

THE PRESENT CHALLENGE OF THE INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS: Unity in Diversity

Maria Diaconescu
Babeş-Bolyai University
 mdia19@gmail.com

Abstract:

In this paper I focus on differences that are linguistically, conceptually and ideologically constructed, and undermine empathic understanding and unity in diversity in intercultural and gender relationships. Here I discuss the phenomena of attribution, projection and categorization: labeling in defining own identity and identity of others throughout history, as well as perceptions, stereotypes, cultural and gendered based prejudices that turn unity in uniformity. In the condition of uniformity, the beauty of the differences between people becomes crippled and differences turn into oppressive or one-sided conflict resolution strategies between people. Ethnonyms that are present in all languages, folklore materials, and popular art as proverbs, jokes and sayings reflect and demonstrate the full process of fragmentation and alteration of otherness, of the differences between people that start at the linguistic level of interaction and everyday speech.

Keywords: dialogue; empathy; epistemological errors: stereotypes, prejudices and barriers of communication; alteration of otherness; authenticity; social justice.

Introduction

I have sought to identify the paradigmatic assumptions, significant prerequisites for human existence, i.e. the ontological philosophical assumptions that are problematic respectively the philosophical assumptions that facilitate dialogue as ontological event, empathic understanding of otherness and self-knowledge. Existential and humanistic theories and practices rooted in phenomenology and oriental philosophies credit the human being as becoming being, have confidence in the potentialities of its development, facilitate empathic understanding and interpersonal communication. On the other hand, philosophies and contemporary practices, which are "skilled in the suspicion and projection", perpetuate epistemological errors identified and described in the phenomenology of empathy worked out by Edith Stein (1917/ 1989), person centered social work and psychotherapy worked out by Carl Rogers

(Roth, 2003). Epistemological errors: 1. are reflected in stereotypes, prejudices and barriers of communication, 2. are based on projection: attribution, simulation and analogy, 3. erode interpersonal understanding, intercultural dialogue and confidence in the high nature of human, in whatever form it is expressed and identified.

Dialogue is not exempt from stereotypes, prejudices and barriers of communication. Anyway, we have the power to overcome them and to free our capacity for empathic understanding from the oppressive influence of the epistemological errors which are based on projection. According to Edith Stein, unity depends on empathy, not empathy on unity. Unity in diversity, is not only necessary, it is inevitable and fulfill the promise of peace in all great revealed religions of the world (Fraser Chamberlain, 1918; Colby Ives, 1974).

The 1st chapter of the paper discusses some meanings of unity and solving strategies of conflicts that are one-sided and undermine unity. One-sidedness that makes the dialogue and unity between people problematic on the level of verbal and behavioral actions is also discussed in the first part of the 2nd chapter (Peseschkian, 1986). Here are two of the conditions of dialogue that are also discussed: authenticity and social justice (Buber, 1991; Silberstein, 2001). Authenticity nurtures trust between people, constitutes the foundation for empathic understanding, credits the human potentialities and the high nature of the becoming person, facilitates acceptance of otherness and appreciation of interhuman diversity. Social justice has the potential to protect dialogue and interhuman becoming from the errors of understanding that are introduced into the everyday interactions whenever pride, struggle for power and supremacy, indifference or alienation slips in dialogue between people, groups and communities. This protection of dialogue is not guaranteed. Currently, social justice is problematic. Consequently, both empathic understanding and intercultural dialogue are problematic.

The 2nd chapter of the paper focuses on answering the following questions: How are both personal and group identities represented and constructed? How are the interpersonal relationships mediated, imagined, and constructed? How are these relationships mediated by different life conceptions? How these mediated images are linguistically expressed? Here I analyze the cultural stereotyped perceptions and cognitions as shortcut knowledge which distorts human experience and ontologically speaking *cripple the otherness and its beauty*. Here I also analyze the positive

and negative consequences of power in anti-oppressive social work theory and practice (Dominelli, 2002), in relation to: 1. the resistance of women in East Europe in front of feminist ideologies, feminist ethics and feminine ethics (Demény, 2002), 2. the paradox of power and the paradoxical power of the women in some culture as it is already discussed in social work practice (Hepworth, Rooney, Larsen, 2006).

The 2nd chapter also discusses the relations between concepts, myths, health and illness in different cultural settings (Pesechkian, 2007). Making absolute, not clashing between, the traditional, modern or postmodern concepts, myths or values, blocks the evolution of the persons, families and groups. A similar idea is also suggested by Rogers Brubaker when he discusses the political conflict of speeches and concepts as rivalry between ethno political elites (Brubaker, 2004). Making them relative indicate an opening which allow different concepts and styles of actions and interactions to be expressed, clash each other and evolve. Clashing between concepts, without fighting between people, is socially accepted and understood as necessary in the process of human development (Pesechkian, 2007).

The 3rd chapter analyses *diversity without unity* and *unity without diversity*, in relation with the concept of *social justice* and the conditions of dialogue and empathic understanding between persons from different culture (Pesechkian, 2007; Parekh, 2006; Buber, 1991) in order to build the so problematic *unity in diversity*.

The meaning of unity

Unity is often confounded with uniformity which is against the physical, biological, social, spiritual evolution, and the laws that govern the human development. We all share the same human rank although our genetic data are different and unique, although we have been taught to speak different languages and use different codes, we have been socialized in different cultures and religions or faiths, our talents and capacities are expressed in a different way. Although uniqueness of the humanity is not to be disputed, the work to construct and maintain unity is not an easy task at all. This work is not easy neither in family relations and friendship relations or in work relations, between people of the same culture, the same religion and gender, speaking the same languages and working in the same institution, and sharing the same ideals and preferences (with respect to food, clothing,

work, the way of spending the spare time, music etc). The more difficult becomes this work in intercultural and interfaith relationships.

In each culture and human group, the capacities and human values that act in everyday interactions enter some sort of competition or conflict one with another and differentiate in a certain order of priority. Along time, each culture and human group favors and actualizes a limited rank of capacities and values, development that is accompanied by suppressing or marginalizing other capacities and values with respect to the priorities that are defined in different way in different historical periods of the evolution of different groups and communities. The solving strategies of the conflicts are in their turn the subject of conflict with one another. They are also learned during socialization in family, reference groups, exposure to media TV or internet. The solving strategies of the conflicts that are one-sided or oppressive undermine the inner unity and *empathic understanding* obviously present in the romantic stage of any human relationship. The strategies undermining unity on the level of verbal actions¹ are: promises that have not been delivered, lies, threats and curses, arrogant remarks, sarcasm, cynical and ironical remarks, disputes, ill speaking of someone and gossip. When these strategies persist, if they are favored by media, by laws or by oppressive group rules, they in their turn feed in time more destructive actions. On the level of behavioral actions², the solving strategies of the conflicts that undermine unity are: isolation of minority groups (*Don't play with those dirty kids*), discrimination (*Foreigners are stupid and dishonest*), destroying property (*After me, the flood*), acts of violence in family and community, criminality, ever larger gaps between employers, employed economic oppression etc. (Peseschkian, 1986).

In order to be actualized, the capacities and values neglected or suppressed³ that could make stereotypes and prejudices (of gender, color, religion, culture etc) vanish, are again and again tested by in the everyday interactions and experiences. If these efforts are continuously suppressed, alongside the fact that social problems already mentioned get more and more acute on the personal and family level, strategies of resolving these

¹ *Unity*: Nossrat Peseschkian, 1986, *Psychotherapy of Everyday Life*. Training in Partnership and Self-Help. With 250 Case Histories, Springer-Verlag Berlin, p.59-67

² *Unity*: Idem, p. 59-67

³ For example: sincerity, consideration, justice and love – conditions that make the dialogue possible.

problems and conflicts become one-sided⁴. In these conditions, the inner fight or the inner civil war become exaggerated, the human being and his/her social relationships begin to disintegrate. If the human being feels alienation or estrangement in a moment of existential leisure, he/ she is also longing for integration with him/ herself and with the world to overcome the one-sidedness and its breaking apart or destroying effects.

