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Short scientific article

MANKIND: FACING THE REALITY[1]

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Abstract: The encapsulation in the common concepts of sociology and its related sciences (social sciences, humanities) in the rethinking of the phenomena of reality (like the ones created by man as well as those that are still far from being grasped) creates the effect of a spider's web from which the thinkers' disentanglement is only illusory. Completely aware that the structures of the social systems are at the same time the structures of structuring, or, rather, of social engineering that justifies the seemingly intrinsic, real-life circumstances of existence, sociologists, still, have the task of moving forward from the analysis of the existing towards the field of designing new questions, postulating the possibility of futuristic discourses whose rigid matrices are stripped off in an imaginative and emancipated manner. Consequently, the basic trauma of society and culture are generically related not only to facing the change, be it logical and progressive or violent and destructive, but also to facing the trauma of emancipation and of a breakthrough in the hardened epistemological discourses. Furthermore, following the "nausea" of existence, one can reach the essence, in a progressive, but open process. If the social sciences and humanities really do secure the input in the process of breaking the closed scientific systems and, at the same time, postulate the thesis of the dialectic relation between man and universe, then they are bound to break the established models of man's life in society and, also, in the universes that surround him. The traumatic effects left by the historical discourses which produced knowledge of *cultural trauma*, of the evident effects of the *culture of resignation*, *culture of fear*, and *culture of distrust* are the challenges that sociology and the human intellectual energy, in general, are faced with.

Key words: cultural trauma, culture of resignation, culture of fear, culture of distrust, sociological paradigms

Like other social sciences and disciplines from the domain of the humanities, in the course of its development, sociology has been creating the spider's web effect in its revealing or constant rethinking (at least seemingly) of the phenomena of reality. It continues to do so, especially today; this refers both

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to the reality created by man and that which is still far from his reach, except perhaps indirectly. It is an artificial, more or less potent discourse from which theoreticians and researchers allegedly manage to liberate themselves. They are aware, or at least seem to be, that the structures of the social system are simultaneously the structures of structuring, i.e. of the social engineering which justifies, believes in, conceives and explains the seemingly intrinsic, real-life circumstances of human existence. Nevertheless, sociologists often, latently or manifestly, give themselves the task of moving on from the analysis of the existing to the field of designing new questions, imaginatively and with emancipating tendencies, thus postulating the possibility for futuristic discourses devoid of rigid and self-reproductive matrices. In metatheoretical terms, intoned in a positivist or constructivist/deconstructivist manner, the social narratives and creative products of humanity are in a state of constant tension with the ontic substrate of life and the universe, a social and anthropological reality which abounds in the manifestations of its content. The radicalism of this historically generated situation of misbalanced competition between the real, on one hand, and the imagined, intelligible, rational, aesthetic, and poetic, on the other, is the immanent source of trauma, both intellectual and artistic (with concrete consequences for human thinking, acting and very survival). It seems that the basic trauma of the society and culture generically refers not only to facing the challenges of existence or change, i.e., the unknown, the violent or the risky, regardless of whether these circumstances or processes are logical and progressive or destructive. It also concerns the trauma of emancipation and the dismantling of the petrified epistemological discourses and heuristic destitution which does not keep pace with the complex polyvalence of the socio-cultural environment. It appears that, by following the "nausea" of existence (Sartre, 1938), one could reach the essence; however, this can be done in an evolutionary and open process in which both anthropocentrism and universality would equally make sense and be justified, constantly opening up new horizons that lead to possible worlds and dynamically postulated knowledge. If the meaning and function of social sciences and humanities lie in their providing input for rupturing closed scientific systems, at the same time developing theses that correspond with the dialectics between man and the universe, then they are obliged to dismantle the established models of man's life both in the society and the universe that surrounds him. The traumatic effects of historical discourses which produced knowledge of *cultural trauma* (Sztompka, 2000), and whose evident and undeniable effects are the *culture of resignation*, the *culture of fear* and the *culture of distrust*, are the challenges that sociology, human intellectual energy in general, and human energy in terms of action are faced with.

