The Lost Order…?
Around Modern and Post-Modern Constructing of the Identity

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Abstract
The paper attempts to answer the question, whether the processes of constructing identity in modern and post-modern times are similar or rather different. Modern society, in contrary to traditional (primitive, simple, pre-industrial) society, ruptures with collective and universal values that influenced human life and his identity. Since that moment, a man is no more strongly involved in social ties; modernity and post-modernity give him unquestionable autonomy in which individualism is the key-value. Therefore, accordingly to the new reality and new social (philosophical) conditions, the human identity is constructed. What are the rules of this process? Are the modernism and post-modernism two separate epochs and two separate realities that construct different cultural frames in which the process of building the identity and the identity itself take specific (opposite) directions? Or rather, as some sociologists prove (e.g. Anthony Giddens), post-modernism brings indeed the new quality of life but should be understood just as the continuation – strengthened form of the previous – modern stage of society? The attempt to answer the question, by presenting main scientific assumptions about subject matter, has been undertaken in this paper.

Keywords
identity, modernity, post-modernity, cultural values, personality

Introduction

The paper has been entitled as *The Lost Cosmos...? Around modern and post-modern constructing the identity*, by no means, not to touch John Milton's masterpiece, but to show how paraphrased title of Milton's work reflects perfectly the main concept of the paper. The social phenomenon of constructing one's identity that is being functioning incessantly, seems to reflect accurately the character of the question-hypothesis put in the title.

The Milton's expression of *"lost paradise"* can be interpreted here literally as the synonym of weak relations between the human and the God, so *"the loss of the paradise"* would mark human rejection the sources of constructing his identity on spiritual realm. But title's expression can be understood also according to Weberian sense – as the "the disenchantment" what in metaphoric sense means a loss of strong connection between the man and the community as the power (centre) organizing of social order. This is, what the modernism introduces, and post-modernism confirms, in the categories of autonomy and individualism. Neither the real community, nor the spiritual aspects of human existence (in the figure of God, or the Fate) do ever identify the values of culture that human identity and his social existence consist of. *The paradise*, on which – as metaphoric example of reflections about the shape of present identity were placed, should not be treated so exclusively (narrowly) – only to the sphere of the human religiosity. The metaphor of paradise marks rather harmony, order, *cosmos* itself that reflect human relationship with the community and its strong ties. Meanwhile the modernism, and post-modernism had made a man free from the domination of the group, giving him autonomy unparalleled so far. However, in exchange, they seem to had introduced the chaos – "thingless names and nameless things", as Clifford Geertz express it (Geertz 1973, p. 103). Has the paradise/cosmos been lost irrevocably?

The identity is the social category that is understood as the self-definition of human being. It consists of specific values that characterize in best way the man as an individual and man as the member of specific society (community, group). In this context identity is always involved in discussion of culture's condition. However, the individual identity is equivalent with self-identification, the social identity marks one's place in social group, what reflects the level of team acceptance to him. Therefore it should be accepted that the man's identity is marked by both these planes, becoming as the "multi-one"/"multi-unity" (Kłoskowska 1996): the special configuration of key features simultaneously edifying feeling of distinction as individual and as the member of the definite community.

1. Modern implications of the identity

There is no clear agreement among scientists when exactly modernism and modern society aroused. But those key-terms (phenomena) are located in human history as the new realm of life in 18th and 19th century (however, even in 16th century first premises of new epoch appeared) related to Enlightenment's categories. Modernism is usually interpreted as the epoch born on the field of the Tree Big Revolutions: The American Revolution and The French Revolution which broke old un-

equal stratifications and gave people new social hopes: democracy, the law as the main source of governance and the autonomy of national states. Technical Revolution in Europe "supported" those changes and resulted in significant technological improvement that revolutionized human life, especially in economical sphere (Sztompka 2002, p. 558). All those circumstances became a fertile field on which new way of life and new core values appeared.

One of the theoreticians of modernity, Krishan Kumar (Kumar 1978, 1988, 1995 in Sztompka, 2002), while describing modernity, recalls such its features like:

- individualism – which means that the man was released from imposed social ties and obligations; he received the right to decide about himself as a citizen, member of specific society and as a human being; since that time the shape of his biography has depended on him;
- differentiation – means that as an individual, man can choose from variety of options related to the ways of life and life strategies;
- rationalism – means the apotheosis of mind and reason; emphasizes the power of empirical argumentation in daily life practices and the science as the source of any kind of explanation;
- economical approach – depicts that majority of human daily activity focus on economics: earning the money in order to spent it – consume; the process of production is caused by the need of consumption;
- expansion of this model (ethic), with its major category: globalization – reveals that the ethos of modern man (modern life) and the expansion of modernity tend to extend over the western Europe – is being spread across almost the whole world towards both directions: broadwise and in depth.

