 family aggressors, of which 1555 (37.53%) female and 2588 (62.47%) male. The prevalence of domestic violence with female victims is higher in rural areas where there were 2291 female victims (54.98%), while a number of 1876 of female victims (45.02%) are from urban areas. Out of the total of 6731 victims of domestic violence, a number of 5,343 minor victims (79.38%) were reported, of which 2852 (53.38%) girls and 2491 (46.62%) boys. At national level, the counties with the highest number of women victims of domestic violence are Constanța (488 women victims), Galați (454 women victims), Timiș (236 women victims), Gorj (226 women victims), Maramureș (193 women victims) (NAEO, 2020c).

On 28 October 2021, the European Institute for Gender Equality launched the latest *Gender Equality Index Report*, which is a tool for measuring the progress of gender equality in the EU in order to support policy makers in developing more effective gender equality measures. Overall, the EU scored 68 points out of 100 in the Gender Equality Index, a microscopic increase of just 0.6 points from last year's edition. On this occasion, EIGE Director Carlien Scheele stated that Europe has made slow progress on gender equality in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The best score on gender equality is obtained by Sweden (83.9 points), and the lowest score is held by Greece (52.5 points). Compared to the European average of 68 points, Romania obtains a modest score of 54.5 points. From the detailed analysis of the scores obtained by Romania on the main fields of activity (work, money, knowledge, time, power and health), it results that women in our country are facing problems in accommodating work with the activities performed in their own household, gender inequalities are most pronounced in power positions, there are slight improvements in economic decision-making, in the women′s participation in education and training programs, the short duration in the field of work, the women′s access to the sexual and reproductive health services (Eurostat, 2021; EIGE, 2021).



Source: https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/compare-countries/index/map

Figure 1. EU Gender Equality Index in 2021

The progress regarding the achievement of the SDG 5 associated targets from the 2030 Agenda is reported by the Department of Sustainable Development within the Romanian Government based on the monitoring performed by the National Institute of Statistics. One year after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Sustainable Development organized in partnership with the National Institute of Statistics the conference on „National indicators for sustainable development", within the project „Sustainable Romania – The development of the strategic and institutional framework for implementing the 2030 National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania". The Report contains relevant statistics for decision-making at national level and illustrates the evolution of a number of 98 indicators associated with a number of 60 targets, corresponding to the 17 sustainable development objectives for Horizon 2020 (Iftimoaei, 2021).

The above-mentioned Report states that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities between women and men in all areas of activity. Women are need to spend more time to educating children and caring for the elderly while performing their duties. Given health restrictions, women dedicated more time for household activities, which amplifies family tensions that generated domestic violence.

Women are the majority in the field of health and social care, with a much higher exposure than men to the new coronavirus. In Romania, inactivity affects to a greater extent woman aged 20-64 years compared to men in the same age segment as a result of fulfilling family responsibilities, especially in rural areas. Legislation on parental leave and the monthly child-raising allowance were a step forward in ensuring equal treatment and opportunities for women and men.

Women continue to be underrepresented in the Parliament and Government of Romania, as well as in other leading political positions at the national and county levels. Regarding the number of women with top management positions in companies with foreign and / or Romanian capital, Romania is among the first places in the European Union. Women are more affected by poverty than men, especially women in rural areas, elderly women, women living in households with low work intensity. The most serious problem that women are facing in Romania is the violence in all its forms. According to the mentioned Report, in the monitored period (2008-2019), the maximum level was reached in 2018 when 1087 rape crimes were registered. (Department for Sustainable Development, 2021).

3. The working methodology: research questions, data analysis, results

For the quantitative assessment of women's quality of life in Romania from the perspective of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development we used the following data sources: (1) data from Eurostat - the section containing indicators for assessing progress on sustainable development, to obtain a comparative perspective, Romania in a European context; (2) data provided by the National Institute of Statistics - the section with indicators that describe the standard of living in Romania; (3) data provided by the National Commission for Strategy and Forecast and by the National Institute of Statistics in the sections dedicated to labour statistics and education statistics.

The research questions are the following:

- What is the Romania's progress in implementing SDG 5 - Gender Equality, compared to the situation at European level?
- What is the contribution of women compared to men to economic growth (GDP per capita)?
- What is the connection between all the variables analysed / are the variables used correlated?
- How has the living standard of women evolved compared to men in Romania after joining the EU?

To test the working hypotheses (research questions) we used descriptive analysis with **SPSS** (Netedu, 2005; Coman, 2011; Vasile, 2014;) boxplot comparative analysis (Rotariu, 1999; Lahoz-Beltra, 2021), Pearson correlation and linear regression processed with **XLSTAT** Program, illustrated with maps made with **PHILCARTO** software.

3.1. The situation of women in Romania: social and demographic aspects

In Romania, women represent 51.1% of the total usual resident population. From the official statistics we find that, out of the 19328.8 thousand people who on January 1, 2020 had their usual residence in Romania for at least 12 months, 9868 thousand were women, representing 51.1% of the total usual resident population. In urban areas, the share of women in our country is more pronounced than in rural areas; over 5474.9 thousand women live in cities, representing 52.4% of the total urban population. In rural areas, the share of the female population is 49.5%. The female population is on average 3.3 years older than male population. The average female age is 43.9 years, while for men it is 40.6 years. This difference is explained by the longer average life expectancy for women than it is for men (National Institute of Statistics, 2021a-b).

Compared to the communist period (before 1989), the women's ideas about life has changed quite a lot. Nowadays, women are experiencing premarital sexual intercourse, are more concerned with fertility control and contraception, prefer free unions to the detriment of the family, accept celibacy and single-person household, advocate for equal opportunities with men, are open to various sexual experiences, adhere to feminist movements and promote gender equality. The change of lifestyles, especially in the last decade, the increase of the education and schooling period, the access to well-paid and socially valued jobs, the desire for career advancement have changed quite a lot the sociodemographic behaviour of women in Romania.

The phenomenon of „postponement of marriages” is reflected in the decrease of nuptials (number of marriages), increase of the average age at the first marriage (28.3 years), decrease of the birth rate (number of births), as well as increase of the average age at the birth of the first child. According to the National Institute of Statistics, in 2019, the average age of the mother at birth (28.8 years) and at the first birth (27.6 years) was slightly higher than the previous year, maintaining the tendency to postpone the birth. Women in rural regions continued to give birth at a younger age (27.2 years) compared to women in urban areas (30.0 years). The highest average age at all births was registered in Bucharest (31.5 years), and the lowest in Călărași County (26.5 years).

Women's reproductive behaviour is impacted by their occupational status. Although the share of live-born by housewives (33.0% in 2019) is at a fairly high level, there is a decrease compared to the previous year (34.2% in 2018). A percentage of 52.4% of live-births had employed mothers. In 2019, in rural areas, 48.3% of the number of live births had housewives, and in urban areas 20.6% of the number of live births had housewives. In 2019, the trend shows an increasing share of live-births by women with a higher level of education continues - at least with a university degree (30.4%) and the share of live births by mothers with a medium level of education: vocational, secondary and post-secondary school (35.6%).

3.2. Statistical analysis of progress in implementing SDG 5 - Gender Equality

For the analysis of Romania's progress regarding the implementation of SDG 5 of the 2030 Agenda, we queried the Eurostat database - the section dedicated to sustainable development indicators from where we selected the following variables, depending on the sex of people, for the period 2008-2020:

- the gender pay gap measures the lower (%), the average hourly income earned by a woman compared to the average hourly income earned by a man (the indicator measures economic inequality rather than discrimination at work);
- the employment gap measures the difference between the employment rates of women and men between the ages of 20 and 64 (the employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of people between the ages of 20 and 64) employed in the total population of the same age group (the indicator is based on the EU labour force survey EU-LFS);
- the gender gap for inactive population refers to those who do not work, are not actively looking for a job and are not available to work even if they have found a job. Therefore, they are neither employed nor unemployed and are considered to be out of the workforce (this definition used in the EU-EU LFS labour force survey) in accordance with the methodology of the International Labour Organization;
- the number of seats held by women in national parliaments;
- the number of top management positions held by women in companies;
- the share of young graduates of higher education (higher education);
- the rate of early leaving the education system by young people is the share of the population aged 18-24 with a level of elementary education (low), which does not follow any form of training (formal or non-formal);
- employment rate of women aged 20-64 years in total labour resources.

