SOCIAL INTERACTIONS IN FACE-TO-FACE SITUATIONS THROUGHOUT THE REALITY OF EVERYDAY LIFE. THE SELF AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT IN THE "HERE AND NOW" HUMAN INTERACTIONS

RALUCA MARINELA SILAGHI*

ABSTRACT. Social Interactions in Face-To-Face Situations throughout the Reality of Everyday Life. The Self as a Social Construct in the "Here And Now" Human Interactions. The reality of everyday life presents itself to the individual as an inter-subjective world, a world shared with others, with which one lives in common. The most important experience of daily life is the one taking place in face-to-face interactions. Only during this kind of interaction the other's manifest subjectivity is completely accessible and visible to me, through a maximum of symptoms. I have access at my own subjectivity thought an inner reflection. Individual identity is the key element of the subjective reality, being formed, maintained and modified inside interactive social processes taking place between individuals in a certain social context. In the defining of the self-image of the individual there are mirrored, the attitudes and behavior of the signifying others towards the respective individual.

Keywords: Thomas Luckmann; face-to-face interactions; the reality of everyday life; subjective reality/identity; internalization of reality; significant others

Introduction

The world is made up from many distinct realities (the reality of daily life, the world of theater, the world of play, the dream-world, etc.), of which the individual is aware and inside of which he co-exists alongside his peers. He "wanders" through the different spheres of reality[1] around which he organizes his existence, but always returns to the reality of daily life.[2] Moving from one sphere of

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* *PhD Student in Philosophy at Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.*
  E-mail: raluca_marinela14@yahoo.com

[1] "Put differently, I am conscious of the world as consisting of multiple realities. As I move from one reality to another, I experience the transition as a kind of shock. This shock is to be understood as caused by the shift in attentiveness that the transition entails. Waking up from a dream illustrates this shift most simply." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 38.

[2] "Yet all these – dreamer, physicist, artist and mystic – also live in the reality of everyday life. Indeed, one of their important problems is to interpret the coexistence of this reality with the reality enclaves into which they have ventured. Berger, Luckmann (2008), 43.

reality to another entails different experiences to the individual and require the allocation of different degrees of attention. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann maintain, in their work, *The Social Construction of Reality*, that the reality of daily life is the only supreme and inalienable sphere of reality between all the others, a given fact that constrains the individual to live his life in the waking world. This world springs from and is maintained as real by the thoughts and subjectively significant actions of the individuals that occur in the inter-subjective millieu. Compared with the pervasiveness of the reality of daily life, all other realities are considered to be zones of limited significance, enclaves inside the supreme reality.[3] In order to underline the differences between the reality of daily life and the other realities, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their work, *The Social Construction of Reality*, analyze the distinctions between the daily life the world of the theater. The curtain is the threshold of transition between the two worlds. It introduces the spectator inside the unreal world of the theater when it lifts, and also it brings him back to daily life with its fall, where the former spectator becomes again one besides many others.[4] The shared reality of daily life is grasped by the individual as an objectified reality[5] through the medium of language. Language assures the permanent link with daily life, allowing the individual to interpret and objectify his daily experiences, and also to order his relationships with other people. Language provides to the individual the necessary objectifications and establishes the order in which they acquire sense, but also the framework in which daily life makes sense for every other of one's peers, thereby establishing the basis for the commonality of everyday life.

The time that governs the proper existence of every individual inside the framework of daily life is finite (due to the certainty of the finitude of human beings) and continuous (because it has existed since before the birth of each individual and will continue to exist after the individual will cease to be). The temporal structure of daily life influences the course of the individual's life and the

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[3] "Compared to the reality of everyday life, other realities appear as finite provinces of meaning, enclaves within the paramount reality marked by circumscribed meanings and modes of experience. The paramount reality envelops them on all sides, as it were, and consciousness always returns to the paramount reality as from an excursion." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 42.

[4] "The transition between realties is marked by the rising and falling of the curtain. As the curtain rises the spectator is "transported to another world", with its own meanings and an order that may or may not have much to do with the order of everyday life. As the curtain falls, the spectator "returns to reality", that is, to the paramount reality of everyday life by comparison with which the reality presented on the stage now appears tenuous and ephemeral, however vivid the presentation may have been a few moments previously." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 42.

[5] "The reality of everyday life appears already objectified, that is, constituted by an order of objects that have been designated as objects before my appearance on the scene." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 38.

degree of realization of personal projects.[6] This means that, for example, there are certain stages that one must pass through in order to obtain a professional qualification, there is a certain period in life during which one may practice professional sports, etc. The temporal structure organizes the biography, integrates it into world history and gives me confirmation that I live in the reality of present time: for example, I know that I was born at a certain X date, that I've entered school in year Y, that I've got my first job after the revolution etc. The clock and the calendar assure me that I live in the living present, that I am a "woman of my time".[7]

Social interactions in the face-to-face situations ("here and now"). The role of the significant others in the construction of personal identity