In contrary to traditional (primitive, simple, pre-industrial) communities, with such key-concepts as:

- collectivism – which meant that community's, group's needs were predominant than individual's and social positions (determining the social strategies of life) were given, outlined by community;
- universalism (of values) – that meant that the one holly order (tradition) – created by ancestors and blessed by God(s) was the only one (and the same for all members of community/society) strategy of living; in this context the metaphor of time as a circle is crucial, what means that order once established should had been repeated without any changes; what is more, in such interpretation of human community, the change was not even needed: the divine (ideal) order was the main mechanism and source of organization of human (community) life;
- irrationalism – with religion and/or magic as the main supernatural powers leading human live and organizing his activity;

- localization/particularism – as the focus on specific features and characteristic of community (society)

Modernism and new modern society seemed that **no more man would depend on community that could have lead his life before**. No more had modern man been involved in group domination that made him just as passive machine reproducing social reality and culture. Modernity, with all the political and technological circumstances, brought him freedom and autonomy.

The complete concept of modern personality was created by Alex Inkels (Inkels, Smith 1974; Sztompka 2002) in **the syndrome of modern personality**. In his project author depicts such features, like:

- openness to innovation and change
- awareness of multitude of views and readiness to showing and defending men's own ones
- orientation to the future
- the power of subjective creativity
- direction to planning of future actions
- confidence to the social order
- meritocratic attitude
- tendency to self-improvement
- respect to the dignity of others

Modernity, with the individualism in its centre, makes the man independent, responsible, innovative and what is more important – let him become the creator of his own biography (identity). This new feature treated as a privilege reflect also others, like: consequence, time-line interpretation of life that indicates stability, human responsibility, reliability. No more the group, community or blind fate had insisted and put directions according to which the modern man identity was building. But on the other hand, modern era guarantied stability of frames in which human's projects – so the identity – could had been realized.

All that have been mentioned above, Zygmunt Bauman (1998) included in the metaphor of an pilgrim, described as the accurate pattern of modern personality. This is the figure in which:

"The life is the pilgrimage", Bauman writes, "and as in each pilgrimage, destination is put in advance, although pilgrims have never been there before and they do not have exact idea how it looks like. (…) [but they are – U.G.] sure that all what is at the end of the pilgrimage, have been already settled and neither anything nor anybody could have changed it" (Bauman 1993, p. 10).

In this context, in modernism, identity was being built as a stable, central point of human personality. It was being achieved as a task, as the treasure that had to be

find out. Once individually characterized, a man was wearing his identity as a knight his armour. What is more, identity was also involved in other stable categories, like: social class, social position, territory, nation, state – what meant that **identity** reminded **and was itself involved in the structure**.

In this light, identity emerges from culture that was also in modern epoch defined similarly – as stable a phenomenon, as the structure; such concepts were presented, for example, by Claude Lévi-Strauss or Talcott Parsons. According to Parsnons, for example,

"cultural system [was – U.G.] a system of symbols and meanings [related to – U.G.] the "social system", which was a system of norms and institutions, and to the "personality system", which was a system of motivations" (in: Sewell 2005, p. 160).

The core of culture is the cultural canon (on which identity can be created) – term that was created, in Polish social science, by Antonina Kłoskowska (1996) and developed by Andrzej Szpocinski (1997) and Joanna Kurczewska (2000). It is worthy to notice, that this category is strongly involved in the process of building human identity and can also be interpret accordingly to "the disposition" of characteristic of exact time; using paraphrase of Sewell (2005), "isomorphic with the characteristic of the contemporary". According to the authors, the cultural canon can be formulated in closed or semi-closed formula – what suggests its strongly structured form, characteristic for consolidated values and social attitudes towards them; in open formula – when changes of core values systematically happen; and the canon interpreted as – only – "canonical rule" – what means that canon (and culture as well as identity) is structured in the weakest way, it is rather amorphic, liquid (Bauman) and depends on individual search and interpretations (Szpocinski 1997). Kurczewska proposes a similar typology interpreting a canon as: (1) museum of national masterpieces – relatively strong, stable formula and (2) canon as a supermarket – store including national trends – open constantly changing formula (Kurczewska 2000).