Indicators that describe the statistical distribution of the selected variables for Romania and the European Union (average scores obtained by EU member states) were calculated using the SPSS software: minimum, maximum, average (central tendency), standard deviation (how much the scores are spread around average) and parameters showing the flattening and inclination of the distribution (skewness and kurtosis).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the SDG 5-Gender Equality: Romania vs. UE

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Pay_gap_RO	13	2.20	12.50	6.3000	2.99026	.569	.616	-.173	1.191
Employment_gap_RO	14	13.10	19.30	16.5429	1.80543	-.313	.597	-.440	1.154
Inactive_caring_responsabilities_t	14	16.30	28.10	20.6071	3.61439	.722	.597	-.107	1.154
Inactive_caring_responsabilities_r	14	.01	3.10	1.4507	.86318	.523	.597	.412	1.154
Inactive_caring_responsabilities_f RO	14	25.50	39.10	30.4786	4.12482	.702	.597	-.155	1.154
Seats_women_parliament_RO	14	9.40	20.00	13.2214	4.30923	.905	.597	-1.112	1.154
Senior_management_positions_w board_members_RO	14	7.80	21.30	12.3571	3.32837	1.795	.597	3.772	1.154
Early_leavers_education_total_RO	14	15.30	19.30	17.3857	1.26786	-.215	.597	-1.013	1.154
Early_leavers_education_males_F	14	14.70	19.50	17.6143	1.70513	-.511	.597	-1.144	1.154
Early_leavers_education_females	14	15.80	19.00	17.1500	1.07399	.436	.597	-1.036	1.154
Tertiary_educational_attainment_t	14	16.60	25.60	23.0500	2.96330	-1.115	.597	.012	1.154
Tertiary_educational_attainment_r	14	15.60	22.90	20.7857	2.36476	-1.281	.597	.342	1.154
Tertiary_educational_attainment_f RO	14	17.70	29.20	25.4643	3.68335	-.916	.597	-.365	1.154
Employment_rates_total_RO	12	63.50	70.90	66.6667	2.70701	.620	.637	-1.241	1.232
Employment_rates_males_RO	12	70.70	80.30	75.1167	3.32534	.519	.637	-1.071	1.232
Employment_rates_females_RO	12	56.20	61.30	58.1000	2.02664	.745	.637	-1.456	1.232
Pay_gap_EU	11	15.30	17.40	16.6364	.69321	-.827	.661	-.378	1.279
Employment_gap_EU	12	11.10	13.60	11.9167	.76733	1.319	.637	.722	1.232
Inactive_caring_responsabilities_t	14	17.70	22.70	20.1643	1.34714	.112	.597	-.179	1.154
Inactive_caring_responsabilities_r	14	2.20	4.90	3.7714	.73425	-.546	.597	.123	1.154
Inactive_caring_responsabilities_f EU	14	25.70	32.80	29.1929	1.91169	.134	.597	-.185	1.154
Seats_women_parliament_EU	14	22.50	32.30	26.8643	3.36214	.254	.597	-1.338	1.154
Senior_management_positions_w board_members_EU	14	10.40	29.50	19.1786	7.01286	.102	.597	-1.597	1.154
Early_leavers_education_total_EU	14	9.90	14.90	12.1286	1.78689	.377	.597	-1.558	1.154
Early_leavers_education_males_E	14	11.80	17.00	13.8714	1.95662	.449	.597	-1.585	1.154
Early_leavers_education_females	14	8.00	12.80	10.3500	1.64258	.260	.597	-1.466	1.154
Tertiary_educational_attainment_t	14	29.90	40.90	36.1786	3.57301	-.401	.597	-.999	1.154
Tertiary_educational_attainment_r	14	26.40	35.70	31.5357	3.01907	-.331	.597	-1.068	1.154
Tertiary_educational_attainment_f EU	14	33.50	46.10	40.8857	4.12998	-.451	.597	-.936	1.154
Employment_rates_total_EU	12	67.50	73.20	69.6917	2.14071	.602	.637	-1.450	1.232
Employment_rates_males_EU	12	73.30	78.90	75.6583	1.93882	.549	.637	-1.274	1.232
Employment_rates_females_EU	12	61.40	67.40	63.7417	2.34345	.493	.637	-1.575	1.232
Valid N (listwise)	10								

***Source:* own processing with SPSS based on Eurostat database**
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/main-tables

The indicator that measures the difference between the average gross hourly earnings of male employees compared to female employees (pay gap) shows higher values in the European Union compared to Romania. In recent years, there has been a significant decrease in the gap between women and men in Romania.

Regarding the difference between the employment rate of men and the employment rate of women (employment gap) aged between 20 and 64, the gap in the case of Romania is larger than in the EU Member States (average of 16.5 % - Romania compared to 11.9% - European Union average). The indicator regarding the inactivity of people in the field of work due to family or personal responsibilities (inactive_caring_responsabilities) registers high values in the case of females.

Romania has a low rate of female members in Parliament (seats_women) or members of the boards of directors of the largest listed companies (senior_management_positions_women).

Another important indicator is the share of young people aged 18-24, who have completed secondary education and are not involved in any vocational training activity (early_leavers_education). Romania registers values above the European Union average for both males and females.

The share of the population aged between 25 and 34 who graduated from university (tertiary_educational_attainment) is on an upward trend in Romania, but the average for 2007-2020 (equal to 23.0%) places us below the average of European Union countries (equal to 36.2%).

The employment rate of people aged between 20 and 64 (employment_rates) in Romania reached a maximum in 2019. It is observed that males have a higher employment rate compared to females. The situation is the same in the European Union.

3.3. The role of women compared to men in the economic growth

Economic growth is a concept that refers to the quantitative dimension of development and is measured mainly by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This macroeconomic indicator represents the total monetary or market value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period. GDP per capita expressed in Euro or adjusted to price level differences (as expressed in purchasing power standards, SPCs) is used as a tool for comparing living standards or monitoring of the process of economic convergence or divergence in the European Union (EU).

A positive evolution of GDP does not always mean the increasing of well-being for people. GDP growth can be generated by growth in consumption that is not sustainable in the long term. There are countries that benefit from high GDP growth rates, but are characterized by deep social and economic inequalities, being societies polarized between the few who concentrate large wealth and the many who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. From a strictly economic viewpoint, GDP measures how much a national economy produced in a reference period. This is also the case in Romania, a country where economic growth coexists with a high rate of poverty.

For this study, we calculated the Gross Domestic Product per capita based on data from the National Commission for Strategy and Forecast, for the period 2008-2020 (GDP divided by the usual resident population of the counties). The evolution of GDP per capita for each county, in the period 2008-2020, will be considered a dependent variable, which it will be explained using the following independent variables:

- employment rate (women vs. men) is the ratio, expressed as a percentage, between the employed population and labour resources (all people who have the physical and mental abilities to work);
- unemployment rate (women vs. men) is the ratio, expressed as a percentage, between the number of unemployed (registered with the employment agencies) and the active population (characterizes the potential labour supply, including the employed population and the unemployed), defined according to the methodology the workforce balance of the National Institute of Statistics;
- the average number of employees (women vs. men) includes persons employed with a fixed-term or indefinite employment contract / employment relationship (including seasonal workers, manager or administrator) whose employment contract / employment relationship has not been suspended during reference period (average number of employees is calculated as a simple arithmetic average resulting from the sum of the daily number of employees in the reference period, including weekly rest days, public holidays and other working days, divided by the total number of calendar days, 365/366 days);
- the average net monthly nominal earnings (women vs. men) is obtained by deducting from the monthly gross nominal earnings the mandatory social contributions of employees (social insurance contribution, respectively social health insurance due by employees) and the corresponding tax;
- the number of graduates (women vs. men) includes pupils / students who have passed the last year of study of a school / faculty, regardless of whether or not they passed the graduation exam, baccalaureate, bachelor's degree, etc. (the number of graduates refers to the end of the school / university year, after the correctness exam; the graduate with a diploma is a person who passed the graduation exam at the end of an educational cycle and obtained a diploma).