The reality of daily life presents itself to the individual as an inter-subjective world, a world shared with others, with which one lives in common. The world of daily life is as real for all the individuals to the same extent, being impossible to doubt of its reality under any circumstance and without needing any supplementary verification, except in case of madness. The reality of daily life is commonly considered to be reality as such, under the conditions in which a usual individual lives the normality of day to day life.[8]

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[6] "My own life is an episode in the externally factitious stream of time. It was there before I was born and it will be there after I die. The knowledge of my inevitable death makes this time finite for me. I have only a certain amount of time available for the realization of my projects, and the knowledge of this affects my attitude to these projects. Also, since I do not want to die, this knowledge injects an underlying anxiety into my projects. Thus I cannot endlessly repeat my participation in sports events. I know that I am getting older. It may even be that this is the last occasion on which I have the chance to participate. My waiting will be anxious to the degree in which the finitude of time impinges upon the project." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 45.

[7] "The temporal structure of everyday life not only imposes prearranged sequence upon the "agenda" of any single day but also imposes itself upon my biography as a whole. Within the coordinates set by this temporal structure I apprehend both daily "agenda" and overall biography. Clock and calendar ensure that, indeed, I am a "man of my time". Only within this temporal structure does everyday life retain for me its accent of reality. Thus in cases where I may be "disoriented" for one reason or another (say, I have been in an automobile accident in which I was knocked unconscious), I feel an almost instinctive urge to "reorient" myself within the temporal structure of everyday life. I look at my watch and try to recall what day it is. By these acts alone I re-enter the reality of everyday life." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 45–46.

[8] "The reality of everyday life is taken for granted as reality. It does not require additional verification over and beyond its simple presence. It is simply there, as self-evident and compelling facticity. I know that it is real. While I am capable of engaging in doubt about its reality, I am obliged to suspend such doubt as I routinely exist in everyday life." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 40.

Living in this world of daily life presupposes interacting, communicating continuously and constantly with others (with whom the individual shares the reality of daily life), even if they possess different world-views. Even when individuals share the same time and space, even when they live in common, reality and knowledge are understood differently by each, in function of their own knowledge stores (what is real for one may be unreal for another; what is "here" for me may be "there" for another) and interests.[9] The knowledge each one has on daily life is structured in function of the relevant elements. Some of them are determined by immediate personal pragmatic interests, while others by the general position of the individual in society. Each one's structures of relevance intersect at many points, in function of the aspects each considers as relevant. To know the structure of relevance of others is an important element of the knowledge I have about daily life.

Social interaction is influenced by the common participation of all the individuals to a store of socially accessible knowledge that is transmitted and enriched during the generations. This common store of knowledge refers to knowing one's existential situation and the boundaries that this entails.[10] The store of socially accessible knowledge differs from a society to another, therefore each society will have another vision on the values and principles that inform a good governance. Knowledge has as its first moment primary/pre-theoretical knowledge/ "knowledge-recipes". These encompass a collection of general truths about reality expressed as maxims, proverbs, moral precepts, values, beliefs, myths that are known by all the members of a community. Such "knowledge-recipes" define and control the rules of conduct accepted for every social context, being the motivational engine of institutionalized conduct. Inside an institution, the knowledge-recipe defines the roles that have to be fulfilled and controls and predicts adequate conduct. Knowledge-recipes understood as knowledge limited to practical competencies for routine actions occupy a main place in the store of social knowledge. It contains complex and detailed information on those domains of daily life with which the individual intersects more frequently (routine activities), on which he has specialized

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[9] "Indeed, I cannot exist in everyday life without continually interacting and communicating with others. I know that my natural attitude to this world corresponds to the natural attitude of others, that they also comprehend the objectifications by which this world is ordered, that they also organize this world around the "here and now" of their being in it and have projects for working in it. I also know, of course, that the others have a perspective on this common world that is not identical with mine. My "here" is their "there". My "now" does not fully overlap with theirs. My projects differ from and may even conflict with theirs. All the same, I know that I live with them in a common world." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 40.

[10] For exemple: I am conscious that I am a poor man and because of this, I never be able to live in a residence district.

and detailed knowledge – knowledge that influences him directly and that helps him to fulfil his immediate and future practical goals. The degree of attention one directs towards a certain activity is influenced by the interest of the individual towards that activity and by its level of relevancy for the individual.[11] On the rest of the domains the individual has only vague and summary information, either because they do not wake his interest or they just do not interest him from a pragmatic point of view, or they interest him only indirectly (secondarily) in the measure that they might become a threat in the present or in a close future. These are problematic activities that the individual is constrained to undertake although lacking sufficient specialized knowledge. The realization of such problematic activities brings with it a plus of knowledge, increasing the knowledge of the individual and therefore also the extent of his reality. As individual ages, his stock of knowledge also increases.[12] Repeated activity becomes habitual, an acquired skill stored in the general stock of knowledge as a blueprint or matrix that contains a description of the algorithm to be followed in order that the respective activity be realized efficiently and with reduced effort.[13]

Knowledge gained during socialization constitutes the second moment of knowledge. It has the role of mediating interiorization into individual consciousness of the objectified structures of the social world. The own self (self as person) is formed during the period in which the human organism is developing towards maturity, both with regard to its biological development (the genetic basis of the self are assured since birth due to the sociability with which every individual is

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[11] "In this world of working my consciousness is dominated by the pragmatic motive, that is, my attention to this world is mainly determined by what I am doing, have done or plan to do in it. In this way it is *my* world *par excellence*." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 39.