The uncertainty caused by fear of chaos, irrationality and disharmony has been exposed for quite some time due to natural sciences and technology and, to no lesser degree, the socio-humanist scholarly perspective. This has inspired Dorfles to write *Praise of Disharmony* (Dorfles, 1986), tackling a topic that has been addressed by numerous other theoreticians as well. He refers us to or, rather, reminds us of the intriguing thesis that chaos is only a higher order of things, that

disharmony is unattained and sublime harmony, and that irrationality is rationality of the most sophisticated kind. These concepts are here, on the path of our necessity and evolution, but they are inextricably linked with our capacity to be curious, free-minded and open to new kinds of intellectuality, spirituality and aestheticism. Such an approach does not imply compromising the facts of life and their socio-ontological complex structure and dynamics, since they have been thought out both synchronically and diachronically. The possibility to grasp them in all their holistic splendor offers us a genuine challenge to act -- something which gives meaning to life and its comprehension. The symbolical, imaginative and creative meaning of not only cultural, but also scholarly, artistic, educational, philosophical and even religious forms of production and reproduction of reality, on the other hand, are just as much facts of life, since they stem from the social constructs, perceptions and production of those who are also actors of sociability, with lesser or greater power in the process of influencing forms of existence.

If our point of departure are the already established (albeit still disputable) well-known assumptions about the proselytism of the Enlightenment, the power of the modern industrial age and their equal fascination with progress, the breakthrough of engineering and technology, the power of knowledge and the *death or killing of God* (Nietzsche, 2009), as well as the open paradigms about achieving freedom, both in social practice and in search of truth – that which is independent of man and the one which is the result of his active participation and intervening in reality – then we would expect the walls of Jericho to come tumbling down. In other words, we would expect that man has vanquished fear, risk, lack of freedom and destruction once and for all or, at least, that "the doors of heaven" are opened, without fear of "Judgment Day", without the pleasing bliss of ignorance, and without being a slave to a utopia of happy idiots (H.G. Wells, A. Huxley, Book of Genesis, J. Verne). However, here we encounter a problem: this very same change has generated new "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1998), new categories of inequality (class, racial, gender, national, ethnical, and political), new social utopias (utopian socialism, anarchism, Marxism/Communism), new ideologies of domination and subordination (Nazism, fascism, Stalinism), as well as powerful breakthroughs of social and engaged action and movements in various domains (e.g. gender theory) in the sense in which Bourdieu refers to it (Bourdieu,1979). They synthesize and symbolize both the militant and counter-cultural effect of the epoch as a direct consequence of and, at the same time, presupposition for social and cultural trauma.

The contemporary postmodern and post-industrial age only seemingly redefined or redesigned this contradictory structure of meaning and acting. Insisting on the "unblocking", "unburdening" and "liberation" of man's existential state and the search for recent modes of intellectual non-arbitrary engagement that is not bound by convention seems to have deepened even further the possibilities for traumatic experiences, rather than alleviating them. This also applies to the abandonment of the obsessive search for original and rigidly

rational solutions of the world's problems in all its spheres, the mockery of the unyielding commitment to great narratives and a systematic critical/uncritical playing with the hybridization of the history of intellectual thought and artistic creation, arbitrary citation and making a "patchwork" of one's cultural heritage and inventing tradition.

The set of circumstances that has accumulated in the postmodern world which generated them proves to be a reminiscence of the previous situation characteristic of the modern world (sometimes emerging in an even more brutal form). They resulted in, for instance, neo-imperialism, terrorism, even more emphatic consumerism, alienation concealed behind cultural carnivalism, and relativization of values that are believed to be relapses of tradition, at the same time refusing to abandon the context of its desired conservative and hegemonic position. Radicalism is allegedly part of the past, banished in the name of legalism and diplomacy that possess features which are extremely normative, full of hypocrisy and artificiality, while being postulated on the ideological viewpoints of democracy and human rights behind which new bureaucracy, technocracy, clientelism and violence latently exist, and do not even try to hide that they are like "a chrysanthemum with the sharpness of a sword". The violent post-colonial and quasi-globalizing logic and practice of the modern civilization generates traumas we are not even aware of and which we feel distant (Sztompka, 2000). It can also cause traumatic experiences which result in the disintegration of the fiber of collective identities and their integrity with such a frightening speed and dynamics that we often follow it on a symbolic level, where trauma is genuinely legitimized (Alexander, 2012).