Based on these variables by sex / county / year of period 2018-2020, we set a database for statistical processing with the XLSTAT program (comparative boxplot analysis, Pearson correlation, linear regression). Using PHILCARTO software we made a series of graphic elements (cartograms) based on the processing of the analysed variables.

In statistical analysis, the boxplot is a special method of graphical representation of grouped numerical data by their quartiles. Cassette diagram shows variability outside the upper and lower quartiles. Outliers can be represented as individual points (outlier). The distances between the different parts of the cassette indicate the degree of dispersion (scattering) and asymmetry of the data, including outliers. The line inside the box represents the median and describes the central trend. If the median is close to the bottom edge, then the distribution is inclined to the left (small values predominate and there are few cases with large but extreme values); if the median is close to the upper edge, then the distribution is tilted to the right. The box itself represents the distribution of 50% of the characteristics (values) of the variable; the bottom edge of the box shows the 25% percentile value, and the top edge of the 75% percentile. The larger the box, the greater the variability of results are. The outer limits of the boxplot chart (above and below the box) are called whiskers and are drawn from the smallest to the highest value located within 1.5 box lengths, also representing a measure of variability. Extreme cases located in the 1.5-3 long box range are represented by small circles filled with colour ● which have passed the case number or the value of a feature. Extreme cases located at distances greater than 3 box lengths are represented by small asterisks * that have passed in their case the case number (Lahoz-Beltra, 2021; Rotariu, 1998).

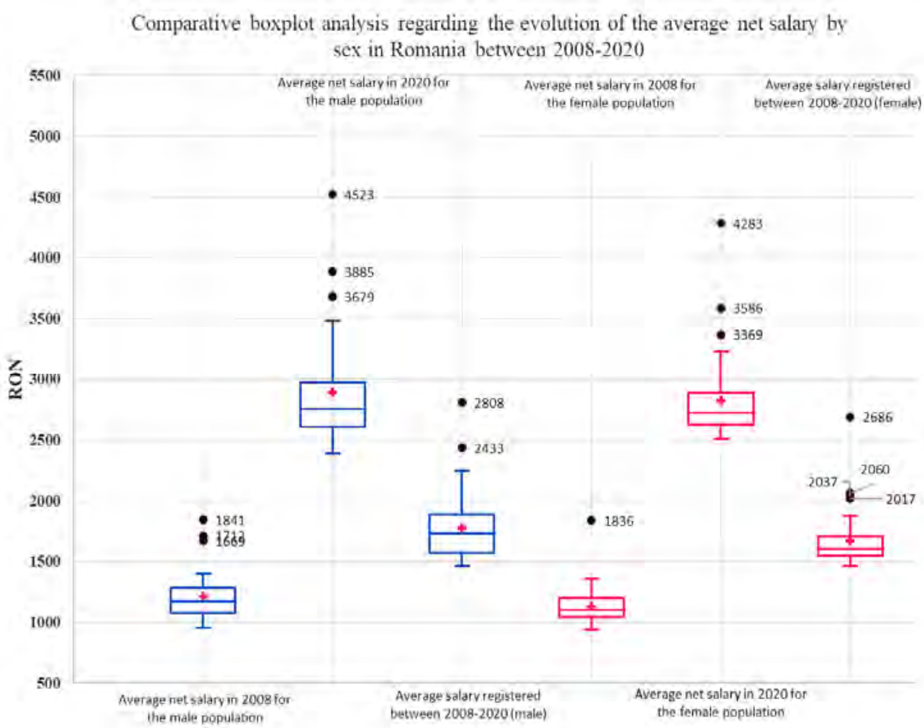


Figure 2. Evolution of the average net salary by sex in Romania (2008-2020)

The comparative boxplot analysis in Figure 2 shows the dynamics of the differences between the average net nominal earnings for women and men, in Romania, for the period 2008-2020. The differences between earnings by sex are observable by comparing the differences between average and median, respectively the values for the graphically represented variables, including the aberrant values that mean the counties with the highest earnings.

In order to make a ranking of the counties with the highest earnings for women and men for the period 2008-2020, we used a Lollipop Chart as shown in Figure 3. This chart is an alternative to the classic bar chart or lines chart and is preferable when analysing data with large and close values. The counties where the best earnings are registered, with a small difference between women and men are Bucharest, Cluj, Timiș, Ilfov and Iași; at the bottom of the ranking are Harghita, Vrancea, Neamț, Teleorman, Covasna).

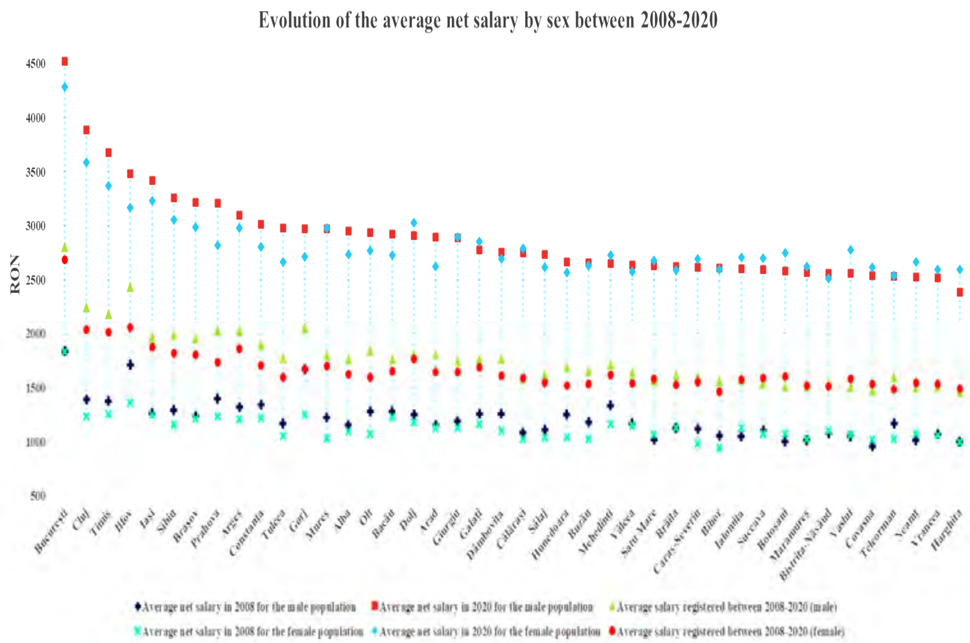


Figure 3. Evolution of the average net salary by sex în România (2008-2020)

The Pearson correlation is used as a statistical method that seeks to confirm the hypothesis that all variables are correlated. The resulting correlation coefficient is very high, for all indicators used, which confirms the hypothesis launched. Some of the variables were also correlated by the similarity of the variables, a situation encountered for the variables that are part of the same category, with a differentiation instead by gender of the data.