[12] "My world is structured in terms of routines applying in good or bad weather, in the hay-fever season and in situations when a speck of dirt gets caught under my eyelid. "I know what to do" with regard to all these others and all these events within my everyday life. By presenting itself to me as an integrated whole the social stock of knowledge also provides me with the means to integrate discrete elements of my own knowledge. In other words, "what everybody knows" has its own logic, and the same logic can be applied to order various things that I know. For example, I know that my friend Henry is an Englishman, and I know that he is always very punctual in keeping appointments. Since "everybody knows" that punctuality is an English trait, I can now integrate these two elements of my knowledge of Henry into a typification that is meaningful in terms of the social stock of knowledge." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 64–65.

[13] All human activity is subject to habitualization. Any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be reproduced with an economy of effort and which, ipso facto, is apprehended by its performer as that pattern. Habitualization further implies that the action in question may be performed again in the future in the same manner and with the same economical effort. This is true of non-social as well as of social activity." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 79.

born), as well as with regard to the social processes in which significant others have a special relevance (the self as a social product). The self as person, as a subjectively or objectively recognized identity, is not inborn, being developed through the action of the social context and through interactive social bilateral processes. The understanding and defining of the own self is efficient only through referring to the individual's social context.[14] The self as a social construct is determined and defined not only by the particular configuration with which the individual identifies himself, which has strong ties with the culture to which he belongs,[15] but also with the complex psychological endowment (somatic reactions, behaviors, attitudes, value sets, principles).

The most important experience of daily life is the one taking place in face-to-face interactions, "here and now", when every participant is oriented directly towards the other. The "here and now" present during which a meeting of individuals happens is concrete, live and shared by both participants. In other words, each one meets the other during the same present, which becomes a shared "here and now". During the reciprocal influence between my "here and now" and the other's, there takes place a continuous exchange between his expressivity and mine. This is a continuous reciprocity of each one's expressive acts, which means that during the face-to-face interaction happening "here and now", each perceives in real time the other's reactions as effects of one's own reactions (inter-subjective closeness during face-to-face situations). Social action has the form of manifest behavior to which everyone has direct access, everyone may interpret it and to which everyone may react. Social action is determined and oriented towards others. Therefore, it may be argued that during face-to-face interactions, the other's manifest subjectivity is completely accessible and visible to me, through a maximum of symptoms, but the veracity of their interpretation is not guaranteed at all. I may interpret correctly or incorrectly these symptoms, and the other, as well, may be honest in their

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[14] "The genetic presuppositions for the self are, of course, given at birth. But the self, as it is experienced later as a subjectively and objectively recognizable identity, is not. The same social processes that determine the completion of the organism produce the self in its particular, culturally relative form. The character of the self as a social product is not limited to the particular configuration the individual identifies as himself (for instance, as "a man", in the particular way in which this identity is defined and formed in the culture in question), but to the comprehensive psychological equipment that serves as an appendage to the particular configuration (for instance, "manly" emotions, attitudes and even somatic reactions). It goes without saying, then, that the organism and, even more, the self cannot be adequately understood apart from the particular social context in which they were shaped." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 75–76.

[15] For example, the individual defines himself as a man. The signification of this identity (what he understands from this self-identification) is taken exactly as it is defined in the culture to which he belongs and with which he identifies himself.

expression (that which he transmits verbally and non-verbally is identical to what he feels), or he may try to mislead me by attempting to disguise his true intentions, his real thoughts and feelings regarding my person and the message I transmitted. Nevertheless, the other becomes truly real to me, as presence, only during such face-to-face interactions, when the other's subjectivity is at its maximum closeness.

I know myself better than I know the other, notwithstanding how much he tells me about himself and no matter how close a relationship we have. My own subjectivity is accessible to me in a way in which his will never be, because I know very well my personal past, that defines me as human being and that influences my decisions. Despite the fact that the access to one's own subjectivity is soundest, nevertheless, during face-to-face interaction, the other is more real to me than I am. This is due to the fact that the access to one's own subjectivity is not immediate, requiring interior reflection directed towards one's person. In internal reflection, an important role is played by the attitude the other has manifested towards me during the face-to-face interaction.[16] For this reason it may be argued that during face-to-face interaction the other is more real than I am, because he is known immediately, his subjectivity is directly accessible, continuously and pre-reflexively, without any kind of mediation. I have this kind of immediate, real, continuous and massive presence of his expressivity only in this kind of interaction. The other's access to my own subjectivity is made possible by the corporal signs of the subjective attitude of each of the participants in the direct interaction. Corporal signs are directly and permanently accessible to others only during face-to-face interaction. These signs betray the true intentions of the interlocutor and that he was aware from the beginning of the true significance of his actions. Besides the corporal signs of the other's subjectivity, the objectification of expressivity and the revelation of the other's subjective intentions may be mediated by objectively accessible objects of the reality that the individual shares with the others[17] and that represent an objectification of human subjectivity, a mark of the true feelings that the individual has for the other. The object enables the access towards the subjective significance that the individual assigns to his gesture.

