BEYOND CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY:
A SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

ANA PASCARU[∗]

Abstract: This paper represents a synthesis of several longitudinal investigations, aiming to elucidate the quantum of challenges of the contemporary society condition and its particularities in a developing society, like the Moldavian one, and how the new democracies try to find their places in the context of changes since the 2008 world economic crisis.

Keywords: contemporary society, development, confluence, multicultural, challenge

It is known that societal differentiated levels of development reflect not only differences/divergences/particularities, but also similarities between societies. Thus, the society represents a conglomerate of co-influences in which traditionalism, modernism and postmodernism are present in various cultural spaces and on the basis of increased interconnection and interdependency between societies. And the changes of transformations that emerge from these multiple modeling phenomena of conditions of the contemporary world and of each individual, beyond his/her or community, can contribute to assuring this presence[1].

The present study includes a synthesis of several longitudinal investigations, aiming to elucidate the quantum of challenges to the contemporary society. It is about the re-structuring significance for which an inter- and multidisciplinary paradigm is applied to highlight the sources, causes, effects and consequences on the societal condition. The starting point is represented by the significance of the contemporary society – re-dimensioning the social system as part of the global system in which the development ensures the communication among them and, due to new technologies, goes

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[∗] Department of Philosophy, European Integration and Political Sciences, Academy of Sciences, 1, Ștefan cel Mare Bd., Kishinev, Moldova
e-mail: apascaru2002@yahoo.com
[1] See Fredric Jameson, *Prison-house of Language*; Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*; Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*; Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*.

beyond the intra-societal borders. In this way, new contributions are made in inter-societal, regional or global communication and in highlighting the level of preparedness of the society/societies to continuously capitalize on it. Even differential interpretation of internal and external modifications of societies that have been produced after the implosion of the communist system, especially in mega-societies from Central and Eastern Europe, conducted to behind-hand measuring or inadequate appreciations.

The question refers to the philosophy of standardization that conducts to schematizing the social conscience, homogenizing differences, and marginalizing peculiarities that supply the divergences with less regrets. The framework of these divergences is transformed in a changing world, being responsible for destroying certain equilibrium and bringing unforeseeable consequences. Though it seems to support principles like: *unity through diversity* or *through diversity toward unity*, in fact, the actions aim to inverting/stigmatizing the intra-community/intra-social realities. The experience of contemporary (multicultural) societies' monitoring proves the following: on the one hand, in stable societies there is a tendency to raise the awareness on the intra- and inter-societal differences that are specific for new democracies (post-totalitarian societies) that are emerging societies; on the other hand, there is an inability to recognize the differences of some new democracies that are in a process of change. The behavior of these democracies is supported by the geo-chrono-political considerations, i.e. they fall under the influence of the external factor, which absolves them from responsibilities in relation to neighboring societies, but not from recognition of the similarities that are proved through their actions, trends, processes of transformation coming from the inside[2].

The present study has employed an historical approach, relying on historicity in the process of similarities' identification with differences/divergences that are difficult to foresee in the contemporary society. The above-mentioned conditions have facilitated the in-depth cognition of the phenomenon of transformation in the actions/trends/processes that define the society. Also, the axiological quality of phenomena of transformation has been underlined to establish/identify how deeply the changes are able to

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[2] Ana Pascaru (2003). "Integration policy in multicultural societies between necessities and availabilities. A comparative study: the Republic of Moldova, Estonia and Latvia", in *Management of Integration in Multicultural Societies*, Kishinev: ARC, pp.22-47.

penetrate the status of each society. Through this prospect, the undertaken research on the significance of the contemporary society has been developed starting from particular/individual to general principles that emphasis the society in the process of development that appeared as result of implosion of the soviet mega society (in Moldova's case in 1991), than following the period when it balanced between conciliation and conflict and coming up to the significance of the postmodern society[3].

The emphasis on the significance of the postmodern society is completed by the specific impact of the postmodern condition on the social conflict and conciliation in an emerging society. Particularly because the profound changes reflected in the transformations not only crossed the borders but also are generated by the new opportunities offered by the postmodern framework of development. Thus, the traditionalism, the rejuvenated modernity/modernism of certain societies, increasingly confront with postmodern/postmodernist elements. Modernism, more sporadic than systemic, makes contemporary societies be closer and differentiates them simultaneously. Thus, the analysis of these conditions identified in and among societies proves the existence of the following features: *primo*, there are delimitations between the postmodern and postmodernism; s*econdo,* there is a continuity and discontinuity between the postmodern and postmodernism, and *tertio,* there is a cultural uniformity and diversity within postmodernism, etc. [4].