Correlation matrix (Pearson):

Var.	Variables	Var1	Var2	Var3	Var4	Var5	Var6	Var7	Var8	Var9	Var10	Var11
1	Average GDP per capita recorded between 2009-2019 (GDPperCapita)	1	0,7585	0,5421	-0,6390	-0,5684	0,8984	0,8831	0,8698	0,8849	0,8090	0,8160
2	Average employment rate recorded between 2008-2020 (male)	0,7585	1	0,7875	-0,6494	-0,5624	0,5983	0,5895	0,5367	0,5159	0,4932	0,5049
3	Average employment rate recorded between 2008-2020 (female)	0,5421	0,7875	1	-0,2784	-0,3521	0,5476	0,5583	0,2840	0,3532	0,4422	0,4647
4	Average unemployment rate recorded between 2008-2020 (male)	-0,6390	-0,6494	-0,2784	1	0,9168	-0,4554	-0,4447	-0,5160	-0,5001	-0,3773	-0,3823
5	Average unemployment rate recorded between 2008-2020 (female)	-0,5684	-0,5624	-0,3521	0,9168	1	-0,4475	-0,4458	-0,4575	-0,5103	-0,3548	-0,3732
6	Average number of employees registered between 2008-2020 (male)	0,8984	0,5983	0,5476	-0,4554	-0,4475	1	0,9984	0,7540	0,8642	0,9612	0,9670
7	Average number of employees registered between 2008-2020 (female)	0,8831	0,5895	0,5583	-0,4447	-0,4458	0,9984	1	0,7328	0,8523	0,9638	0,9707
8	Average salary registered between 2008-2020 (male)	0,8698	0,5367	0,2840	-0,5160	-0,4575	0,7540	0,7328	1	0,9305	0,6997	0,7006
9	Average salary registered between 2008-2020 (female)	0,8849	0,5159	0,3532	-0,5001	-0,5103	0,8642	0,8523	0,9305	1	0,8276	0,8375
10	Total graduates 2008-2019 (male)	0,8090	0,4932	0,4422	-0,3773	-0,3548	0,9612	0,9638	0,6997	0,8276	1	0,9970
11	Total graduates 2008-2019 (female)	0,8160	0,5049	0,4647	-0,3823	-0,3732	0,9670	0,9707	0,7006	0,8375	0,9970	1

Values in bold are different from 0 with a significance level alpha=0,05

p-values:

Var.	Variables	Var1	Var2	Var3	Var4	Var5	Var6	Var7	Var8	Var9	Var10	Var11
1	Average GDP per capita recorded between 2009-2019 (GDPperCapita)	0	0,0000	0,0002	0,0000	0,0001	0,0000	0,0000	0,0000	0,0000	0,0000	0,0000
2	Average employment rate recorded between 2008-2020 (male)	< 0,0001	0	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0,0002	0,0005	0,0009	0,0007
3	Average employment rate recorded between 2008-2020 (female)	0,0002	< 0,0001	0	0,0743	0,0222	0,0002	0,0001	0,0683	0,0218	0,0034	0,0019
4	Average unemployment rate recorded between 2008-2020 (male)	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0,0743	0	< 0,0001	0,0024	0,0032	0,0005	0,0007	0,0138	0,0125
5	Average unemployment rate recorded between 2008-2020 (female)	< 0,0001	0,0001	0,0222	< 0,0001	0	0,0030	0,0031	0,0023	0,0006	0,0212	0,0149
6	Average number of employees registered between 2008-2020 (male)	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0,0002	0,0024	0,0030	0	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001
7	Average number of employees registered between 2008-2020 (female)	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0,0001	0,0032	0,0031	< 0,0001	0	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001
8	Average salary registered between 2008-2020 (male)	< 0,0001	0,0002	0,0683	0,0005	0,0023	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001
9	Average salary registered between 2008-2020 (female)	< 0,0001	0,0005	0,0218	0,0007	0,0006	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0	< 0,0001	< 0,0001
10	Total graduates 2008-2019 (male)	< 0,0001	0,0009	0,0034	0,0138	0,0212	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0	< 0,0001
11	Total graduates 2008-2019 (female)	< 0,0001	0,0007	0,0019	0,0125	0,0149	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	< 0,0001	0

Values in bold are different from 0 with a significance level alpha=0,05

Figure 4. Pearson Correlation Matrix

The statistical analysis showed a series of negative correlations, such as the unemployment rate at county level (average of 2008-2020). These negative correlations also indicate an atypical situation, more precisely the negative correlation between the unemployment rate and the employment rate, a situation due to an opposition effect of the characteristics of the variables in the analysis: the mirror representation of a two-variable from the analyzed phenomenon.

The table with the significance of the correlation confirms from a statistical perspective the validity of the correlations resulting from the analysis.

The two linear regressions are a form of identification and graphical representation of a series of correlations. In the present case, the correlation between the female unemployment rate and the GDP per capita was represented, the resulting correlation is a negative one with a low correlation coefficient (0.323). Linear regression, which represents the GDP per capita and the average net salary recorded at the female gender level, has a high correlation coefficient (0.783), and the resulting correlation is a positive one.

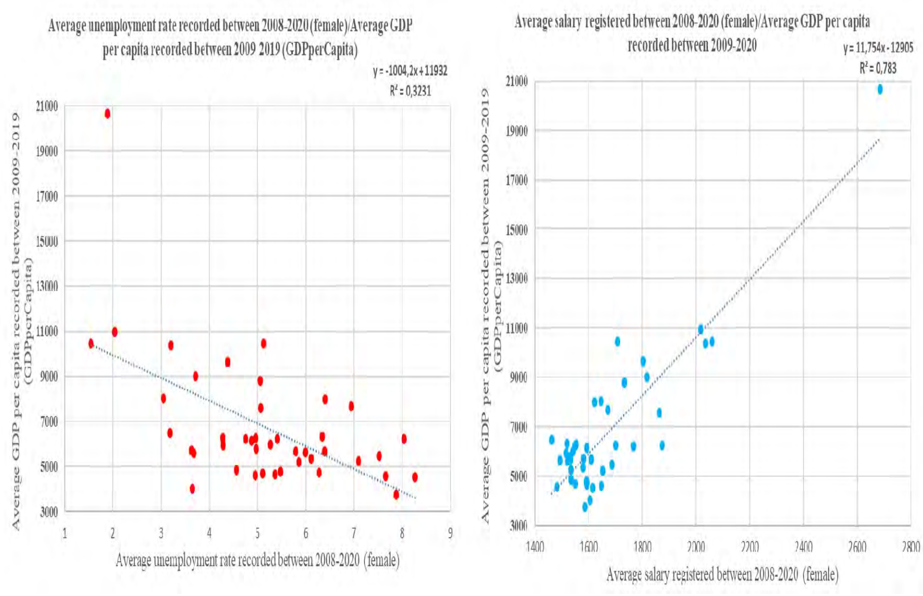


Figure 5. Linear regression analysis

The cartogram represents the differences in LEI (RON) between the average net salary earned by women compared to the average net salary earned by men in Romania, showing a series of social and spatial disparities between genders.

In 2008 the territorial disparities were not very high between women and men, although most of the average net earnings recorded in Romania were higher for males, the largest discrepancy was in Gorj County with 421 LEI in favour of men. In 2021, the discrepancies increased at the territorial level, but instead there were several counties where the balance tipped in favour of women. Many of the counties where high values in favour of women are registered present a series of social and economic problems, with a significant share of people engaged in the process of external migration.

The higher ratio registered in favour of women is generated by the significant share of the budgetary sector in the respective counties (Botoșani, Neamț, Vaslui), where there is a significant and disproportionate concentration of the share of female staff in the total human resources engaged in the public sector: public administration, education, health, etc.