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[16] "On the other hand, "What I am" is not so available. To make it available requires that I stop, arrest the continuous spontaneity of my experience, and deliberately turn my attention back upon myself. What is more, such reflection about myself is typically occasioned by the attitude towards me that *the other* exhibits. It is typically a "mirror" response to attitudes of the other." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 48.

[17] For example, the knife represents a clear intention of violence, feelings of hatred, the objectification of anger that an individual can cherish for the other. If at night, an individual thrusts a knife into the other's door, with which he has a rebuked, the knife paves the way to the perpetrator's own subjectivity. "In other words, the knife in my wall has become an objectively available constituent of the reality I share with my adversary and with other men." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 54–55.

The direct access to the other's subjectivity favors the possibility of modifying the initial pattern into which I have integrated the other since even before the initiation of the interaction between us.[18] This shows that the relations with others during face-to-face interactions are flexible and even constructive. The initial interaction between individuals is based on reciprocal observation of the manifest behavior of the other, followed by the formation of the first reciprocal assignments to a type. At the basis of categorizing the other as being of a certain type, or, in other words, as belonging to a general category of human beings, stand typifying schemes.[19] The typifying schemes model and determine the way in which the interaction between individuals will evolve. I relate to the other and interpret his behavior during the face-to-face interaction in function of such typifying schemes. Following the classification of the interlocutor as belonging to a certain general category of people, he will be considered as being an anonymous person of that type, either as someone with whom I share the same tastes, ideas, passions, or the opposite, etc. The common features of the general category under which my interlocutor from the face-to-face communicational situation is classified will be used as basis for explaining the reactions and behavior adopted by the other during our interaction. The access to one's own subjectivity during direct interaction favors the installation of a detailed knowledge about the other, revealing new particular data, specific to the other.[20] Therefore the other will no longer be considered an anonymous person, just as someone belonging to a general type. I will relate to him as to an unique individual, possessing certain particular traits, specific to his own person (the individualization of the other).[21] The individualization of the other

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[18] "In the face-to-face situation, however, the other may confront me with attitudes and acts that contradict this pattern, perhaps up to a point where I am led to abandon the pattern as inapplicable and to view him as friendly. In other words, the pattern cannot sustain the massive evidence of the other's subjectivity that is available to me in the face-to-face situation." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 48–49.

[19] Some examples of typification schemes: man, European, generous customer, funny boy, liberal.

[20] "In face-to-face situations I have direct evidence of my fellowman, of his actions, his attributes, and so on." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 51.

[21] "If I typify my friend Henry as a member of category X (say, as an Englishman), I *ipso facto* interpret at least certain aspects of his conduct as resulting from this typification - for instance, his tastes in food are typical of Englishmen, as are his manners, certain of his emotional reactions, and so on. This implies, though, that these characteristics and actions of my friend Henry appertain to *anyone* in the category of Englishman, that is, I apprehend these aspects of his being in anonymous terms. Nevertheless, as long as my friend Henry is available in the plenitude of expressivity of the face-to-face situation, he will constantly break through my type of anonymous Englishman and manifest himself as a unique and therefore atypical individual - to wit, as my friend Henry. The anonymity of the type is obviously less susceptible to this kind of individualization when face-to-face interaction is a matter of the past (my friend Henry, *the Englishman*, whom I knew when I was a college student), or is of a superficial and transient kind (the Englishman with whom I have a brief conversation on a train), or has never taken place (my business competitors in England)." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 50–51.

following the modification of the initial typifying scheme is optimally realized when we take into consideration the "interior circle"[22] of the individual, as it is called by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in *The Construction of Social Reality*, meaning the closest friends, with whom we have constantly interacted in the past and with whom we manifest interest to interact more. The modification of the typifying scheme is effective only when there have been previous constant interactions with the respective person. The sum of typifying schemes forms the social structure, which is the key element of the daily reality.

At the basis of the interactions between individuals lies language. It is the most important element of socialization, common to all individuals and it allows for the reciprocity of their interactions. During "here and now" communicational situations, both partners talk together, each having thus access towards the subjectivity of the other and, implicitly, towards its own. By exposing towards the exterior my own thoughts, my subjective meanings become objectively accessible to me. This is the objectification of one's own being through language. If earlier I have mentioned the direct, continuous and pre-reflexive access to the other's subjectivity, as compared with the access mediated through interior reflection that I have with regard to my own person, in the case of the objectification that a subject undergoes through language the things stand differently. The reflection directed towards my own person takes place simultaneously while I'm communicating with the other. Our interaction does not have to be interrupted in order that I may be able to reflect on myself. It may be said that language has also the role to stabilize one's own subjectivity.[23]

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[22] "The social reality of everyday live is thus apprehended in a continuum of typifications, which are progressively anonymous as they are removed from the "here and now" of the face-to-face situation. At one pole of the continuum are those others with whom I frequently and intensively interact in face-to-face situations – my "inner circle", as it were. At the other pole are highly anonymous abstractions, which by their very nature can never be available in face-to-face interaction. Social structure is the sum total of these typications and of the recurrent patters of interaction established by means of them. As such, social structure is an essential element of the reality of everyday life." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 52.