Confucius, referred by Peseschkian⁵, would have said that each person is responsible for the progress or the downfall of humanity. Small changes in a certain part of the life could generate changes in the entire system. For example, a corrupt official, says Peseschkian, could discredit the entire social institution and could undermine the trust of the people in the existing social structure. As a rule, this incident is not an isolated one and the entire country is being considered corrupt, corruption becomes in the end more or less accepted as a semi legal form of official interaction. Middle East wisdom, evoked by Peseschkian, says: *If you want to make order in your country, you have first to make order in your province. If you want to make order in your province, you first have to make order in your city. If you want to make order in your city you have first make order in family. If you want make order in family, you have first make order in your family. If you want to make order in your family, you first have to make order in yourself* (Peseschkian, 1997).

Construction of differences

Before going into depth as far *unity in diversity* is concerned it is important to understand *social justice*. Before understanding social justice it is important to understand: How are both personal and group identities represented and constructed? How the relationships between *I* and *You* and *He/ She* are mediated by *We*⁶, and how the relationships between *Us* and *You/ They* are imagined and constructed? How these relationships are mediated by different life conceptions? Finally, how these mediated images are linguistically expressed? In what form are they transmitted from one generation to the other? Martin Buber has been looking ceaselessly for answers to existential questions of philosophical and religious spiritual nature that would serve the evolution of mankind in a spirit of *social justice*

⁴ Different persons have different strategies that could enter in competition one with another and escalate the initial conflicts: father escapes in work or extramarital sexual relationships, mother escapes in small talks with the neighbours, the child escape in loneliness or infotainment etc.

⁵ Peseschkian, 1997, *Positive Family Therapy*, p. 85.

⁶ The 3rd term, less visible in the philosophy of Martin Buber on dialogue.

and *unity*. Silberstein⁷ says that Buber dedicated his life and his philosophical and social anthropology writings in order to build bridges that would overcome estrangement that keeps apart person from person, from God and from social and cultural world, estrangement that keeps Jews away from Judaism, from Christians and Arabs, nations from nations etc. His entire thinking says Silberstein, is dealing with the ceaseless conflict between spiritual experiences of life and social and cultural forms in which these are expressed and reified, and with the effects of alienation of cultural and institutional forms along history. The blood cult of ancestors as brought into discussion by Buber can be misunderstood and criticized easily as being an essentialist concept. *The blood community*⁸ in Buber's thinking refers to the community of ancestors, in which he was born, raised, and in which he decided to form his own life. In the following words, *the most profound strata of his being, thinking and will colored by blood*, the term of *blood* expressed by Buber means *something* that is implanted in each of us by groups of fathers and mothers succeeded alongside history. It is their human nature and destiny, their facts and sufferings along history to which this *something* implanted refers (Silberstein, 2001).

Thinking and the most profound strata of our being is colored by language and experience of life of parents of our parents in migration or exile of thousands of years who have colored language and thinking of our parents who formed nations. According to Glatzer referenced by de Silberstein, Buber says that the characteristics of a group originate in climate, social, cultural and economic conditions and become fixed by heredity which is an unchanged force in the life of the group. What has been fixed along thousands of years is most probable not going to change from today until tomorrow or for decades. In the end, the forming of all nations is founded on the cult of ancestors⁹. The problem signaled by Buber refers to the spiritual becoming and the conditions of cultural and institutional expression that alienates and oppresses, respectively those who feed the high nature and human becoming (Silberstein, 2001).

Buber conceives the interpersonal differentiation and *inter-human* becoming in authentic dialog. He hopes that social education can contribute in a very important measure to developing authenticity in human interactions. Buber

⁷ Silberstein, L.J., 2001, Martin Buber: The Social Paradigm in Modern Jewish Thought, in: *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 49.02, p. 211-229.

⁸ Idem, p. 218, nota 17.

⁹ Joking, George Orwell would maybe say: some ancestors are more equal than others.

has thought the social education and development of community in antithesis with political propaganda. He criticizes also modern education¹⁰ which, like the political propaganda, treats people like objects, controls and exercises influence without authentic dialogue and without sincere respect for their humanity, autonomy and personality. *I* and *You* and *We* exist in an authentic interpersonal dialogue in which each *I* can say and confirm the *You* in his/ her humanity and otherness with all differences and inevitable confrontations. In the absence of this dialogue, Buber suggests the impossibility of existence and of evolution of human communities even if formally or apparently each individual belongs to one group or another. The absence of dialogue in Buber's analysis, says Cohen, reflects the lack of trust in people and the consciousness of the fact that the other people suffer the same lack. Canceling reciprocal trust generates uncertainty, isolation and alienation, or melting down in collective oppressive actions with the purpose of vanish the unbearable feelings of uncertainty and loneliness (Cohen, 1979). The community can not exist in isolation one from another as it can not exist by escaping in collective oppressive actions which deprive persons from self-determination, responsibility and which estrange people from themselves, from their higher nature. What kind of unity and what kind of difference will be built in the absence of community? Unity becomes uniformity which is a caricatured representation of totalitarianism in which the *whole*¹¹ or the entire human being and the beauty of differences is crippled. Buber, in the analysis offered by Cohen, makes a difference between *collective* in which the persons, the differences and the interpersonal relations are fading away or are melting, and *community* in which the authentic dialogue *between* persons blossoms, the human potentials actualize and unity is built up step by step.

In order to build communities that grow and differentiate, implicitly make people grow together in dialogue, condition no.1 for this is *authenticity* and condition no.2 is justice. The first condition feeds the trust between people, the trust in the potentialities of the becoming person and trust in the higher nature of human nature. The second condition helps the person to realize his/ her human rank in relation with the animal and divine rank, feeds

¹⁰ Adir Cohen, 1979, *Society and Social Education in Martin Buber's Philosophy*, in *Educational Studies*, vol.10, p.335-356, http://www3.baylor.edu/American_Jewish/everythingthatusedtobehere/resources/jphil_articles/buber-society.pdf, accessed on 27.08.2008.

¹¹ *Postitum*, in Latium, the meaning of the term *positive* in *Positive Psychotherapy* (Nossrat Peseschkian).

dignity, autonomy, independence of thought and action. These lately defend the person from the slavery of slogans and seductions, as the temptation of letting other people getting between human being and God, *getting between* that makes human being to “become God” for other human being. Confrontations, which Buber speaks about, *between* people in an authentic dialogue, do not mean competition. When the pride trickles in *between* people, when instead clashing different thoughts and arguments their vanities starts to clash, the fight starts *between* them and the human interpersonal dialogue takes an end (Cohen, 1979). The persons who raise the fist in order to subjugate or oppress have remained without arguments. Consequently, which is the 3rd and 4th term in the philosophy and thinking of Buber and how they trickle in *between I and You*? Is it a collectivity; is it a group from which *I and You* are estranged or in which they melt or escape obediently? Is it collectivism versus individualism as a life philosophy, or other life concepts of religious, philosophical or political nature, which have been more or less experienced? Is it maybe a dominant, one-sided concept governing and enslaving life and the actions of individuals from one generation to another? The concepts that are made sacred could become mottos of life and they are found expressed in jokes, proverbs and sayings like: *Gypsies are all thieves and liars; the Germans have started the 2nd world war because they have forgotten they have lost the first; the Jew would sell his mother, too. The Romanians are glad to have quests, time is money, or the quests mean trouble and misery etc.*

The fundamental problem *between* people, authenticity¹², which has been found as key concept in the philosophical thinking of existentialism, is to be found in the philosophy of Buber as duality between *to be* and *to appear*, between what the human being really is and what he/ she wants to appear to other (Buber, 1991). The crisis *between* people is a *crisis of authenticity*. The lack of *authenticity* does not allow the inner to grow and the acceptance of otherness to develop. Obstacles *between*, in the becoming and growing between humans, the ghosts that wait to be exorcised are, according to Buber: the invasion of appearances, the imposing of own opinion and attitude, the lack of accuracy or inadequacy in perceptions.