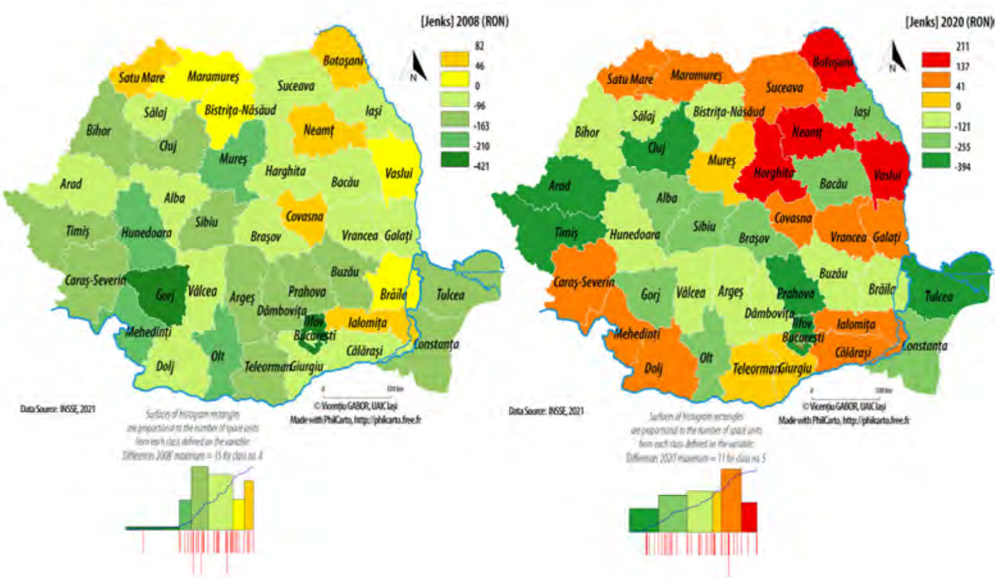


Figure 6. The net pay-gap in the counties of Romania (in RON)

Although these counties have a significant share of employed women, they also use labour in some economic activities in the private sector, where human resources tend to be disproportionate in favour of women, such as garments industry or the food industry. The private sector in these counties does not have a high degree of absorption of human resources, the majority and statistically visible remaining the budgetary sector.

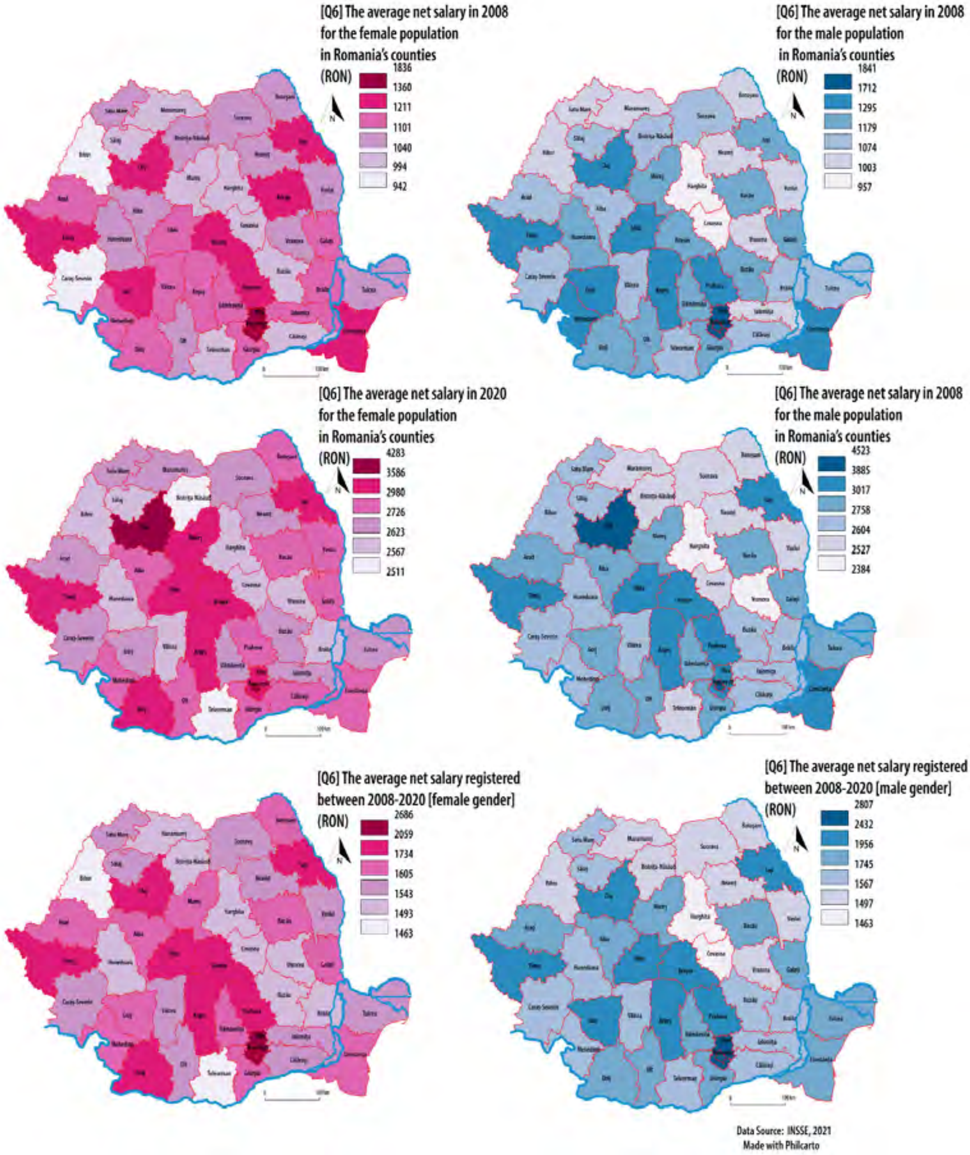


Figure 7. Cartographies representing the evolution of average earnings, women vs. men by counties (2008-2020)

3.4. The standard of living in Romania after accession to the European Union

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to eradicate poverty in all its forms and in all contexts in which it manifests itself (SDG 1). The National Institute of Statistics carries out an annual research called „Survey on quality of life" which has as main objective the production of statistical data necessary to characterize the living conditions of the population and to assess poverty: living conditions, health, education, employment work, income, equipping the home with various facilities and durable goods, etc.

For the evaluation of women's the standard of living compared to men in Romania after the accession to the EU (2008-2019), we used the following indicators from the INS - TEMPO Online database:

- relative poverty rate is defined as the share of poor people in the total population (people in households with a disposable income per adult-equivalent below the poverty line are considered poor);
- relative poverty rate before social transfers, excluding pensions, is defined as the share of poor people in the total population (those non-pension social transfers are deducted from disposable income, the latter being kept in the volume of income);
- at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE) is the share in the total population of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion. People who are subject to the AROPE indicator are those who are in at least one of the following situations: they have disposable income below the poverty line; are in a state of severe material deprivation; live in a household with very low labour intensity;
- rate of severe material deprivation shows the share of people over 18 who are in the following situations: cannot afford to pay bills on time, a vacation of at least one week away from home, meat consumption every two days, phone, personal car, ensuring adequate heating of the house, etc.

Table 3. Poverty indicators. Romania: 2008 vs. 2019

Percent (%)	**Relative Poverty Rate**		**Relative poverty rate before social transfers (excluding pensions)**		**AROPE Indicator**		**Severe Material deprivation rate**	
Year	**2008**	**2019**	**2008**	**2019**	**2008**	**2019**	**2008**	**2019**
TOTAL	23.6	23.8	30.8	28.1	44.2	31.2	32.7	14.5
Male	22.8	22.7	30.1	27.0	43.0	30.3	32.2	14.5
Female	24,3	24.9	31.4	29.2	45.3	32.1	33.2	14.5

The data centralized in the table above show that poverty is a gender issue in Romania, in fact one of the poorest countries in Europe. Women are on average 2 percentage points poorer than men. In 2019, the relative poverty rate for men was 22.7%, and for women with two percentage points higher, 24.9%. In other words, in Romania, one in four women is poor. Without social transfers, excluding pensions, the relative poverty rate for women is 29.2%.

It is important to point out that, if the state did not intervene through social protection measures in the form of social transfers, the relative poverty rate in 2019 would have been about 5 percentage points higher (the difference between the relative poverty rate before social transfers, excluding pensions, and relative poverty rate).

After Romania's accession to the European Union, poverty did not decrease significantly, despite economic growth before the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that social policies for preventing and combating poverty do not achieve their proposed goals. Romanian society continues to be extremely economically and socially polarized, with major discrepancies between urban and rural areas.