[23] "Another way of putting this is to recall the previous point about my "better knowledge" of the other as against my knowledge of myself in the face-to-face situation. This apparently paradoxical fact has been previously explained by the massive, continuous and prereflective availability of the others being in the face-to-face situation, as against the requirement of reflection for the availability of my own. Now, however, as I objectivate my own being by means of language, my own being becomes massively and continuously available to myself at the same time that it is so available to him, and I can spontaneously respond to it without the "interruption" of deliberate reflection. It can, therefore, be said that language makes "more real" my subjectivity not only to my conversation partner but also to myself. This capacity of language to crystallize and stabilize for me my own subjectivity is retained (albeit with modifications) as language is detached from the face-to-face situation. This very important characteristic of language is well caught in the saying that men must talk about themselves until they know themselves." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 58.

Society exists both as subjective[24] and as objective reality[25] (appearing to the individual as a separate reality, independent of his will; it is produced by objective social processes).[26] Each of the members of society exteriorizes his own being in the social world and, at the same time, interiorizes it as an objective reality. Interiorization refers to the fact that the objective social world is introjected, reflected in consciousness during contact with the social reality, during socialization. Being in society means participating to its dialectics. The starting point of this process is interiorization, followed by primary and secondary socialization.

Interiorization represents the perception or immediate interpretation of an objective event (something outside the individual) as having significance (the attribution of sense/meaning to the objective exterior event). It is a manifestation of the subjective processes of the other that during face-to-face communication become interiorized by the self and become meaningful.[27] Interiorization and attribution of significance to the other's manifest actions do not guarantee the correctness of my understanding of the other (as I have already specified earlier in this article), they only underline the fact that the other's subjectivity is objectively accessible and meaningful only from inside my point of view, and only because I decide to attribute meaning to it (therefore independently of any correspondence between my subjective process and that of the other). The fact that I am the one who attributes significance to the other's manifest actions means that an accord was established between the two subjective meanings (what I am understanding from what the other transmits and what the other understands that he is transmitting) and that this concordance is recognized as such by both partners of the dialogue. Therefore it may be argued that interiorization represents the basis of what permits people to understand each other and of perceiving the world as a

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[24] "The subjective side consists in the consciousness an actor has, shaped in pervasive processes of socialization, and sustained and modified in daily interactions." Eberle (1992), 493.

[25] "The objective social reality, although produced by social action, appears to the individual as separate and independent from him or her." Eberle (1992), 493.

[26] "Whereas the human world, too, should be looked at from the 'outside', that is, as a reality that is to be objectively observed, described and, as best as one can, explained, the position which I find immeasurably more convincing maintains that the human world also has an 'inside', that it is a world of individual subjects, of persons. In fact, the matter can be expressed in a seemingly absurd statement: the 'inside' is the 'outside'. It would seem obvious that social worlds are made by people for people, by individuals acting as persons, as actors on a stage with other actors. The dramatis personae act in comedies and tragedies which follow the stage directions of social and historical institutions and organizations." Luckmann (2008), 280.

[27] "The beginning point of this process is internalization: the immediate apprehension or interpretation of an objective event as expressing meaning, that is, as a manifestation of another's subjective processes which thereby becomes subjectively meaningful to myself." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 177.

meaningful social reality. Successful realization of interiorization as reaching an understanding of the other is based on the following necessary conditions: understanding the other's momentary subjective processes, understanding the other's world and understanding the fact that through interiorization the other's world becomes also my own (my own world communicates with and is altered by that of the other) An important aspect of interiorization is that it enables the formation of a mutual continuous identity, that refer to the fact that we live in the same world and that each one participates in the other's existence.[28]

Socialization is defined by Berger and Luckmann in *Social Construction of Reality* as the individual's initiation into the objective world of a society.[29] There are two types of socialization that the individual passes throughout his lifetime: the primary and the secondary socialization. Apparently, these resemble the interiorization of the world of the other (described earlier), but these two types of socialization are not structurally identical with interiorization.

a) Primary socialization is the first socialization of the individual. It takes place during childhood and through it the individual becomes member of society.

In every society, each individual interacts with other people. The first persons with whom the individual usually interacts are the members of his family. They mediate the individual's entrance into the objective social world (modified during mediation according to their own vision and beliefs) and play an important part in the individual's socialization. The family members are called to be the first "significant others". The significant others of primary socialization are not chosen, they are imposed upon the individual. The conceptions, opinions and views – on the world, on other people and on the individual himself – of the significant others are imposed upon the individual as objective reality.[30] The significant others are intermediaries between the individual and objective reality. The world that the first significant others present is interiorized not as a world that the individual-child has chosen from between

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[28] "We not only live in the same world, we participate in each other's being. Only when he has achieved this degree of internalization is an individual a member of society." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 178.