In phenomenology of empathy, Stein¹³ calls these obstacles proceedings that compensate the failure of empathy: fake empathy, fiction or

¹² Buber M, 1991, Elements of Interhuman, in: *The Knowledge of Man*, selected essays, Maurice Friedman (ed.), Humanities Press International, Inc. Atlantic Highlands, NJ.

¹³ Edith Stein, pf.14, 21, 26, 29.

„attribution“ (Stein, 1917/ 1989). These are representations missing the 2nd step of empathy. In these representations the experience of the strange (unknown or foreign) *I* or *Ego* is dislocated and replaced with representations which are more or less projective and legitimated in religious, philosophical, or political way. This way, the feelings and meanings of the strange *I* remain objects of representations and attributions without the objects of lived experienced and feelings being recognized and understood.

The problem is in preconceptions, not in the conceptions of the different philosophies, religious systems, or political ideologies¹⁴. Almost all of them, from their different perspectives, have the potential to guide and to encourage understanding, knowledge and experience between and among human beings. When the concepts which guide the human practice and interaction transform into preconceptions, they become obstacles in the human development.

These preconceptions are formed by simple classifying, stereotyping or categorizing the lived experience and are called stereotyped perceptions and cognitions, pigeonholes or labeling often found in the system of education, in social science and human sciences (Maslow, 2007). Labeling the experience, says Maslow, is certainly less tiring than participating with the entire being. Simmel, referenced by Maslow, says that scientist *sees* one thing because he *knows*; the artist *knows* one thing because he *sees* it. The implicit thesis of Maslow, which could be seen as dangerous as all stereotypes, says that scientists would do well to become more intuitive and the study and understanding of reality as seen by science should deepen the intuition of the artists with regard to the world and make it more mature and valid. In another words, Maslow invites us to use all the means of knowledge and to see the whole reality. Stereotyped perceptions and cognitions shortcut knowledge and distort human experience, ontologically speaking *distort the otherness*.

Buber is convinced in his turn that we could drive out or we are able to exorcize these “ghosts”¹⁵ and free ourselves from them because he trusts the higher nature of the human being. He knows that these “ghosts” are not inherited genetically; they are transmitted from one generation to another

¹⁴ Except which are obviously oppressive.

¹⁵ With the condition of giving up the arrogance and pride.

by social learning, that is to say by staying together for a long time and daily interaction during socialization along history.

As Carl Gustav Jung, Peseschkian¹⁶ treats human knowledge as a whole. He explores different cultural practices and discusses the means of sensorial and rational knowledge and the means of intuitive¹⁷ and social knowledge¹⁸. Human experiences accumulated along history¹⁹ express in concrete actions, confrontations, storytelling, proverbs which reflect concepts and counter-concepts that condense the life experiences that were accumulated. These myths and concepts make reference to rules, implicit roles and life scripts, some of them being functional and some of them dysfunctional. When they do not respond to the human needs of development they are dysfunctional and block the human evolution. Making absolute the traditional, modern or postmodern concepts and values²⁰ blocks the progress of the individual persons, families and groups. Making them relative indicate an opening which allow different concepts and styles of actions and interactions to be expressed, clash each other and evolve. Clashing between concepts without fighting between people is socially accepted and understood as necessary in the process of human development (Peseschkian, 2007).

In psychosocial theory of human development Erik Erikson, referenced by Berger²¹, considers that we have to take in consideration three important aspects: the somatic (physical capacities), the personal (life history and current stage of development), and the social (aspects which deal with culture, history, social life). The conviction that each of the cultures confronts with certain challenges and ways of development that come to meet these challenges is central in Erickson`s theory. He suggests, for instance, that the accent which the German tradition places on cleanness and sphincter control which are very early in German education prepares adults for a society in which punctuality, law and orderliness are of

¹⁶ Peseschkian, 1987/2007, *Psihoterapia Pozitivă*, p. 115-116.

¹⁷ Expressed in poetry, literature, sayings etc.

¹⁸ Learning from tradition which is transmitted by social interaction, direct face to face contacts: *From the experience of my parents/ ancestors/ masters I know that...*; collective myths, myths of groups, of families, personal myths etc.

¹⁹ Those accumulated by every person along his/ her evolution in groups, from the tradition of the own family.

²⁰ Traditional, modern and postmodern.

²¹ Berger, Kathleen Stassen, 1980/1986, *The Developing Person Through Childhood and Adolescence*, 2nd ed. Bronx Com. College, City University of NY.

supreme importance. Likewise, the accent on independence and dealing assertively which was placed by the American pioneers prepared adults to explore new territory and to ignore traditional laws and conventions and is exactly what the society needed in that respective time. The problems show up when the traditional and the current methods of growing up and educating a new generation do not prepare the children to face the challenges and demands of society which they would confront as adults. The role of society in development of personality and identity, for Erikson, is much more important than for Sigmund Freud. The contribution of Erikson is in the fact that: 1. He revealed the needs and the specific challenges in the period of adolescence, mature age and old age, each of these ages facing with critical moments and changes that are linked with development; 2. He revealed the influences and pressures of the parents and the society that model, structure and direct our behavior alongside our life (Berger, 1986).

Erikson, mentioned by Nossrat Peschekian²², confirms the anthropological studies carried out by Margaret Mead that sustains that there is a very subtle and clear connection between the way a child is fed, put to bed, disciplined, trained to control him/ herself, hugged and punished, and encouraged and the way the child becomes an adult. Erikson explored the rituals of feeding and training the sphincter control by the Sioux and Yurok Indians, and he correlated them with the more aggressive or submissive actions of the Sioux Indians and the compulsive order and peaceful actions of Yurok Indians (Peseschkian, 2007). These studies do not entitle us or anyone to draw the conclusions that *the Germans are orderly* or that *the order is German, the Americans are assertive/ the independence is American, the Sioux Indians are aggressive while the Yurok Indians are peaceful by nature or that their peaceful attitude has been genetically transmitted to them.*

During socialization, living together and interactions in phylogeny and ontogenesis, the spoken language, indifferently of which language is spoken, becomes richer with an important volume of adjectives and expressions that show the phenomenon of putting labels and attribution in defining own identity and the identities of others. The spoken language becomes a strong mean of categorizing and “is acting” or “acts upon us” as if it were out of time and space. Diminishing verbs and de-contextualizing socially, historically, as well as politically makes the definition of identity

²² Peseschkian, 1997, *Positive Family Therapy*, p. 57.

become in time a process of reification of the language. The language becomes laden with ethnic and gender terms which are taken as givens. In this way the language, identity, and the human virtues become feminized, laden with masculine definitions and ethnonyms²³, or essentialized²⁴.