4. Concluding remarks

The data provided by the European Commission, Eurostat and the European Institute for Gender Equality show that Romania (54.5 points) is the European average in terms of the gender equality index (67.4 points), in 2021. From reports the aforementioned institutions, women in Romania are affected by domestic violence, face problems in terms of accommodating working time with household activity, access to health, sexual and reproductive services, but also with political under-representation, especially in Parliament and Government. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates women's problems in the family /household, as they are needed to spend more time to educating children and helping the elderly, including straining family relationships.

The correlation and regression analysis show the link between independent variables (employment, unemployment, earnings, number of employees, number of graduates, by sex, period 2008-2020) and dependent variables (increase in GDP per capita in the period 2008-2020). There is a gap between the employment rate in women *versus* employment rate for men in Romania (16.5%), compared to the European average (11.9%). At the same time, the indicator regarding the inactivity rate of the labour force registers higher values in the case of women, explanations being the assumption of more complex and time-consuming family responsibilities compared to those assumed by men. Unpaid work of women in the household is unrecognized and not socially rewarded.

Regarding the situation of women in Romania, there are positive aspects reflected in the evolutions of some statistical indicators in recent years. We note that the share of women graduating from higher education has increased compared to men, including in the technical fields and IT&C - fields traditionally reserved for men. In terms of wages, the gap between the average net salary obtained by a woman *versus* a man from Romania is among the smallest in Europe. The counties in which women and men earn the best is Bucharest, Cluj, Timiș, Ilfov and Iași. There are also counties where women earn better than men (Botoșani, Neamț, Vaslui), where the share of public sector employees in total employees is higher than in other counties, women being the majority in areas such as education, health social care and public administration.

Poverty is a gender issue in Romania, with women being on average two percentage points poorer than men. The poverty situation would increase on average by five percentage points if the government did not intervene through social transfers. According to the latest data published by Eurostat, in 2020, 30.4% of Romania's population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

The limitations of our study derive from the fact that not all aspects related to the quality of life of women were covered. The issue of violence against women is insufficiently explored due to the lack of official statistics. At the same time, issues such as the social and economic consequences of women's external migration, maternity of adolescent mothers, the situation of forced marriages, other forms of discrimination and abuse that impact the quality of life of girls and women remained unexplored.

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BOOK REVIEW

„HOMO MAGICUS" – A SOCIOANTHROPOLOGICAL READING OF THE WORLD

OTILIA HUZUM[1]

Nicu Gavriluţă, *HOMO MAGICUS. Camouflages, Mysteries, Soteriologists,*
Iasi, Editura, Junimea, 2020

Homo Magicus. Camouflages, Mysteries, Soteriology is a book that we can easily attribute to the direction of a socio-anthropological approach to the religious phenomenon which the already well-known sociologist and writer Nicu Gavriluță has accustomed us to. Without denying for a moment the concerns that have consecrated him in the field and in the readers' preferences, the sociologist from Iasi returns in 2021 with a new volume published at the „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Publishing House in Iasi to provide us with an exciting, promising and up-to-date topic. The magic, in its camouflaged, mysterious and saving hypostases, is the focal point of the book around which the entire construction revolves.

This time, the author brings to our attention the magical fact as a new reading grid of reality. Thus, magic is not just an object of study, it turns into an instrument for reading and interpreting the world in which we live. This hermeneutical formula is not entirely new. It is inspired by the writings of Eliade and Culianu and adapted to current contexts and phenomena. Thus, two are the meanings that the term magic acquires in the volume Homo Magicus: the one of playing the phantasms and the one of unusual attraction, fascination.

Nicu Gavriluță's goal is to draw our attention to the fact that life and everything they inhabited by it has another level of interpretation and understanding. In this case, it is located beyond what is quantifiable and measurable. We are, therefore, in the company of a bold socio-anthropological approach that brings attention to the role of hermeneutics in knowing and understanding the world.

Homo Magicus is such because, as evidenced by Nicu Gavriluță's book, it is inhabited by sacredness and mystery. It is magicus because the world he lives in is a truly fabulous, magical one. It is also magical because it manages to penetrate

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reality beyond appearances, beyond its visible fabric. Yes, man is so and not otherwise because in his essence flickers a divine spark and is fascinated by the miracle of this world.

Thus, all the texts contained in this volume become true pleas in favor of an appointment of this kind: *Homo Magicus.*

A great lover of books and reading, Professor Gavriluță opens the volume with a text dedicated to the book. In a way, for those who know him, the chapter „The Magic of the Book and the Alternative Worlds" is also a public devotion to the relationship between the author and the magical world of books. For many they constitute themselves as veritable vehicles of spirit and imagination to fabulous alternative worlds, they can become an intercession to the absolute. „(...) the book written in ancient Greek ceases to be an instrument of didactic training. It becomes an Epiphanic reality (...)" (pp.34-35).

Then the magic of reading is complemented by the philosophical understanding of magic in the chapter „Magic in Hegelian Philosophy". Although less well known this preoccupation of the German philosopher, it demonstrates that the spirit objectifies in the world in the surprising form of the magical or revealed religions. Presenting itself as a „direct religion," magic draws its sap from the reality of the human spirit and is „a primal hypostasis of the camouflage of the spirit in history." (p.49) Or, such an understanding proposed by Hegel invites a return to certain philosophical perspectives taken up and mishandled by exegetes.

Even the most secular current phenomena do not remain untouched by contamination with magic. For example, in „The magic of the new secular religions: political correctness and woke ideology" Nicu Gavriluță explains why the most popular expressions of secularism exert today a magical attraction and fascination. Camouflaging old and essential myths of the human condition *(the myth of the confrontation between good and evil,* the myth of the golden age), these ideological *writings* of a late marxism on Western soil *rebreath suffering,* fetishize vulnerability, *redefine the world* and *rediscover the vitality* of ritualistic participation in social rebirth under a new ideological cover.

Magic is not to be understood as a perfectly autonomous phenomenon, but is part of the existence of a complex suitem, of a „participational universe", in the expression of John Wheeler. The sociologist from Iasi also proves that the current separation between science, religion and magic is contradicted by Isaac Newton's project of total science and by a fascinating work with a strong transdisciplinary imprint, *The Atom. An Endless Story. A Transdisciplinary and Transcultural Incursion,* signed by Simona Modereanu, Alina Gavriluț, Maricel Pop, Gabriel Crumpei.

On the other hand, this complexity of the world extends beyond the living or lived experience. The journeys of the soul into the great religious traditions and the experiences of the limit of death scientifically analyzed compose a fascinating perspective on a universe extended beyond the limit of the visible. For

Nicu Gavriluță this unusual translates into what he calls to be „The magic of life after life".

The probing of the underworld and the attraction to the unseen is a constant of the human spirit, observes Professor Gavriluță. The fact is visible in science through the theories of n-dimensionality (Jim Al-Khalili, *Black Holes, wormholes and time travels)* philosophy, history and religion (I. P. Culianu, *The Historian's Kit for the Fourth Dimension*) in literature (M. Eliade, The Secret of *Dr. Honigberger*), film, etc. It is not only about imagining and conceiving (mathematically or not) an alternative, multidimensional space, but also about a new epistemic placement on another scale of man and the visible ones. Thus, from the perspective of the theory of complexity, Nicu Gavriluță considers that „the people of the third millennium will really take a step forward only if they understand religion, magic, folklore but also life itself – as well as the human mind itself – are nothing but three-dimensional fragments of a cosmic puzzle game. The real reality goes far beyond the conventional frameworks of this world.” (p.146) It can be the subject of study, of devotion, it can arouse attention and stimulate the imagination, but at the same time, the same hidden face of reality can be subject to speculation, arbitrariness and imposture. „The magic between spell and sparrow” is a chapter that captures both the survival of the magical by camouflaging it in novel contemporary forms and practices and, through it, an incessant reverence of the world. And here the intellectual from Iasi captures the fallen forms, the kitsch, the pathologies of the magic in the world having as main argument the book of Camelia Burghele, *From spell to sparrow.*

In order to be as convincing as possible in his statements, Nicu Gavriluță exemplifies successfully and with inspiration the survival of magic in the world by analyzing the fascinating world of automotive technology. The winged horses of the old mythologies today take the face of some brilliant technical specimens of horsepower. The migration of magic into technology (autonomous cars, those that respond to voice commands, that change color or that reconfigure their shape, etc.) and the attraction it exerts is a sign that magic is silently and efficiently frequenting us. Undoubtedly, it also betrays Nicu Gavriluță's passion for sophisticated cars and mythology. After all, the two are not excluded but live together in a discreet harmony.

