DETERMINATION VERSUS SELF-DETERMINATION IN THE STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS OF SELF

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ABSTRACT: *The paper looks in a critical way to the relation between determination and self-determination in the structure and dynamics of Self, relationship that is paramount in the formation of the personality. By one's activities, objective external determinations turn into internal determinations, acting towards one's adaptation and differentiation. We see Self as a real landmark in postmodern individual's attempts to fight depersonalization and alienation, in his effort of self-creation and personal achievement. Cultivating youngsters' interest in this dimension means, in the long run, their preparation for life by cultivating self-control and self-regulation, independence, in brief, the art of self-support and self-teaching.*

Keywords: *dynamics of self, self-conscience, determination, self- determination*

PAPER: 1. POST-MODERNITY AND THE LACK OF BENCHMARKS

For many sociologists, historians and philosophers, post-modernity is an age of plurality and end of unity as a consequence of the many ways of understanding things, nothing meaning a priori anything fixed. This situation is felt by the individual as "letting loose a plurality of life forms we can choose between, or that we can make live together, as it already happens" [1].

Post-modern human being has no longer interpretation benchmarks to rely on. What results, in Bruckner's view, is a state of enchantment and chaos, each one receiving the task of creating oneself and finding a sense in life. This seems to be "the greatness and curse of post-modernity", in the same author's opinion. Still, in his becoming, man needs landmarks to give sense and direction to the existence. In principle, man sees the world and himself according to standards and criteria that evolve, built by internalization of certain social values deemed desirable by the community the individual is part of.

Psychologically, the way one sees the environment starts with the way one sees oneself, with the self-knowing and self-appraisal turning to self-knowledge and self-evaluation. Thus, as Self expresses the individual's self-reflexive hypostasis, it is also the object the individual (Ego) turns to for evaluation and knowledge. Self becomes a benchmark in the development of the personality, determining the attitude and values towards oneself and towards the world.

Self is a personal construct, but socially and culturally conditioned through social learning. Because of that, it becomes simultaneously an interior landmark and exterior benchmark, integrating the individual in the society without dissolving one's integrity and individuality. It gives man the sense of continuity in time and also of the place in the social field. As for man's need of meaning, it is "the main motivation of every man's life", as stated by logo therapy titan V. Frankl [3].

As a psycho-individual reality the Self includes in its structure at least three elements: one's image about oneself, the consciousness of being appraised by others and the corresponding feelings about that fact. The interactions of the three gives what we might call consistency, essential for everyone when adopting attitudes about one's existence, oneself, one's environment. That is why we see Self as a real landmark in the post-modern individual's attempt to cope with de-personalization and spiritual destruction, to self-build and have success.

2. EDUCATION FOR SELF-MANAGEMENT

When it comes to self-knowing, this is neither easy to do, nor easy to conceive. As a psychological reality, Self is easier felt than defined. Still, seeing its main features: identity, subjectivity, self-image, we can better understand its structure and dynamics. This feat supposes active involvement, both cognitive and affective. The individual engages in permanent information processing on oneself, based on which one makes up a certain self-image, appraises oneself and builds a self-concept. The process comes with feelings that give one the sense of one's place and value in life, in society and in relationships.

In the process of self-knowledge, adolescence is unanimously seen as a moment of paramount signification and relevance for later development. Adolescence, seen by J. J. Rousseau "the stage of a second birth", brings with itself an increase in personality development, in deliberative inner life, in the development of self-conscience, in responsibility and affective life.

To prepare youngsters to see – *timely and accordingly* – the resources they have and their individual value at a certain moment means to educate them for self-knowledge. Cultivating their interest in this dimension means preparing them, on the long run, for life by cultivating self-control and the ability to self-regulate, independence of action, initiation in the art of self-teaching and self-assistance.

The final goal of the teacher should be to bring the young to self-assistance, so as to save and develop their own thinking and acting skills, to solve optimally present challenges and to see and manage future ones. In modern pedagogy, this is named "own resources management", a long-term skill. The first steps could mean self-knowledge, important premise towards self-fulfillment. The goals are successful academic learning, optimal career choice and adequate socio-productive integration.