To say that the characters and spiritual virtues are inborn or genetically transmitted means to ignore the difference between the animal and the human rank, implicitly it means to ignore the higher nature of the human being and his/ her lack of responsibility towards his/ her own becoming. Essentializing implies a lack of differentiation between what is *potential* and *actual* in human being. What people, families and groups do *actualize* in a certain moment of their evolution, they *actualize* from what is given or innate as human potential which is ontologically different from the animal potential. The human being can learn and teach other human beings to speak, to sing and to make music and develop questions, which the animal cannot. Essentializing denies the higher nature of the human being and evokes the image of the human being as 'social animal'. Occupations, life conditions, virtues and different ways of being, cigar or rubber obviously are not German or Indian, American or Romanian, Gypsy or Hungarian, Christian or Jew, masculine or feminine. As well as the human spirit is neither French nor Romanian nor Gypsy.

Living together and interacting with people of other culture encouraged the apparition of expressions which evoke²⁵: 1. Customs: *to sit like a Turk or like a Greek, to smoke like a Turk, to leave (or familiar, to cut off) likes a Frenchman, to cut off like an Englishman, to move or to go around like the Gypsy with his tent etc*; 2. Occupations: *to be used to wants (or to something else) like the Gypsy to the flashes of the fire or to the hammer etc*; 3. Way of being, of behaving: *Give me, my Lord, the mind or thought of the Romanian which comes after he has done something, to go or to walk straight like the German, to shut up like a German, the Turks always pays, to ask like a Gypsy, to borrow Gypsy money,*

²³ Ethnonym: name given to people or ethnic groups that speak the same language, name applied to a given ethnic group to express or extract the essence form of... (Yass Gagy-Khabirpour, 2006, *Etnonimia în limba și literatura română*, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Facultatea de Litere, Cluj-Napoca, teză de doctorat).

²⁴ To essentialize: to take out or spotlight the essence of things and phenomenon (DEX online: Explicative Dictionary of Romanian Language), inner or fixed aspect of what a person or a social group is supposed to be neglecting the changing, constructive and evolution aspect of the human being and social groups (Joseph, J.E, 2004, *Language and Identity*).

²⁵ Yass Gagy-Khabirpour, 2006, p. 42.

to wait for a gift like a Gypsy that is 'to do nothing'; 4. Life conditions, poverty: like a Gypsy who expects to be fed; 5. The experiences of the history in which fights, wars, sufferings of the past have left traces in the consciousness of the people of the actual country called Romania: *they come as the Tatars or Turks, they come as if they would be driven away by the nomads, they are run out as if the Turks run after them, the Turkish justice that is an arbitrary justice or judgment.* Some other expressions reflect the difficulty of communication in a foreign language, those who speak it giving the impression that they are drunk: *to speak Turkish, to pretend German or Chinese that is 'to pretend that he/ she does not understand the other or knows nothing', to say it in a Romanian way, to say it in the green mother tongue that is 'looking the other in the eye, speaking clear, straight without gentleness* (Gagyi-Khabirpour, 2006).

It often has happened in the history of a language²⁶ that certain names, including ethnonyms, become appellative names by continuous use or abuse and enlarge their initial content and meaning. It happens that names of people, of countries or of ethnical groups receive a new meaning and become pejorative or satirical as a way of expressing bad feelings, revenge or jokes. Let's take for example the expression: *Moldavian, ox head*. 'The ox head' was the emblem of the country of Moldavia but especially the Russians used it to mock this expression when they speak about somebody who does not know to do anything and especially when they want to insult a Moldavian²⁷ (Gagyi-Khabirpour, 2006).

The phenomenon of categorizing is an old one²⁸. In antic Greek the neighboring people were called in pejorative terms *the others*, that is to say *the Greeks versus the others*. In Roman Empire they were called *Barbarous*²⁹. In the middle of the XIV century, the terms 'Europe' and 'Christianity' were often coincident categories suggesting a kind of war against Barbarians: *the Christians versus the Pagans*. Since the time of disintegration of churches and apparition of humanism, 'Europe' has developed in time new careers: Europeans versus ottoman Turks, Christians versus infidels, Habsburgs versus French perceived as enemies against peace in Europe, Europe Empire of Napoleon versus Europe of nations, the learned versus the

²⁶ Observations made by Saineanu referenced by Gagyi-Khabirpour, p. 99.

²⁷ Zanne, *Proverbele românilor*, VI, p.207, 13704, referenced by Gagyi-Khabirpour, p. 112

²⁸ Maryon McDonald, 1996, Unity in Diversity. Some tensions in the construction of Europe, in: *Social Anthropology*, no. 4, p.47-60.

²⁹ Idem, p. 48.

primitives, Europe of peace versus the barbarism of the war etc (McDonald, 1996).

After the World War II, Europe is linguistically build and conceived as a post war Europe, economically rational. An entire industry of historiography builds histories of Europe. Europe, says Mcdonald, is invented and reinvented correspondently³⁰, according to the geographical borders that extend and contract, to the different concepts on relations that is changing, to the never ending moves of borders and moral concepts. After 1950, Europe is constructed in opposition to the threat that comes from the East, than in opposition with USA. In 1960 another category and debated problem appears in the European Parliament: the young ones. Europe, in the perception of the young, was far from the triumph of civilization against irrationality, violence and tyranny. The term *cultural diversity* has been invented after 1968, in the time of decolonization. After the romantic period of the concept of *unity in diversity*, the official discussions in the European Parliament have started to become more and more tensed. At the high level debates after 1992, the issues on which the most sparks gravitate are: intergovernmental *diversity* and supranational *unity*, *national identity* versus *supranational European identity*, *diversity* versus *unity*. When in their discussions tensions of this kind appear, the officials of high level place these tensions on individual differences, personality and cultural differences. They think about themselves they have passed their *stereotype* and *prejudice thinking*. Although, they are afraid that these very heated debates could others consider or label them: narrow minded, with prejudices, fascists, nationalists, xenophobes, parochial, with vanity, aggressive etc. This in fact happens, concluding the study carried out by Maryon McDonald in the offices of the European Parliament. Her study about the construction of differences³¹ illustrates and contextualizes the evolution on linguistics and imagistic level of certain stereotypes. After the war between French and Prussian in 1870, *poets* and *thinkers* of Germany become by labeling barbarian and brutal. After de 1st World War (and not only) the Germans are seen and labeled by the French and the British (and not only) as being *superhuman in efficiency* and *subhuman in feelings*, *rude* in expressions of their feelings. The French are labeled by the

³⁰ Construction that evokes the writing the history and writing it every day again and again (1984 of Orwell).

³¹ Maryon McDonald, 1993, The Construction of Difference: An Anthropological Approach to Stereotypes, in: Sharon Macdonald (ed.) *Inside European Identities: ethnography in Western Europe*, p.219-236.

British as being *sentimental* until they become *hysterical* etc. Many such images are essentialized: *what*, for example, the Germans *are often* become *what they are in fact or in reality*. It is very difficult, says McDonald, to de-essentialize the stereotypes because: 1. even the most commonplace interaction could offer so called 'empirical proofs' in order to 'confirm' the stereotypes; 2. the historical events, by association of ideas, could confirm the older ideas that sustain that certain 'national characters' are inborn. Any discussion regarding identity, says McDonald, is clearly dependent to the political and to the social maps of the time, to the categories which are disposable to mark, conserve territories or build borders of the I/ other, we/ they and to keep silence around the context in which the categories appear (McDonald, 1993).