All those projects lead us to understand that identity in modernism was build, constructed, and once "established" seemed long-lasting set of features. Meanwhile in 21st century, the process seems to have changed its nature – nowadays identity is not a matter of construction, it remains the process of catching on accidentally occurred values.

3. Post-modern conditions of the identity construction

It seems that the category of individualism achieves its culmination in second part of 20th century and continues in 21st century, when post-modernity appears with the new idea of life in which deconstruction has become the central value of ontological and epistemological sense (Nycz 1997). But it should be also added that similarly to modernism, post-modern era as the new quality, came into existence on the basis of technological development as well as political changes. In the second half of 20th century it was connected with the development of Information and Communication Technologies in which media started to play the main role as the source of information (not infrequently as any source of so called reality – "hyperreality"), transport (airplanes) that made people available to become more mobile and also the political changes (the end of The Cold War with its demolition of the Iron Curtain, destruction of totalitarianisms in Central and Eastern Europe with the fall of the Berlin Wall) also played important role.

All those circumstances caused that the world – expressed until this time as the "Guttenberg's Galaxy" (big and unattainable) had become interpreted as "global village" in which the time and the space have been compressed, so the world (in full sense of the word) become fully attainable (McLuhan 1964). In consequence, globalization appeared as the process of tightening up the international and intercontinental relations and dependences. All those circumstances resulted with new ideas and interpretations of culture, society, human being and his identity.

Post-modernism, as a new idea, originated from the field of architecture, critique of literature and philosophy (Nycz 1997). There is no one declaration (manifesto) of all protagonists of post-modernity (and of course, intentionally, there cannot be such) about what post-modernism really is, but any attempt of characteristics of the idea usually focuses on (Szacki 2002):

- radical relativism – as the negation of universal role of ratio that was to reveal objective and obligatory through, instead of it the pluralism of values is incorporated;
- rejection of all "general narrations" or "metanarrations" – as the scientific, religious and philosophical projects explaining the reality in only one, unquestionable way; the plurality of biographies (and factors creating them) make them equal, so one explanation of anything should be neglected;
- the change and uncertainty as the main categories – what means that nothing in the world is finished, closed, finally defined; the change and instability causes ambiguity and contingency that penetrates all spheres of human life.

In consequence, the world loses its scheme, directions, borders and any references, in which any context or convention is no more suitable (Bauman 1991,

1993, 1994, 1997a, 1997b). Everything has been removed from the old contexts, so as well the man himself seemed to be changeable, flexible, surrounded with instability and ambiguity. Reception of time remains episodic, accidentally appearing moments, which lead person from one point to another unexpectedly, without any drawn pattern. All that leads to the crisis of identity.

Suitable metaphor according to which Z. Bauman draws the essence of new – postmodern epoch, is a figure of tourist (Bauman 1993). Bauman describes it as a personality in permanent state of journey, who freely leaves his home in order to find new impressions. Convenient circumstances that avail him to travel are those that there is a home to which back journey is always possible – it makes tourist feeling safe. In new, exotic place of destination he is unengaged in any close relations – it is not even needed: other people are just his servants showing their culture and giving him the pleasure of well done effort of journey.

What it the aim of tourist's existence? It is just the **move** (**mobility**):

"Mobility in the tourist's life is the prime value: when one needs, it will push or calls the dream, that's why he should be ready to the trip. This eternal readiness tourist calls as the freedom, autonomy, independence – and he values it more than all the rest. She [the readiness] is condition *sine qua non* of all – anything the heart can desire" (Bauman 1997a, p. 144).

The conclusion drawn from the quoted fragment of Bauman's work can be that post-modernity gives to all human beings the autonomy in the widest sense. Post-modernity releases a man from any tights and obligations and allows him to act freely in any way and any direction he wants. The aim of human existence – and his identity – is "**not let to be defined**":

"It is not the point to discover in oneself the calling given him forever or to build one's existence, one's identity patiently and persistently, floor after the floor and brick after the brick, but it's the point „not let to be defined". So that every adopted identity would be the disguise, and not the skin, that does not fit too closely to the body, in order to drop it when the need or the desire will come, and to take it off as easily as the sweaty shirt" (Bauman 1997).

What is more, "The brawny, solidly built human identity more often turns to be the millstone round his leg than sends him flying" (Bauman 1997).