[29] "The ontogenetic process by which this is brought about is socialization, which may thus be defined as the comprehensive and consistent introduction of an individual into the objective world of a society or a sector of it." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 179.

[30] "Every individual is born into an objective social structure within which he encounters the significant others who are in charge of his socialization. These significant others are imposed upon him. Their definitions of his situation are posited for him as objective reality. He is thus born into not only an objective social structure but also an objective social world. The significant others who mediate this world to him modify it in the course of mediating it. They select aspects of it in accordance with their own location in the social structure, and also by virtue of their individual, biographically rooted idiosyncrasies. The social world is "filtered" to the individual through this double selectivity." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 179–180.

more possible worlds, but as the only possible world, the World itself. This is deeply embedded in the individual consciousness, the individual only with great difficulty being able to expunge the teachings, values, principles and view on the self, the world and the other people that were transmitted to him. These all will accompany his journey into the existing social world.[31]

Primary socialization involves more than cognitive learning. It takes place in surroundings strongly charged emotionally. The emotional factor facilitates learning and faithful identification with the significant others. The identification with the significant others takes place naturally, as an inevitable and given fact, simultaneously with interiorization. Identification presupposes that the individual assumes the roles and attitudes that other family members adopt towards his self, towards others and towards everyday problems. This assumption involves the interiorization of opinions, beliefs, attitudes manifested by significant others as being proper to the individual, as if they had emerged out of his own self. The identification with significant others lays the foundation for the construction of the subjective personal identity of the individual. Only through faithful identification with significant others the individual will succeed to recognize himself, to identify himself and to form his own identity. The subjective acquiring of identity and of the basic social world are different aspects of the same process of interiorization, mediated by the same significant others. The self is a reflected reality, in which the attitudes and behavior of the significant others towards the respective individual are mirrored.[32] To define one's self-image is equivalent to establishing one's place in the world.[33]

The consequence of the interiorization of the roles and attitudes manifested by the significant others towards the individual consists in their generalization, in other words their application not only in the familial context (the micro level), but to any social situation in which the individual may find himself (the macro level). This is called by Berger and Luckmann as "the progressive retreat from the roles and attitudes

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[31] "The child does not internalize the world of his significant others as one of many possible worlds. He internalizes it as *the* world, the only existent and only conceivable world, the world *tout court*. It is for this reason that the world internalized in primary socialization is so much more firmly entrenched in consciousness than worlds internalized in secondary socializations." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 184.

[32] "The child identifies with the significant others in a variety of emotional ways. Whatever they may be, internalization occurs only as identification occurs. The child takes on the significant others' roles and attitudes, that is, internalizes them and makes them his own. And by this identification with significant others the child becomes capable of identifying himself, of acquiring a subjectively coherent and plausible identity. In other words, the self is a reflected entity, reflecting the attitudes first taken by significant others towards it; the individual becomes what he is addressed as by his significant others." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 180.

[33] "Indeed, identity is objectively defined as location in a certain world and can be subjectively appropriated only along with that world." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 180.

imposed by others, and the assumption of other general roles and attitudes",[34] in other words the apparition of a generalized (an-)other. This change takes place beginning with the stage of the interiorization of norms, teachings and worldview transmitted by the first significant others. The generalization of teachings, norms, of the set of values and principles guarantees their effective imprinting into memory. The emergence of a generalized (an-)other at the level of consciousness generates the identification of the individual not only with concrete significant others, but also with their generalization, therefore with society as whole. Identification with society as a whole presupposes the interiorization by the individual of the existing objective reality and the subjective founding of concrete, stable and continuous identity. The individual has not only a certain identity when facing his significant others, but also a general identity that gathers all the generalized roles and attitudes of the individual, and that will remain effective in relation with anyone will enter into the category of significant others.

The stage of primary socialization ends when the concept of generalized (an-)other is assimilated at the level of consciousness, the individual becoming an effective member of society, in possession of his own self and of the social world.[35] The crystallization of the generalized (an-)other generates a symmetry between objective reality (that which really is in exterior) and subjective reality (that which is inwardly real).[36]

b) Secondary socialization is based on the previous process of primary socialization, through which the own self was formed and the world was interiorized. Secondary socialization has the role of guiding the individual in order that he may accede into the new sectors of the objective world, specific to the society in which

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[34] Berger, Luckmann (2008), 182.

[35] "The decisive step comes when the child recognizes that *everybody* is against soup-spilling, and the norm is generalized to, "*One* does not spill soup" – "one" being himself as part of a generality that includes, in principle, *all* of society in so far as it is significant to the child. This abstraction from the roles and attitudes of concrete significant others is called the generalized other. Its formation within consciousness means that the individual now identifies not only with concrete others but with a generality of others, that is, with a society. Only by virtue of this generalized identification does his own self-identification attain stability and continuity. He now has not only an identity *vis-a-vis* this or that significant other, but an identity in general, which is subjectively apprehended as remaining the same no matter what others, significant or not, are encountered. This newly coherent identity incorporates within itself all the various internalized roles and attitudes - including, among many other things, the self-identification as a non-spiller of soups." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 182.