The last part of the work includes three chapters that, in a more serious register, draw attention to the spiritual crisis of the Romanian village, to the need for sacrifice and miracle. All these themes appear as a true corollary of the whole endeavor. This is because the traditional spirit and especially the traditional countryside constitutes itself as a true keeper of an inexhaustible spiritual resource in which the religious, the magical or the imaginary or alternative worlds represent a living ferment of life.

Job's lesson, masterfully interpreted by the well-known French writer, Rene Guenon and brought up to date by Professor Nicu Gavriluță can be a key to interpreting our daily experiences. Many of them stand under the sign of banality and some easily glimpse the magic of this world. Life, after all, is an endless cycle of destruction and births in which one cannot deny the presence in countless ways of the „invisible ritual of cathartic and founding lynching". The veterotestamentary sequence of Job's sacrifice indicates an *ancient path of the ungodly* that repeats itself paradigmatically from time to time. It shows us that, not definitively, the logic of the functioning of the world escapes rational patterns and approaches the miracle. And that's really magical.

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BOOK REVIEW

HYPOSTASES OF OTHERNESS AND SOCIAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE CHURCH

ILARION MÂȚĂ[1]

Petronela Polixenia Nistor, *Philanthropy and professional social services in the Romanian Orthodox Church,* Iasi, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2020

The work „Philanthropy and professional social services in the Romanian Orthodox Church", written by Petronela Polixenia Nistor, published in 2020 by a famous publishing house: „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Publishing House in Iasi, treats the subject of social assistance from a religious perspective seriously and fills the romanian journalism picture with its complexity through the analyzes performed and the results obtained. The complexity of the work is given by the research of the charitable and philanthropic field of faith in the Romanian Orthodox Church, carried out especially in the Archdiocese of Iasi.

The author states that the purpose of the paper is to show and explain the social-philanthropic characteristics within the Church and even to present a model of Christian social assistance specific to the Archdiocese of Iasi. I noticed that it was oriented around three important objectives: the identification of the specifics and the significance attributed to the social philanthropic activity of BOR in different environments of the Archdiocese of Iaşi; identifying the stage and peculiarities of the professionalization of social services offered by BOR in the Archdiocese of Iasi and clarifying the roles of the priest in the process of combining philanthropy with professional social services, which clarifies a number of basic concepts of the work, such as charity, philanthropy, institutionalization and professionalism, faith-based organizations.

In the theoretical part, the human and social dimension of the charitable and philanthropic gesture are exposed. Charity is defined, in the work, as „action (social) oriented towards the other, taking the form of a self-sacrifice, which implies tolerance, it is a form of manifestation of one's own will (free will), without a discriminatory character" (D. Heyd, 2016, p. 20), while Philanthropy means „an act of charity undertaken for the benefit of the poor and the charities"

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(Ioan M. Stoian, 1994, p. 63). Whether it is the western space (where the term charity is used) or the eastern one (where we meet the concept of philanthropy), the two concepts translate human and social experiences and gestures that represent the foundations of modern social assistance, as stated by E. Zamfir and D. Buzducea, in all societies, they express the deep human nature, related to the absolute (the vertical dimension of existence) and socially (the horizontal dimension of existence).

The impact of this work is guaranteed by the diversity and relevance of the literary sources used (E. Zamfir, D. Buzducea, E. Durkheim, S. Frunză, D. Saulean, T. Gheorghe, M. Olah, etc.), highlighting the role of the Church in the management of human values essential for the Christian life such as: caring for others, love for others and sacrifice as a founding gesture, values that he identifies to be concentrated in the charitable gesture. We understand from the paper that most philanthropic actions include charitable work in the field of education, equality between people, poverty or sanogenetic culture, and resources are not just financial, but involve the philanthropist's private resources, time, social capital and expertise. with the aim of producing a change in the environment in which we live (Matthew Bishop, Michael Green, 2008, p. 49) and that for today's philanthropists, this concept is „a concern for the manifestation of generosity, which pursues the well-being of humanity and human development; this altruistic attitude is most often manifested in the form of donations in money, property or activities to people in need, but also through the endowment of educational institutions, health or any kind of generosity manifested in the social interest „(Gerald Freund, 1996, p. 13).

I appreciate the exposition of the history of institutionalization and professionalization, that there is a tradition and that they are not modern concepts, but they manifested themselves from the beginning. The first forms of institutionalization of charity and philanthropy being identified since the time of Constantine the Great (brephetrophies (swings for abandoned children, up to seven years old), orphanages (orphanages), parthenomies (shelters for young girls from poor families or orphanages), gyrocomies (shelters for old and unsupported widows).

The institutionalization and professionalization of charity enjoys special attention in the book, the author, identifying and highlighting the specifics of social assistance carried out by the Church, its strengths, the peculiarities of social assistance in faith-based organizations with reference to the romanian space. The accents she puts very well are those concerning the involvement and motivations of the welfare and charitable act, the capacity of the Church to organize and manage resources, the complementarity and cooperation with the state system. Since the middle of the first century, the *philanthropic community act* has acquired a church character, we could say institutionally since it was practiced at the level of the local Churches in the different provinces of the Roman Empire, supported by the Holy Apostles, bishops and ministers of those Churches (E. Durkheim, 1978, pp. 158-180).

Regarding the *professionalization of charity*, it is stated that „first in the British countryside, then in the United States and Western Europe, the consequences of the law initiated by Queen Elizabeth on the poor were the transfer of public responsibility for disadvantaged people and community responsibility. on the care, expressed through the churches, as intermediaries and institutions that offered philanthropic services „(C. Bocancea, 2003, p. 123).

All the theoretical information is supported by the comparative research carried out over three years (2016-2018), on distinct chapters (institutions and services, budget, staff, projects and social assistance programs, beneficiaries) from which we learn that the Church has an appreciable number of specialized social assistance institutions and services (815 institutions in 2018 - social canteens, medical services, residential centers, sheltered housing, day centers, social kindergartens, etc.). These social assistance activities mobilize a financial effort of 24,000,000 euros in 2018, money from direct financial aid and material aid. All these activities are carried out with a significant number of volunteers (9,573), specialized staff (1,486) and only 461 social workers. We also find out from Petronela Nistor's research that the total number of beneficiaries is increasing (104,957 people in 2018).

The summary of the entire care activity carried out by the Church is then put by the author in the equation of a broader concept developed in the West, that of *faith-based organizations*, emphasizing their specificity, characteristics and typology, according to the model of Sider and Unruh (p. 115). Petronela Nistor touches on and explains the importance of developing the social economy, which supports philanthropic activities „in the context of the modern world, the social economy has returned today not only in terms of philosophical arguments, ideologies, but also in terms of practical action" (C. Gavriluță, 2016, p. 49). Researching the specifics of the act of charity and social assistance in the Archdiocese in Iasi, Petronela Polixenia Nistor is investigating 13 archdioceses, 1,221 parishes and 94 monasteries and hermitages. The author's study benefited from a complex, exploratory approach (inspired by the action research model evoked by K. Lewin) using quantitative and qualitative methods and investigating all categories of actors of charity and social assistance (those who provide services beneficiaries and supervisors).