What stereotypes are present in Romanian language? Proverbs, sayings, jokes, and different other folk creations are those that can answer best to this question. The Romanian proverbs label Romanian man as being always in loved; a human being who likes put love on the first place and has a heart that loves without choosing: young women, old women, Romanian women and Gypsy women. It can be interpreted as a self reference with regard to an easy going character... *I have a Pagan heart, I love without pity...*³². In some folk materials patriotism is underlined, in others courage but also nationalism feelings of the Romanian, traits which are concentrated in the legendary hero Iancu for whom no woman is compared with those of the Romanians. Iancu is not afraid of any threat. He equally frightens Hungarians and Turks³³. Romanian proverbs³⁴ make reference to the strong belief that the Romanian has in the strength and vitality of his nation; a lack of perseverance of the Romanian following an idea, a certain goal or work; the Romanian conviction that he can surpass the German; the quality of Romanian as a good farmer, as a good dancer, as a joyful person, as a person who loves to party and to have fun; to the fact that he has not success in everything he does and consequently he is confused and to the fact that he has anyway a joyful and sociable character who easily overcome the difficulties; to the fact that he does not forget either good nor bad that has been done to him and acts consequently with friends and enemies; to the fact that Romanian has mainly an inwardly nature but he his hard working and does not replace facts with words etc. With regards to the ethnonymes that make references to the labeling of the other ethnical

³² *Materialuri folkloristice*, vol. I, p. 239, referenced by Gagyi-Khabirpour, p. 118.

³³ *Materialuri folkloristice*, vol. II, p. 1238, referenced by Gagyi-Khabirpour, p. 119.

³⁴ G. Zanne, *Proverbele românilor*, VI, p. 278-288, referenced by Gagyi-Khabirpour, p.119-120.

groups we find sayings that, for example in the area of Suceava, make references to Jews: if a Jew crosses your way it means you will be lucky and things will go well³⁵. In the Romanian proverbs³⁶, the Jew is regarded as a dirty nation especially religiously speaking because they did not accepted Christians and there are consequently a lot of negative and denigrator stories about Jews. Thus the proverbs and sayings told that the Jews celebrate their Easter by receiving the blood of the Christians as Eucharist, blood which is get by violent means; that Jews are always tempted to cheat and betray, especially the Christians. Likewise it is said in the proverbs that Jews have an evil smell because they are not baptized. It goes so far as to say that some Christians after they receive a Jew in their house they have to burn incensed herbs in order to make the smell go away. Another saying says that, especially in town, Jews are not preoccupied with their personal cleanliness and hygiene. Other proverbs say that a Jew baptized is considered a Christian with bad habits and other leave the impression that the Jew would practice lack of honesty and lack of kindness in their professional practice etc. (Gagyi-Khabirpour, 2006).

Some of the ethnonymes and stereotypes present in Romanian language, which reflect aspects of the relationships between the Romanians and the Gypsies have been already mentioned³⁷. In the study on ethnonymes that are present in Romanian language, Gagyi-Khabirpour, invites to reflect on the fact that the reactions of the inhabitants in the Romanian principalities, wherever Gypsies arrived³⁸, were extremely hostile because nobody could understand their way of life, their nomad way of being in permanent contact with nature. In the beginning, all the kings of the Romanian principalities where the Gypsies had arrived³⁹, were all in agreement that they should be driven away from their own territory considering the Gypsies exponents of strange foreign way of thinking, accusing them of

³⁵ A. Gorovei, *Credinþi  i superstiþii*, p. 156, referenced by Gagyi-Khabirpour, p. 110.

³⁶ D. Zanne, *Proverbele rom nilor*, VI, p.177, referenced by Gagyi-Khabirpour, p.110-111.

³⁷ Gagyi-Khabirpour, p. 42.

³⁸ Gagyi-Khabirpour, p. 129.

³⁹ Schwicker considers that emigration of the Gypsy people from India started only when the new Indian languages had been already formed, in a period when the Sanskrit language had disintegrated and the old Indian declension had already disappeared This happened around the year 1000. The comparative philology has helped to map out the journey made by the Gypsy people from India to Europe. It was found that the Gypsy language contains Persian, Armenian, Turkish, and Greek, Slavonic, and Latin words. Nicolae Iorga references the information supplied by B. P. Haşdeu (Historic Archive of Romania, 1867) and asserts that the Gypsy people arrived in the Romanian countries in the same time with the invasion of Tatars and Mongols around the half of the XIII century; Gagyi-Khabirpour, p. 129.

witchcraft, of cheating, of theft etc. In the history of the Gypsies, Muntenia and Moldavia held a special place and a sad repute as here the Gypsies were systematically transformed in slaves. From the oldest documents we can read that the Gypsies were always brought to a certain form of servitude towards the rulers or monasteries. The Gypsies had an economic importance that made certain rules to oppose their leaving. The Romanians principalities have lost the wealth they once enjoyed because they were traversed by important commercial routes. The churches, then the monasteries and the boyars come to the conclusion that the Gypsies represent a value because they are appreciated as very skilled craftsmen specialized in ironwork, in locks made work, and in producing different other metallic object. In order to keep them from running away, the boyars and the churches transformed them in slaves and in order to supervise them each Gypsy without a master was declared property of the state. Among other conclusions, Gagyi-Khabirpour signalize in the end of her study⁴⁰ the fact that stylistic attitudes in very many senses pejorative, ironically, or mockery, envision the effects of the jokes or underline some ethnical particularities picked up as being characteristic and reflect aspects of particular social and historic difficulties that have been encountered by those who spoke Romanian in their interethnic relationships. (Gagyi-Khabirpour, 2006).

In modern and contemporary societies, who are those who place others in such classifying schemas and impose on them these categories? They are those who have access to material and symbolic resources and entitled themselves to make statements and define: *who is who, what is what*⁴¹; that is to say: the state, the family, the teacher, the doctors, the civil workers and bureaucracy, social movements old and new etc. Notions as 'identity' and 'crisis of identity' in the actual social, political and academic practice try to answer to the question *who is who or what*. By their frequent usage, Rogers Brubaker attracts attention that these notions become stereotypes and not even the academic environment is free from such prejudices (Brubaker, 2004). The crisis of identity is a crisis of supra production says Brubaker and an ontological pauperization of the meaning probably also Buber would say.

The ethnic conflict does not always mean difficulties in interethnic relations or '*conflict between ethnic groups*' as Rogers Brubaker warn us evoking the

⁴⁰ Gagyi-Khabirpour, p. 139.

⁴¹ Rogers Brubaker, p. 31, 41, 28-63.

studies and the title of the book of Horowitz⁴². The conflict is between definitions and ideological speeches, systems of classifications and categories of ethno political practices, contextualizing actions and organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects and many others. The protagonists that construct these categories are organizations that have power and authority: states, ministries, politicians and business men specialized in ethno politic business, and army; paramilitary groups, political parties, ethnical organizations, churches, press, radio and TV etc. (Brubaker, 2004).

Some of these organizations are self represented or can be perceived by others as being organizations build up by and for certain ethnical groups. IRA, KLA and PKK (the The Laborers' Party from Kurdistan) for instance pretend that they speak and act in the name of the Irish Catholics, the Albanians of Kosovo, or the Kurds from Turkey. Even so, says Brubaker, these organizations cannot be equivalent with ethnic groups and this do applies not only in the case of ethnical organization, paramilitary or terrorist organization, but in the case of the all organizations, institutions or states that have the pretention to speak and act in the name of an ethnic, racial, national or any other kind of group. Moreover, says Brubaker, these organizations are the principal protagonists in the conflicts and violence between ethnics and the relation between these and the ethnical groups which they pretend that represent are often profoundly ambiguous (Brubaker, 2004).