Living in the society of the spectacle (Debord, 1967), in simulations and simulacra (*Baudrillard*, 2001), in an atmosphere of virtual culture and virtual communication (Virilio,1990) and cyberculture (Lévy, 2001; Robins, 2003 and others) inhibits us, makes us opportunistic and seemingly relaxed, while, in essence, it increases our anxiety and exploits the culture of fear (Furedi,2002), risk culture (Giddens, 2003; Beck, 1992) and culture of distrust (Giddens, 2003) in order to increase our permissiveness and our distance from the crucial need for change. We have in mind the kind of change that is not generated only by dissatisfaction or by a futuristic solution for the cultural or social trauma. Social sciences have already established that change does not necessarily result in progress and humane solutions nor does it make possible an anthropological solution generated by knowledge of limitless and multi-linear solutions for structures, systems and elements of possible social, collective and cultural matrices, not even those that haven't been justified by history. The changes which drastically and violently destroy the fiber of the collective as much as any individual awareness, which jeopardize our survival and ravish the dignity of the symbolic structures of a culture, usually produce passivity or violence with both cathartic and destructive effects. Regardless of whether there is a consensus about the scope, kind and categorization of the causes for the traumatic experiences of the entire humankind or of certain communities and individuals (revolutions, wars, catastrophes, diseases, exploitation, alienation, capitalism,

neoliberalism, effects of globalization), the acceptance of trauma as an inevitable part of life becomes paradigmatic and problematic.

Even the age following Nietzsche's idea of the *Übermensch and the seemingly similar, but simplified and somewhat naïve and, of course, far more optimistic idea of the transhumanists about science, engineering and technology does not open up the perspective for a future, perhaps very near, human condition which would make possible for man to live longer and enjoy better health. This also applies to speculating about the transformation of men into cyborgs as a solution which would extend men's "shelf life", hoping that such a relaxed humankind will have to refigure its sociability and the social system which it inhabits; however, the awareness of the many challenges that such a situation may bring about still remains.*

The genuine, real and evident cause and, at the same time, consequence for social and cultural trauma is the situation where the society and science fail to consider the fact that the historical constellation and recent reality, and even future, should not be sought in utopias which are only a simplified reflection of a one-way dynamics of social change. The terrifying dystopias that seem more probable are not the relevant place, either; instead, we should look for the possibility of a number of potential solutions in many possible worlds which can, but do not necessarily have to be sought in the experiences of the history we know or that which is presented to us.

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ЧОВЕШТВОТО И СООЧУВАЊЕТО СО СТВАРНОСТА

Антоанела ПЕТКОВСКА

Затвореноста во вообичаените концепти на социологијата и на сродните науки (општествени, хуманистички) во преобмислувањето на феномените на стварноста (како онаа креирана од човекот така и онаа која е сеуште далеку од можноста да биде допрена од него) создава ефект на пајакова мрежа од која само привидно мислителите успеваат да се ослободат. Сосема свесни дека структурите на општествените системи се истовремено и структури на структуирањето, односно на социјалниот инженеринг кој ги оправдува навидум интристичните, реални, животни околности на егзистенцијата, социолозите, сепак, имаат задача од анализата на постоечкото да преминат на полето на дизајнирање на нови прашања, имагинативно и еманципирано постулирајќи можност за футуристички дискурси лишени од ригидни матрици. Следствено, базичната траума на општеството и културата генерички се однесува не само на соочувањето со промената, било да е таа логична и прогресивна или виолентна и деструктивна, туку во соочувањето со траумата на еманципацијата и пробивот на закоравените епистемолошки дискурси. Така, следејќи ја „тегобноста“ на егзистенцијата може да се допре до есенцијата, во еден развоен, но отворен процес. Ако навистина општествените науки и хуманистиката го обезбедуваат импутот во кинење на затворените научни ситеми и истовремено постулираат тези за дијалектиката на односот помеѓу човекот и универзумот, тогаш тие се обврзани да ги раскинат етаблираните модели за животот на човекот во општеството но и во универзумите кои го опкружуваат. Трауматичните ефекти на историските дискурси кои продуцираа сознанија за културната траума, за евидентните ефекти на културата на резигнација, културата на страв, културата на недоверба се предизвиците што се поставени пред социологијата и интелектуалната енергија на човештвото воопшто.

Клучни зборови: културна траума, на културата на резигнација, културата на страв, културата на недоверба, социолошки парадигми.