[36] "What is real "outside" corresponds to what is real "within". Objective reality can readily be "translated" into subjective reality, and vice versa. ... There is always more objective reality "available" than is actually internalized in any individual consciousness, simply because the contents of socialization are determined by the social distribution of knowledge." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 183.

he lives.[37] In modern society, characterized by the division of labor and the social distribution of knowledge, secondary socialization is indispensable.

If primary socialization implies the interiorization of the basic world, secondary socialization will require the interiorization of an institutional subset of the world (a sub-universe of signification; a partial reality), the acquirement of a role-specific knowledge and the acquirement of the specialized language presupposed by it. The individual participates in the social world by interpreting more social roles. Each social role played brings with it a plus of knowledge to the respective individual, enriching his knowledge stock. The individual gains knowledge when he stores in memory an experience that he deems will be useful further on. All the experiences are deposited in the subjective structures of signification, in function of their relevancy and type. The accumulation of knowledge that is specific to the social role must be sustained by society, that must facilitate the possibility that individuals focus on the activities implied by their respective specialization. If during primary socialization the individual assimilates general knowledge, secondary socialization is about specialization and the segmentation of the common stock of knowledge in contemporary society. In the social distribution of knowledge, knowledge that is role-specific becomes reserved to certain types of individuals. The old knowledge, gained through tradition, is no longer sufficient for solving the new problematic situations.

In contemporary society, economic surplus, the division of labor and the accent on specialized knowledge may lead to the emergence of socially separated sub-universes of signification, structured in function of different criteria (sex, age, occupation, tastes, passions, beliefs, etc.). Such sub-universes of signification are considered as different thought schools, each with its own objective reality and its own vision of society, shared by its members. The shared nature of the beliefs and worldviews of the members of the respective group/collectivity legitimates the existence of that universe. There may arise conflicts between distinct sub-universes of signification, each group desiring to consolidate its position and to discredit that of the rival group. The complexity and the large number of sub-universes renders them inaccessible to outsiders. The outsiders must be kept away from knowledge accessible only to those inside the sub-universe through intimidation techniques, propaganda (appeals to the interests and feelings of the outsiders), the manipulation of the symbols of social prestige.[38] Theoretically, each member of the sub-universe has the right to change his vision on society, to stop sharing in the group's beliefs

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[37] "Secondary socialization is any subsequent process that inducts an already socialized individual into new sectors of the objective world of his society." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 179.

[38] "The outsiders have to be *kept out*, sometimes even kept ignorant of the existence of the sub-universe." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 122.

and to adhere to another sub-universe. Practically, the insiders (the members of the sub-universe of signification) must be kept inside. To achieve this, theoretical and practical procedures are being developed, in order to control the temptations to escape.

The subjective reality of the interiorizations made by the individual during secondary socialization are vulnerable to the reality that was interiorized by the individual during primary socialization, not because the former would be suspected as not as real or valid, but because (as mentioned earlier, when discussing primary socialization) the later is deeply entrenched in the consciousness of the individual (and due to its emotional charge), being difficult to eliminate.[39]

Constant and continuous inter-human interaction represents the main way in which the subjective reality of personal identity is successfully constructed and conserved.[40] All the individuals with whom we interact contribute to the re-affirmation of the own subjective reality. The process of conservation of reality permits distinguishing between significant others and less significant others. In order to succeed maintaining the faith that he is as he considers that he is, the individual needs the explicit and emotionally charged confirmation of his subjective identity from the part of his significant others (identity is proven to be precarious and susceptible to be influenced).[41] The significant others from his life are main agents of the conservation of subjective reality.[42] The less significant others are considered a kind of "chorus" that either sustains or not the identity being confirmed by

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[39] "The more "artificial" character of secondary socialization makes the subjective reality of its internalizations even more vulnerable to challenging definitions of reality, not because they are not taken for granted or are apprehended as less than real in everyday life, but because their reality is less deeply rooted in consciousness and thus more susceptible to displacement." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 200.

[40] "The most important vehicle of reality-maintenance is conversation. One may view the individual's everyday life in terms of the working away of a conversational apparatus that ongoingly maintains, modifies and reconstructs his subjective reality." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 205. "Generally speaking, the conversational apparatus maintains reality by "talking through" various elements of experience and allocating them a definite place in the real world." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 206. "The subjective side consists in the consciousness an actor has, shaped in pervasive processes of socialization, and sustained and modified in daily interactions." Elberle (1992), 493.

[41] "To retain confidence that he is indeed who he thinks he is, the individual requires not only the implicit confirmation of this identity that even casual everyday contacts will supply, but the explicit and emotionally charged confirmation that his significant others bestow on him." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 203.