Brubaker analysis the '*ethnicity without groups*' in an East European town, Cluj-Napoca, which after the fall of communism has been the scene of conflict and rivalry between ethno politic Hungarian and Romanian elites. These conflicts, says Brubaker, are not at all conflicts between ethnic groups which mean groups belonging to certain nationality, Romanian and Hungarian, who live together in Cluj and whom the ethno political elites pretend to represent them⁴³. In a study worked out in 1997 by Magyari Nandor și Laszlo Peter, referenced by Brubaker, most of the Romanians and Hungarians interviewed are busy with problems that they do not interpret in ethnical terms and many of them are indifferent to politics. Almost all of those who have been interviewed, Romanians and Hungarians, speak about ethnical conflict as something that '*comes from*

⁴² Rogers Brubaker, p. 3-4, 10-11.

⁴³ Idem, p. 20-27. In 2002, from 320.000 inhabitants living in Cluj, 20% identified themselves as Hungarians.

somewhere above' and is generated by politicians who have their own agenda. The results of the studies focalized on groups (studies that attribute to the groups: identity, action, interests, will) can be totally different from the results of the studies focalized on concepts and categories. The study mentioned by Brubaker focalized rather on categories and concepts of *Romanian* and *Hungarian*, on process and relations. For example, how and in what contexts the ethnic categories are used in order to understand difficulties, to clarify preferences, to interpret what was heard, to understand own self and others (Brubaker, 2004).

Neither the gender conflict does always mean difficulties in the relationships between men and women or '*conflict among groups of men and groups of women*'. Gender conflict is also a conflict of speeches and concepts. In this case, the protagonists who have the power to name and define '*what is the woman*' and '*what is the man*' are the social patriarchal organizations that strengthen the gender inequalities, the feminist organizations and those who fight for the emancipation of women and equal chances among women and men. The social movements and the systematic actions of the social work that fight for social justice from a feminist stance *reproduce*⁴⁴ likewise the inequalities of chances and of power in the larger patriarchal society. These movements and social actions reproduce inside the women organizations the inequalities (there is inequality among women of different race and ethnic groups, social and economic conditions), without necessarily reinforcing them. Lena Dominelli brings into the discussion the masked hierarchy in the different forms of clashes and fights for access to the resources, most obvious aspect in women organizations being the coexistence of unprivileged positions of unpaid work called voluntary alongside the privileged positions of paid work called management and professional expertise⁴⁵ (Dominelli, 2002).

Although in full agreement with many of the feminist values, the social work has been already in full war of theories confronting its own professional dilemmas. Consequently, social work keeps itself away from this mess in which the feminists have gotten themselves into, functioning mainly after reparatory, psychoanalytically or behavioral model. How did

⁴⁴ Lena Dominelli and Eileen McLeod, p. 15-18, 60-61, make reference to the waves from 1970-1980, in SUA.

⁴⁵ In accord with the sayings of Orwell: „all people are equal, but some people are more equal than others”, a well known experience in East Europe. Equality in the form of egalitarianism proves to be a chimera in the Western world as well.

the feminists try to get out of this? They redefine the traditional notion of power⁴⁶. *Feminist interpretation of power* extends this concept from the ability to dominate, to control and to influence other persons to the ability to capacitate them to actualize their own potentialities and aspirations: *empowerment*⁴⁷. Lena Dominelli⁴⁸ also mentions the obstacles in the activities of empowerment; the statistics of 1994 points to the fact that 80% of the world population has access only to 16% of the resources of humanity. As poverty and hunger get sharper, she continues, the capacity of the people to contribute to the development of the world in which they live and to interact with it is dominated by the efforts for survivor. In this way, it becomes more and more difficult for them to prioritize their preoccupations and encounter the 20% of the population of the world who has access to the 86% of the resources of humanity, in order to be heard (Dominelli, 2002).

Dominelli⁴⁹, alongside other feminists, is hard working to get the feminism out of this mess and to contribute also to the evolution of social work in a larger social, political, and international context. She develops the concept of *empowerment* from a non linear perspective of the power relationships. In this way, she tries to transcend the dichotomy and one-sidedness of classical fragmented concepts. She makes the difference between the positive consequences and negative consequences of power discussing three forms of power: the *power over relations*, the *power to take action*, and the *power of the relations*. The *power over relations*, as the expression of oppressive power relationships, involves the process of 'othering': to alter the otherness, the oneness of the other. That is to construct an individual or group as 'the other', as someone who is excluded from the so called normal hierarchies of power and labeled inferior or pathological. Othering, says Dominelli, is socially constructing through social interactions and can occur on a range of different attributes and involve a range of binary divisions so that a person or group can be 'othered' on multiple levels (gender, race etc).

⁴⁶ *feminist visions for social work*, idem, p.151

⁴⁷ In social work, *empowerment* is closely related with *the anti-oppressive practice*: putting in action the core professional values of social work at the individual, family, group and community level, cultural and structural as well. It is about: self determination and autonomy, fight against prejudices and discrimination, the right of every person to have access to the necessary resources for his/ her life and development, respect and development of dignity and trust in the value of the human being, confidentiality, Roth, p.68, 119-138, 216.

⁴⁸ Lena Dominelli, *Anti-Oppressive Social Work and Practice*, p.3.

⁴⁹ Lena Dominelli, 2002, *Anti-Oppressive Social Work and Practice*, p.17-18, 44-47.

The *power to* indicate the transformative power to take action and to make the own potentialities become true, including to exercise power to resist oppressive interactions that imply <to oppress> and <to be oppressed>. *Power of relationships* refers to the collective power that shows itself when individuals meet to aim at common purposes and that in order to raise it requires collective actions and collaborative work between members of similar group identities. The feminist analysis of power, according to Dominelli, suggest that in order to release the power to take action, women and other subordinate groups in society can come together in groups to enact power of relationship aimed at individual or group empowerment. Dominelli mentions the 1980's works of Foucault to attract the attention that, in absence of vigilance, activities that aim at empowerment can reproduce *power over* relations if they are aimed at subjecting others to their control or seeking to deny others their capacity to act. Because power, she continues, is interactive and multidimensional, and no one individual or group is either completely powerful or powerless. People who oppress others in one aspect of their lives, they may be oppressed in other aspects of it. The feminist analysis focalizes only one aspect of the human experience, divides the world in those who oppress other versus those who are oppressing others (Dominelli, 2002).

Although almost all cultures are apparently dominated by male patriarchal concepts and practices, Hepworth and Larsen⁵⁰ warn that professionals in social work practice should avoid taking of premature decision with regarding evaluation of the structure and balance of power in families, with regards to who holds the power in the family. Even if all patriarchal definitions of roles in the family prescribe submissive attitudes of women being in the service of men⁵¹, at a more or less obvious level women have a central and powerful role in the family. Hepworth and Larsen illustrate this paradox of the power citing the discussions of Falicov regarding families of Latin origin in which he has observed that although there is an exterior compliance to the cultural concepts that prescribe male dominance and submissive attitude of women towards men, this compliance is often a 'social fiction'. In spite of verbal recognition of the submissive status of women, the hidden powers of women observed in certain cultures determine some of the authors to speak about paradoxical power of women. Powers in families, according to Hepworth and Larsen like many

⁵⁰ Hepworth & Larsen, 2006, Assessing family functioning, in: *Direct social work practice: Theory and skills*, Pacific Grove, CA: Brookes-Cole Publishing Company, p. 241.

⁵¹ Prescriptions that legitimize for example the violence of man against the woman.

others, refer to: the ability of a member of the family to induce changes in the behaviors of other members of the family, to have access to the necessary resources in order to gratify the basic human needs of the members of the families (economic and financial, social status and recognition, love and many others). The paradox of power in the family refers to the fact that women in certain cultures have the power to decide with regard of the daily things in the family and with regard of the destiny (goals) of the family, and at the same time they are forced to deny the fact that they have this power in the family (Hepworth, Rooney, Larsen, 2006).