Self-development is an intimate process, hidden to others, many times youngsters not realizing the consequences of their actions and not realizing that they self-teach in the process. They must be helped to cultivate that meta-disposition that allows them a certain distancing from themselves and from the very experience, a reflexive conscience of thoughts and emotions that brings a certain control. That self-consciousness means a *"non-reactive, non-prejudiced attention on the inner state"*, that brings with time the development of new personality features, such as autonomy, good psychological health, positive attitude towards oneself a.s.o.[4]

Modern psycho-pedagogy should find concrete ways to teach youngsters first *"how to be"* and only then *"how to become"*, by active involvement in their own orientation and a permanent and consistent dialogue with themselves. In looking for sense and landmarks, young men need to consciously harmonize interests, skills and motivations with their learning abilities, their social needs and aspirations.

3. DETERMINATION vs. SELF-DETERMINATION

Structuring and affirmation of personality is a vast, complex process encompassing many sources, where "the system of Self" takes a central place. Very personal, "the Self system" expresses in adolescence as a dimension that organizes and structures the personality, giving it identity, orientation and sense. Self is an integrating concept that facilitates a better understanding

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of the modes of individual and personal structuring of the psychological processes and functions at individual level.

A complex structure, Self comes up in individual ontogenesis, in and through social experience, in and through education and socialization. In the process of the forming of the personality and personal identity, Self builds as a relatively stable psychological structure that includes knowledge, faiths and convictions, attitudes, values, mental models of action. The Self contains elements both innate and acquired, conscious and unconscious, but fundamentally it is acquired through social and cultural exposure all along personal history. Its dynamics assumes both external determinations – influences from outside – and self-determinations – initiating and doing activities, getting in relationships as a form of personal freedom.

In the process of adaptive and anticipative socialization, one assimilates norms, attitudinal modes and behavior models seen as socially desirable. By their internalization, inside the personality are established certain structures we might call Social Self. The peculiarities of crystallization, through own effort and action, of these attitudes and behavior models determines the constitution of the individual, or personal, Self. It is the expression of the individual structural differentiation through which men becomes a psychological individuality. As a result of the interaction social – individual Selves, the personality nucleus appears, the Total Self, a specific bio-psycho-socio-cultural structure, playing an essential part in its dynamics. Thus, the Self constitutes as a result of the interaction between external forces (social – formative) and internal forces (expressing personal requests and needs).

The relation between determination and self-determination is an essential one in the becoming of the personality. By one's activities, constructive and self-building, objective forces turn into internal determinations, acting not only in an adaptive way but also in a differentiating one. By acting and relating to others, the individual seeks the most adequate ways to satisfy his needs and desires, including here the personal construction. The psychological balance and the social integration depend on the individual's possibilities to match as well as possible the driving forces from the environment and society with his own. The better that match, the higher Self consistency is obtained, expressed in just self-knowing and self-appraisal, resulting in optimum balance. Self consistency is "a quality of personal identity resulting in integration, coherence and compatibility of self-knowledge and self-appraisal manifested in quite constant attitudes and behavior" [5].

Two elements are essential in determining the consistency of the Self:
a) **Self-image / self-knowledge**: landmark, orientating part of the personality that attitudes and behaviors are based upon
b) **Self-appraisal**: element of self-image forming process, giving value to persons, function that helps develop orientating attitudes for activity and behavior.

The child develops a certain sense of Self, of what makes him different and unique. It is not consistency of Self as such, as a child experiments several Selves. The lack of consistency is obvious in behaviors and, more than that, in the circumstances generating cognitive and affective dissonance as expression of value- and norm-based conflicts. The adolescent's Self is rather mobile, even labile, than consistent, especially so in puberty. All these mark the learning process. The interests of the child at puberty have a place in the "social Self", and as such learning

will include present-day stars and hobbies, more than history in school for example. Anything relevant for Self will be acquired and assimilated, this type of learning being called *"biographic learning"* [6]. We can deduct that, for an active involvement of the young in then learning process, we must get his "engagement". In this sense, we must first know what G. Kelly calls "the personal constructs" of the young involved and especially to activate the instinct of self-expressing. Some say this is an as fundamental instinct as sex or hunger. Any one experienced a situation where, while apparently listening to a speech, was in reality delving with one's own thoughts on the issue at hand or eager to express the opinion. A teacher knowing all that could put the young's thinking to good use by cutting on the speech in the favor of free dialogue. The teacher could thus see the perceptions and subtle visions of the student, both of them being gifted with powerful feedback. Of course, this would mean for the teacher to give up teaching and start educating, in a Socratic spirit. One of the greatest benefits of this way is that it makes the student discover his own visions and put these into his own words. *"There is no better way to make such a long-lasting impact"* [7].

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