[42] "In the terms of Plessner's philosophical anthropology one may say that personal identity begins to form when an individual, eccentrically positioned in the world by the triad of its body, living body and the unity of the two, recognizes himself or herself in the perspective of others." Luckmann (2008), 2.

the significant others. If there is a disagreement between the significant others and the less significant others, individual is put in the position of either modifying his own reality, or modifying his relations involved in conserving reality. He can either accept that his identity is a failure, or he may orient himself towards other individuals in order to obtain from them significant confirmations of his reality. The individual maintains his own self-definition only in an environment where it gets confirmed.[43]

Socialization implies that subjective reality can be transformed. This is a re-socialization process, whereby the individual chooses to adhere to another social group (the sub-universe of signification described earlier), to identify himself with other ideas, opinions, worldview, and therefore with a new reality (structure of verisimilitude) shared by the members of that respective group. The new identification of the individual with the signifying others from the social group to which he has adhered are similar with that corresponding to primary socialization. This process is therefore motivated by the necessity of re-establishing the important factors of reality and leads to an identification having an increased degree of emotional dependency towards the new significant others. This new identification represents the basis for a radical transformation of subjective reality (including personal identity). The significant others function like some kind of guides into the new reality that has been offered during the re-socialization process, their role being to intermediate between the individual and the new world. The new social group to which the individual is adhering is for him the means through which he may confirm his subjective identity. For this, the new social group must recognize the individual in the same way in which he recognizes himself.[44] The process of re-socialization requires the re-organization of the conversational apparatus, since the discursive partners have been changed. The interiorization of the new group's value system, norms, principles implies the rejection of everything that tied the individual to the old social group to which he belonged. The old reality must be re-interpreted inside the legitimacy apparatus of the new reality. Re-interpretation functions as a rupture in the subjective biography of the individual, meaning that during discussions with others he will refer to himself using expressions such as: "before I have affiliated myself to your group" and "after I became integrated into this social group".

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[43] "Subjective reality is thus always dependent upon specific plausibility structures, that is, the specific social base and social processes required for its maintenance. One can maintain one's self-identification as a man of importance only in a milieu that confirms this identity." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 208.

[44] "In other words, Saul may have become Paul in the aloneness of religious ecstasy, but he could remain Paul only in the context of the Christian community that recognized him as such and confirmed the "new being" in which he now located this identity." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 212.

At this point of the discussion it must be stated that re-socialization is not similar to secondary socialization. When secondary socialization is based on primary socialization, re-socialization implies re-constructing reality *ab novo*. If in the case of secondary socialization the present was being interpreted is such a manner that it remained in relation continuously with the past (the past being the basis of reality), in the case of re-socialization the basis of reality is the present, the past being re-interpreted in order to conform to the present reality.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of socialization is guaranteed by a high degree of symmetry between objective and subjective reality. There is no absolutely successful socialization, and neither completely failed one. Absolutely effective socialization is specific to societies in which a weak division of labor and a minimal distribution of knowledge are present. In such societies, socialization has the task of producing socially predefined and highly specified identities, in which to reflect the objective order of society. Each individual is exactly whom it is presupposed he is, the identities being socially predefined, recognized both subjectively as well as subjectively, and confirmed in any social interaction (the nobleman was a nobleman, the peasant was a peasant, both in their own eyes as well as in those of the others).[45] There are no identity problems (no one asking about whom he really is) because everyone knows perfectly well his own status, social role inside society and his corresponding identity.[46] Individual identities were integrated in the egocentric identity of a community.

Unsuccessful socialization, or socialization realized to a low degree, may be found, for example, in the case of individuals suffering from disabilities, who are stigmatized by society. Due to stigmatization, due to the mocking behavior other people have towards them, they may start to perceive themselves as inferior beings, identifying absolutely with the type attributed to them by the other members of society. Such negative opinion on their own person is deeply imprinted in the consciousness of each individual being in this situation, so that any attempt to modify this opinion is sorted to failure. They feel trapped in the objective reality of society, from which they cannot escape, a foreign world inside which they need to carry on with their lives while being constantly discriminated against by other people.

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[45] "In other words, the individual in such a society not only is what he is supposed to be, but he is that in a unified, "unstratified" way." Berger, Luckmann (2008), 221.

[46] "Personal identities were formed exclusively in immediate, face-to-face, intimate social relations. In the small communities everybody knew everybody and everybody was known to everybody. Communication was limited to relatively few persons, but the density of communication with the few was relatively high." Luckmann (2008) 5.

A society in which discrepant worlds are available in "market" regime facilitate the emergence of a multitude of possible identities and subjective realities. Here there is no socially pre-established model of identity. One's own world is no longer the World, the only possible world, as it was perceived during primary socialization. It is just a world amongst many. The individual conduct is perceived as a social role played in a certain social context, from which the individual may detach himself anytime, since he no longer has to identify with the role. Individual identity is the key element of the subjective reality, being formed, maintained and modified inside interactive social processes taking place between individuals in a certain social context. In the defining of the self-image of the individual there are mirrored, mostly, the attitudes and behavior of the signifying others towards the respective individual.

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