The resistance of women in East Europe in front of feminist ideologies is due to the fact that the feminist speech, says Enikő Demény⁵², is based on politics of feminist identity and explores a language of human rights, but feminine identity has not been constructed in East Europe as a political category. Neither in Romania, this resistance is not due to the political unconsciousness, to the ignorance with regard to the own social difficulties or the lack of solidarity between these women, as some feminist voices who belong to the Western countries would blame them and underline. Social and cultural causes and background of this resistance are more profound, says Demény, such as collectivist tradition, and are very different from the cultural environment of individualism in the Western countries in which feminist has developed. Alongside this, there is also an outspoken and strong option for religious ideologies and concepts that prescribe that women should be submissive. This is why many women prefer to take action according to *feminine ethics* (to take care and nurture interpersonal relationships), and not according to feminist ethics that focalizes on *social justice*. Moreover, says Demény, many women who take part in the activities of women organizations, secular and religious, formulate the necessity to linguistically frame themselves in the categories of gender identity in order to get financial support for their projects (Demény, 2002). Hepworth and Larsen⁵³, on the other side, invites professionals from social work to be careful in evaluating the social problems that children, women, men and families from different cultures face. Concepts and practices defined functional in the context of normative behavior of certain families in a certain culture can be defined dysfunctional in the context of other culture; those dysfunctional in a certain culture could be perceived entirely

⁵² Enikő Demény, 2002, *Participarea femeilor în societatea civilă și redefinirea regimurilor de gen în România postcomunist*, Prezențe feminine. Studii despre femei în România, Ed. Fundației Desire, Cluj-Napoca, p.288-289.

⁵³ Idem, p. 263.

functional in another culture. For instance, in evaluating behavior of healthy interdependence that exists between the members of the Latin families, terms like 'melting', 'fusion', 'undifferentiated ego' estrange and label the members of these families with different categories of pathology. For those observers who live in a culture that is shaped by strong individualistic philosophy of life (whom independence and autonomy are dominant values on which they guide their own life) the fusion that exists in the Latin families can seem to them as pathological. When practitioners working with families of other ethnic background, impose their own preferences, standards and cultural concepts on these families, in fact they intervene in a way which blocks the functioning and the evolution of these families. Confronting with misunderstanding of the culture from which these families come from, practitioners come into the paradoxical situation to punish those families which are living harmoniously and to contribute to their estrangement from the professional social services. Ironically, say Hepworth and Larsen, when practitioners understand the culture of the different ethnical groups, they confront with the risk of resorting to cultural stereotypes, stereotypical perceptions which exist in each culture. Realizing the fact that each person, family, group, culture is unique and the members of the same ethnic group can be very different from each other and from the typical description of the ethnic group they come from, prevent and counterbalance the comfortable trend of resorting to stereotype cognitions (Hepworth, Rooney, Larsen, 2006).

Exploring the cultural concepts in 18 different cultures and investigating the relations between health, sickness and culture in the practice of psychotherapy, positive and transcultural⁵⁴, Nossrat Peseschkian deal with the questions: How can we face conflicts and how can we make daily misunderstandings disappear as they appear in couple and family relationships, work relations, intercultural relations and in trans cultural situations (like mixed marriages, international migration etc)? What can we do that a child should become capable of tenderness, radiance and content, should become capable of trustworthiness etc? The medical and psychotherapy literature makes abundant reference to what Peseschkian calls the capacities to love which is primary⁵⁵ and capacities to know which

⁵⁴ Peseschkian, *Positive Family Therapy*, p.102, *positum* (Latin): whole, entire, what is given.

⁵⁵ Idem, p. 181-182: expressions of the capacity to love: time, patience, contact, sexuality, tenderness, trust, hope, faith, certitude, unity etc. On these primary capacities the secondary capacities build and resonate affectively (in the societies of North America and western part

is secondary⁵⁶. Freud referenced by Peseschkian mentions sexuality and cleanness; Jung, Kuenkel and Frankle, referenced by Peseschkian, speak about the importance of faith; Fromm speaks about hope; Mitscherlich speaks about the importance of success and motivation. Dreikurs relates the difficulties of learning with the emphasis on success, prestige and accuracy; Deutsch brings into discussion spontaneity, openness in the couple relationship (honesty); Erikson elaborates a sequence of virtues that build according to the stages of individual development and maturity of the psychological functions counting on trust, hope, will, determination, loyalty during adolescence, and care and wisdom in the adult stage of life. The contribution of Peseschkian is the fact that: 1. He has brought together systematically these theories and practices, the sayings and proverbs from different cultures, the human capacities, the development strategy and conflict resolution which are differently accentuated and reflected in different theories and cultural practices. 2. Interpersonal conflicts are interpreted as confrontations between different styles and life conceptions, between different means of knowledge⁵⁷ and forms to love⁵⁸, clashes between different development needs of the partners, conflicts between different expectations in daily interactions, in fact as many opportunities of learning and reciprocal development⁵⁹; 3. Somatic disorders, mental disorders or disorders in the area of work, of social life and fantasy (one sided concepts regarding future and meaning of life) are described as one sided strategies of conflict resolution (escape in illness, in work, loneliness, and social actions or in day dreaming and fantasy). This one sidedness' has to do with the overemphasizing of certain experiences and values⁶⁰ and suppressing of other different experiences, values and capacities. If persons

of Europe these values – for ex. contact – are time to time shadowed by the one side favour of the secondary capacities, mainly achievement, success and performance).

⁵⁶ Idem, p. 179-180: expressions of the capacity to know (reflect norms, values in action/ in shadow in every day life and interactions): punctuality, cleanness, orderly, obedience, politeness, honesty, loyalty, justice, work and achievement, frugal spirit, exactness etc. (in the societies of Asia and Middle East these values – for example punctuality – are time to time neglected/ shadowed by the one side favour of the primary capacities, mainly time for contact, faith etc.).

⁵⁷ Sense, reason/ work area, contact/ tradition, intuition/ fantasy/ vision of future and life meaning

⁵⁸ Idem, models of relationships with I, You, We, Origin-we (relation of parents with religion/ different life conceptions, patience and time in these relations).

⁵⁹ *If two people each have an apple and then exchange them, they still have only one apple. But if the same two each have an idea and exchange them, each thereby has two ideas* (George Bernard Shaw, referenced by Peseschkian, *Positive Family Therapy*, p. 5).

⁶⁰ Idem, (ex. reason, body, I in the western societies of Europe and North America; intuition, body, contact, We, origin-we in the societies of the Middle East and Asia).

from different cultures, with different experiences of education and socialization come together (as in mixed marriages, migration etc) tensions between them could easily appear. Peseschkian attracts the attention that these tensions reflect conflict between different behavioral patterns and expectations⁶¹. He says that progressively, during daily interactions, one of them can develop patience and acceptance, the other authenticity, the other punctuality etc. Unconsciousness, in the approach of positive psychotherapy, has the meaning: 1. 'Location' of the human capacities which have not been developed or differentiated as the conditions for their maturation has not yet arrived, the human capacities being potential energies which have the tendency to actualize. 2. 'Location' of human capacities that are suppressed or repressed and have already been confronted with a certain social and cultural environment. Either they have been rejected by the environment or the environment has not offered sufficient conditions, space and time for their training and development or has encouraged other capacities to be exercised and developed, exclusively and in a unilateral way. Different perspectives on the same capacity and human conduct produce different responses from people from different cultures. The perspectives that reflect different social rules operating in different groups are present also in forms of folk creations, of stories, of proverbs and sayings that contain wisdom. This wisdom has the potential to broaden the horizon of understanding and to overcome the misunderstandings *between* different persons and different groups. Realizing the fact that one and the same behavior is differently evaluated according to different criteria existing in different epochs and different cultures can broaden the spectrum of values, solutions and answers in situations that are conflict laden (Peseschkian, 1997).