Free will of collecting one's identity, where changes are so deep and when so strong is the right "to posses universal rights to liberty of body and mind" (Ray 1999) lead man to reach those spheres and realms which seemed to be unreachable: nature, sex (in terms of cloning, transsexualism). In this light, the question should

be put: who or what is the source of change? The mind, ratio – as it was used to be in modernity but was passed away irrevocably, or rather emotions and feelings? Bauman explains it in terms of **the need of experience**:

"The experience [or experiencing – U.G.] (…) is not the emptiness waiting for being ful-filled with suitable content, is not shapeless plasma waiting for being formatted by experts equipped in exclusive hermeneutic tools. (…) it is just the opposite: since first moment is [the experiencing] significant, interpreted and understood by these who experience it – that condition of meaning, interpreting and understanding is the way of their life" (Bauman 1997, p. 137).

And:

"This is not as much propriety of watched things, as the tourist's wandering interests, his eternally busy attention, the changing points of the sight make the form to the world – al-ways, anyway equally faint and temporary as that glance which brought her into being" (Bauman 1997).

The only stable point on this unstable – episodic, fragmented reality is just the **control of the situation**: "The point is whether man is available to decide about which fragment of the world to be in contact with and in what moment – without obstacles – withdrawn from this" (Bauman 1997).
All those suggest that post-modern man – individual – has gained freedom for ab-solutely independent creation of his life but, on the other hand, in permanently changing world, he lost the ability of controlling it[1].
What differ the processes of making the identity in modern and post-modern times is the matter of source and the way of construction it: neither the family nor the state could determine the pattern of individual identity in nowadays. It reminds the process of permanent acting/collecting that individuals make. Sewell confirms this point of view describing the culture (as a field on which identity is build) in similar way:
"Culture may be thought of as network of semiotic relations across society, a network with a different shape and different spatiality (…). The meaning of symbol in a given institu-tional location may therefore be subject to redefinition by dynamics entirely foreign to that institutional domain or spatial location (…). This implies that users of culture will form a **semiotic community** [U.G.] – in the sense that they will recognize the same set of opposi-

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[1] Does not the post-modern personality need the stability, stable ground in contrary to hesitating, unsafe, tiring and torturing reality? This point of view is presented by Zygmunt Bauman who says that globalizational processes of deconstruction include will of new construction. Contemporary man seeks for stable platform as a kind of remedy against general tendencies: a rise of new others, eman-cipation of variety of differences is a remarkable sign of nowadays reality (Bauman 1997a).

tions and therefore be capable of engaging in mutually meaningful symbolic action" (Sewell 2005).

That's why nowadays identity does not seem to be the central and stable point of one's life. It has become the subject that is being continually negotiated; identity is being created as partial identity (Kłoskowska 1996), because in unforeseen and accidental reality, the **borderland** is going to be the metaphor of human relations (Gupta, Ferguson 1992). Since the reality is changeable and fragmented, so the identity cannot be different. In such a context the identity and its core – cultural canon – is no longer a task. It has become a kaleidoscope – a childish play which, when moved, changes and each time shows us different pattern of colored pieces in new combinations. The role of a man in this process is reduced only to watch and move the tube – the rest is a matter of circumstances.

4. Conclusions

It seems that what modern era introduced, post-modernism broadened, intensified and deepened. The release of a modern man from any tight connections and obligations evolved in the category of individualism. Post-modernity in the context of globalization brought almost absolute freedom to him but instability as well. It is wrong assumption that modernity was free from ambivalence (what was clearly presented by Ray 1999 and Bauman who even titled his book 1991 in such way) but in comparison to post-modern liquidity (Bauman) and ambiguity – modern ambivalence occurs between general narrations that lead to find an accurate definition for the social, its destination and the man as its part. In post-modernity, where everything was deprived from the contexts, continuity become temporary, changeable, momentary, the ambivalence lost its structure – transforming into post-modern rule – and transforms into ambiguity.

The paradise, cosmos, order – as an exterior agent (structure) that could organize human life and his identity has been certainly lost. But irrevocably? Probably the emphasize should be removed to the entire sphere of human life – soul, spirituality? This is what Charles Taylor wants men to do.
His project (1994 (2001) focuses on conciliation of all those modernistic and postmodernistic disadvantages and suggests leaving *dis*-engaged self and transforming it into a deeply involved man who is aware of the fragmentation of life but is strong enough to overcome all obstacles and finally is able to unite himself.

But asking in Baumanian style: is it really possible to find a harmony, peace, and agreement (unity) when such amount of factors influence human life, swinging on the hammock?

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