The research results highlight a number of issues and a certain perception of the act of charity and care among professional or non-professional service providers. One of the main problems identified in the field is poverty, and this is often accompanied by spiritual poverty. Therefore, as the author remarks very well, the Archdiocese of Iasi insists on *working with the beneficiary,* and not for the beneficiary.

In conclusion, the work Philanthropy and professional social services in the Romanian Orthodox Church. Sociological research conducted in the Archdiocese of Iasi signed by Petronela Polixenia Nistor, states that the Church can become the most important actor in providing professional and efficient social services, given that it has an impressive capacity to mobilize resources and approach beneficiaries, which can leads to streamlining the intervention process.

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BOOK REVIEW

SOCIAL PHENOMENA IN CULTURAL DIALOGUES

COSTEL MARIAN DALBAN[1]

Nicu Gavriluţă, *Life, An Initiatory Ritual.*
Interviews and Cultural Dialogues, Iasi,
Editura Junimea, 2020

The volume *Life, An Initiatory Ritual. Interviews and Cultural Dialogues,* written by Professor Nicu Gavriluță, appeared in 2020 at a prestigious publishing house: Junimea in Iasi. The author summarizes in his speech a series of leitmotifs found in other published works: the condition of **the religious man** capitalized in the new social context (Gavriluță, 2013), the explanation of the meaning of life in relation to certain beliefs: globalization, multiculturalism, technology, myth, ritual (Gavriluță, 2015), or the updating of the idea of **political correctness** (Gavriluță, 2018) through concrete social examples.

Thus, life encapsulates these motifs as forms of self-testing in a labyrinth (or several) of initiation. Inspired by the writings of authors such as Mircea Eliade and Ioan Petru Culianu, life is transposed into a ritual that takes place according to the rules established by the labyrinth. If in a Greek sense the labyrinth has the role of keeping closed the mythological creature (the Minotaur), the one that could produce disharmony and social imbalance, in this work the labyrinth has a new connotation: in the center of the labyrinth is the perfection of the individual, and the route is from the outside to the inside, from ignorance to knowledge, from imbalance to balance, from material life to spiritual life... This initiatory ritual is discovered through the 12 works (introduction, 9 interviews and 2 cultural dialogues) which excellently synthesize the author's motivation, the existing social problems and the directions of postmodernity as forms of initiation.

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The beginning of the work is one that presents the professional genesis of the author, transposed through an intergenerational comparison, the generation of current students and that of 1987, representing the year in which a destiny in the field of philosophy and sociology was chosen. The admission to studies, the presence of new technologies in the lives of young people, globalization, internationalization and acceptance of multiculturalism, all under the auspices of the transition from a communist government to classical democracy, are genuine tests of the labyrinth, forms of initiation and intellectual formation. The author admits that he had the „chance of an inspired choice” (Gavriluță, 2020, p. 8) and his studies in philosophy and sociology represented a „modus vivendi", an aspect that is hardly encountered in the postmodern present determined by the social and material pressures to which the current graduates are subjected.

The transition from the personal plane to the societal one is achieved through elements that characterize alchemy, both in the material plane, by combining resources in order to obtain the alchemical gold, and in the spiritual plane through the path to perfection and immortality of the alchemist: „I want to say that if in the athanor the elements are purified and, sometimes, the alchemical gold is reached, then there are other strange combinations in the body and mind of the alchemist.” (Gavriluță, 2020, p. 16). The Athanor (the furnace of fire) is also transposed into the plane of the religious man, and the motif of the labyrinth is found through the alchemist's attempts to reach the utopian finality: the *philosopher's stone.* Inspired by the writings of Carl Gustav Jung, the author compares the stages of life (prenatal, birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, etc.) with four main phases of the alchemical process (nigredo, albedo, xanthosis, rubedo). The representations of alchemy are transposed in the stages of life towards „inner purification, the attainment of perfection". The fire register is found as a process for perfection and knowledge. Through fire, impure metals become pure. Through *the fire of life, impure* man becomes pure (spiritual).

The discursive repertoire also remains at the level of the individual, and in a secular, global, multicultural world, a question arises in regards to the degree of acceptance and tolerance of the different one towards the majority. Professor Nicu Gavriluță emphasizes the necessity of accepting the one next to us, an aspect that is achieved through love: „Acceptance makes way for the different, sometimes the deeply different one, thanks to the miracle achieved by Christian love” (Gavriluță, 2020, p. 69).

Family is part of the individual's life, and the postmodern challenges are plenty: the appearance of the transgender, cloning, redefining the parents, etc. All this essentially converges towards a spiritual crisis (or Cristianophobia), which is based on the economic crisis, the social crisis, the epidemiological crisis. The solution offered by the author is to return to Christian knowledge. The author places scientific objectivism in the background and presents another inner *self,* that of *homo religiosus,* stating the following conviction: „the older I get I understand that the absence of „sacred fire" in our soul and the replacement of God with fetishes can kill us" (Gavriluță, 2020, p. 78).

All these aspects happen in an international macrocosm, and globalization is an irreversible phenomenon, especially in the economic, political, informational fields. There is a question of a conflict between the local and global cultural space. Local/national cultures are based on language and religion, fundamental elements in the definition of an individual. The author states, however, that Western/European values should not be neglected, but also taken over at the expense of local/national values. The key to survival is a return to the sacred: „Global society needs more national spirit and a soul in order to survive in the future. For the West, this soul is given by Christianity" (Gavriluta, 2020, p. 97).

Life as a ritual of initiation is also found in the condition of the citizen during the pandemic period, where the key element is *the adaptability* to the new social norms generated by the state of emergency. Nicu Gavriluță presents a series of social and emotional transformations of individuals. Inner balance must be achieved „by praying to God, taking care of family and ourselves, working and, above all, trying to give spiritual meaning to our lives." (Gavriluta, 2020, p. 94) *The negative of the daily newspaper* is diminished by the return to spiritual valences, which are the last solution given by the author (Gavriluta, 2017). This manages to diminish the effects of the secular religion *of safety*, where isolation in one's own home, physical and social distancing can ensure apparent medical and social security.

Excessive technology is a catalyst contributing to the emergence of secularism. It reaffirms the important role that classical religions have in explaining the new directions of technology in relation to the individual and his spiritual condition. The author brings to the fore a series of current problems, both socially and politically, culturally, administratively.

In order to solve some social problems, a professional outfit is needed. Professor Nicu Gavriluță's dialogue is continued in a double hypostasis: that of his own example of professionalism and dedication, through the awards obtained in the field in which he operates and that of the character who projects an image of the future generations of professionals, by characterizing today's students. „We want quality people” seems to be the social desideratum, the one that is achieved through the internalization of moral, social, high values (Gavriluță, 2020, p. 137). The author goes through a *check list* of the current social needs among young people, the emphasis being placed on the need for identity values, to the detriment of the material ones. These values found under the umbrella of humanistic culture have a soteriological force of „salvation". The culturalization of the individual is the chance of the modern man to live „the fullness in time and eternity in history” (Mircea Eliade).

Towards the end of the work, the author transposes the condition of the current man through the global postmodern issues. It urges in the pandemic context to an even more thorough experience of the elements important for life, and this can be achieved through the functions of the holidays. The global, intercultural framework is completed by analyzing *black lives matter* social movements and the *woke movement* in the context of racial discrimination. Although a follower of multiculturalism and the acceptance of the different one, Professor Nicu Gavriluță does not encourage *politically correct* social movements by vandalizing statues, changing some names, closing some institutions, etc. All this is part of the identity and history of a nation (with positive and negative aspects) and must be assumed as such, and „the rewriting in a politically correct manner of history is an act of utopian construction".

Thus, in a manner that characterizes his writings, Nicu Gavriluță manages, like a circular novel, to place the individual, both at the beginning of the work and at the end, through the route of the labyrinth of social problems understood as forms of initiation towards spiritual perfection.

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