Unity and Diversity vs. Unity in Diversity?

In the actual state of development of interpersonal, family, group, community and state relationships, unity in diversity is dilemmatic. These dilemmas reflect the conflicts between different capacities, values, concepts and conflict resolution strategies that are placed in action in different stage of development by different people, families, groups and communities. The culture of fundamental human rights is based on individualistic and monistic philosophies that build *social justice* around concepts of independence and autonomy of the individual, *Me/ I* being the central

⁶¹ For ex. X arrives in time (active dimension of punctuality), he gets angry if Y is late (passive dimension/ expectation of the same punctuality), punctuality is the central concept in the life of X, it dominates his entire life because he has made it sacred.

concept of these philosophies. The culture of individual rights tend to give up and <sacrifice> the unity of communities⁶² on the altar of autonomy and self determination cultivating *diversity without unity*, wherefrom fragmentation of the social groups and social care, and the resulting social confusion and disorder. The culture of social responsibilities is based on community philosophies that build *social justice* around the concepts of cohesion of communities, *Us/ We* being the central concept of these philosophies. The community culture tends to give up and <sacrifice> the individual autonomy on the altar of community cultivating *unity without diversity*, that is to say uniformity.

The Asian dilemmas, brought into discussion by Bhikhu Parekh⁶³, illustrates the difficulty of societies to build *unity in diversity* when the culture of these societies gravitates, exclusively or with high priority, around the concept of cohesion. The dilemma of India is how to guarantee individual freedom and human rights without sacrificing the goals of community. When the space of dialogue is open at high level, government and in parliament, expressing reasonable arguments in order to limit human rights, allows progressive integration and adaptation of human rights without fragmentation of communities. When arguments are not reasonable they usually reflect oppressive social practice and the dialogue is compromised. The legitimate pressures to guarantee human rights start moving at international level in order to limit obviously oppressive philosophies and practices such as violence against women or against cultural and religious communities without voice in society (Parekh, 2006).

Bhikhu Parekh⁶⁴ pleads like Peseschkian for exploring other culture in order to interrogate and reflect upon the strong points and limits in the own culture, even to learn from contact and dialogue with other cultures, both at individual, group and community level, and institutional and international level. Parekh analysis critically the great trends of thinking that have been focalized on cultural diversity with all their benefits and shortcomings, with those the different cultures have in common and those which they differ from each other. The monistic vision on human being in the antique philosophy, the Christian moral philosophy, the classical liberalism and contemporary liberalism is a source of intolerance towards

⁶² Where it is still there: Asia and Middle East.

⁶³ Bhikhu Parekh, 2006, *Rethinking Multiculturalism. Cultural diversity and Political Theory*, p. 136-141.

⁶⁴ Idem, p. 74.

different differences, is a source of uniformity and of distortion of otherness. The pluralistic vision, says Parekh, even if is proven to be more tolerant, is not morally more just than the monistic aggressive vision because it implies rejection, indifference towards otherness, estrangement like that mentioned by Buber. The condition of dialogue and empathic understanding between persons from different culture, says Parekh, is it that each has to make a minimum effort to give up the one sided focalization upon own concepts in order to rise above own stereotypes and cultural prejudices that color so deeply the human being (Parekh, 2006).

Unity between justice and love, between sincerity and politeness or consideration, are thought by Peseschkian⁶⁵ as conditions of dialogue. To sanctify or make sacred the sincerity leads to oppressive frankness, and politeness without sincerity leads to hypocrisy. To sanctify or to make sacred the love without justice, says Peseschkian, loses control of reality. To sanctify the justice without love focalizes unilaterally the successes and failures, accounts mistakes, exaggerates comparisons and competitions between persons wherefrom jealousy and arrogance - conditions, according to Buber, that finally undermine dialogue. Justice without love is blind to differences, ignores the needs and conditions of developments that are different from one person (and group and culture) to another and is illustrated in the following motto that promotes the unity between justice and love: *to treat two people in the same way means that one of them is wronged*. Parekh sustains a similar conclusion with regard to the debates on Quebec in Canada and provinces of Kashmir and Punjab in India: when different communities have different needs and different conditions of development, insisting to treat them in the same way is unjust.

Conclusions

Prejudices and stereotypes are accounted among the greatest obstacles in the way of *unity in diversity*. It is easier, more comfortable to understand empathically, and consequently to get and keep a certain unity⁶⁶ in relations with people who are more like us, who are the same nations, gender or faith, who speak the same language, who we like, who love us and whom we love. The challenge to endure the tensions that are present face to face in the authentic encounter with our fellow people, who are different from us and still the same as us, signalize also the effort we can do in order to build and keep unity without giving up diversity. The effort to

⁶⁵ Nossrat Peseschkian, 2007, *Psihoterapie Pozitivă*, Editura Trei, București, p.410-424.

⁶⁶ Unity that tend to become uniformity.

endure the happenings of our encounter and to learn from each other without entering any competition, without becoming aggressive or submissive, has the potential to facilitate unity in diversity. These efforts imply to resist to the temptation to reify⁶⁷, to resist also to the temptation to use comparisons between fellow that are usually expressed in the form of adjective and expressions that promote labeling and categorical, stereotypical thinking. Moreover, each human being has the potential to bring into light and enhance the beauty of the other, impossible task in conditions of competition, jealousy, envy, and arrogance. Unity in diversity is not only necessarily, it is inevitable. It is the promise of peace in all great revealed religions to the world⁶⁸, philosophically speaking it has been suggested by Edith Stein and Martin Buber⁶⁹, politically and economically it has been discussed. Nevertheless, in many parts of the world, unity in diversity is just a slogan, a utopia or a far dream, far too far to be true. *Unity in diversity* is the official motto⁷⁰ in the construction of Europe, New Guinea, South Africa, Indonesia, and term often used in order to describe India that is a multiethnic society, multi linguistic and multi faith society.

The feeling of unity, according to Edith Stein, is based on empathy not vice versa. This means that we understand each other through acts of empathy which eventually leads to unity; we get the unity feeling and the richness of our experiences through our acts of empathy not vice versa: *through empathy what is "sleeping" in us is developed*.

After more than two thousand years, we can re-think the Socratic self-knowledge as a discovery of potentialities, as a "reminder" of hidden, of infinite pearls of wisdom that are latent in each of us, relationship and dialogue partners. Empathy, as maieutica, looks after and takes care to support the efforts for searching and intuitive knowledge of the

⁶⁷ *Reification* means to make concrete, to materialize; the tendency to give a static character for every dynamic thing which is moving. Misunderstanding of the social relations as being relations between autonomic objects or things (DEX online, <http://dictionare.ro>, 21.08.08).

⁶⁸ It is spiritually revealed in Baha'i Faith as well, the youngest of the world wide religions. *Unity* (Three core assertions of the Bahá'í Faith, sometimes termed the "three onenesses": Oneness of God, the Oneness of Religion and the Oneness of Humanity. They are also referred to as the unity of God, unity of religion, and unity of mankind), Wikipedia, accessed in 21.08.2008.

⁶⁹ The philosophy of dialogue and considerations on communities which are crushed, divided by rivalry (preface to *Povestiri hasidice*, pg.13-58).

⁷⁰ *Unity in diversity, multiculturalism* (India); Wikipedia, accessed in 21.08.2008.

potentialities that are hidden in every human experience, no matter how profane it would be.

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