The difficulties faced in the identification of similarities and differences, the level of interconnection, interdependence and interaction within and between societies raised the highest interest towards the research topic. The results obtained concerning the evolution of the global social system components served as a departure point in order to highlight the globalization emphasis among the realities/re-considerations from emerging societies. It was an attempt to find out to which extent the constitution of these components is influenced by globalization. The globalization can condition similarities as well as differences, depending on the geo-chrono-political considerations of the society that influence development through culture and viability, aimed at rebuilding the world

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[3] Ana Pascaru (2000). *Societatea între conciliere şi conflict. Cazul Republicii Moldova*, Kishinev: ARC.
[4] Ana Pascaru (2003), *op .cit.*, pp.22-47.

civilization, while the cultural tangencies serve as basis for facilitating cooperation among societies. Thus, the countries' re-affiliation take place either around the leading states like G-8 (author's note), or by belonging to the civilization nucleus[5]. This leads to the idea that the presence and continuity of any society on the civilization arena is directly proportionate with receptivity and perpetuation of the challenges on *intra-* societal level that is connected to the *extra-*societal, regional, continental levels, etc. There is a need for similarities between the new era of politics and the similar social one, which means its theoretical reformation.

Attention towards differences (various and quite insignificant) is due to perception/readiness of the intra- and extra-community environment from all socially hierarchical levels. In this framework, the promotion of differences against the diversification and vice-versa led to the stigmatization, inter- and intra- referral of actions, trends, processes that constitute the essence of the unlashed transformations. The character of transformation goes beyond the intra- and inter-societal borders that has been neglected, yet significantly influenced by realities built during centuries. The peculiarities of the neighboring society, equally recognized as own, can constitute differences in diversity and less in divergences and separations/cleanings in accordance with various criteria: ethnical, confessional (religious), racial, residence (urban/rural), etc., while the actions, trends, and ongoing processes reveal the contrary. This explains why beyond the differences in contemporary societies there are a few similarities[6].

The above-mentioned identifications combined with other similarities contribute to emphasizing other characteristics of contemporary society. Among some relevant similarities that somehow ensure the continuity of the modern and postmodern society we can mention the following: multiculturalism, postmodern/postmodernism, globalization, and geo-chrono-political position that are reflected in the interconnection/interdependence/interaction in and among societies. In this context, a similarity was particularly emphasized: the multiculturalism that can be found in other similarities, but especially that makes the distinction among societies. However, the multiculturalism nurtured by the intense migration on the American

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[5] Pierre Rosanvallon (1995). *La nouvelle question sociale*, Paris: Seuil.
[6] Ana Pascaru (coord.) (2001). *Confidence building measures and conflict regulating strategies in divided societies: Macedonia-Moldova,* Kishinev: ARC.

continent in 19th – beginning of 20th century and mostly after '60s of the 20th century remains *denied* and *rarely* addressed at its value. Thus, the omnipresent manifestation of the multiculturalism in all social environments, except those closed, as a result of extensive and intensive migration, were reflected tangentially in the social hierarchy, according to which the integration concerns only those migrants settled down in a majority ethnic environment and that means transformation of migrants in national minorities. In both cases, sooner or later the community environment explodes due to an attempt approaching it in a way that contradicts the omnipresent realities. Last decades are full of examples but the interpretations continue to remain fragmented.

Obviously, the recognition of the reality in which the migrant is its component becomes impossible without the awareness and his acceptance on behalf of the community because for this accepted migrant the residence and the accommodation to the environment are just the initial steps after which follow other steps like integration *vs.* marginalization (self-marginalization or community marginalization). It's known that the community is less prepared to accept its integration. Through, the integration itself means inclusion of all parts – the community members and the newcomers. Vital are the mechanisms that ensure the equality of all members irrespective their ethnicity, confession or residence, determination of legal framework of cohabitation in accordance with national and international legislation[7].

Monitoring the realities in the newly established democracies during last two decades as well as in the societies with traditions, I've concluded that the multiculturalism is heavily influenced by the external factors. It's about the inheritance of past paid in present time. The interpretation and development of the multiculturalism in respective societies depends on the standards for which this past-present is adopted. In this way those components of multiculturalism related to the inter-connection, interdependence and their interaction suffer modifications. Frequently dispersed and artificially manipulated, these components instead of consolidating create impression that their aim is to mutually marginalize/eliminate each other. For example, the internal migration that is inherited by the ex-soviet societies (Moldovan and Estonian). The migrants were brought in advantaged position and considered themselves absolved of the need to integrate into the cultural autochthon environment. Thus, during more than 50 years, the migrants not only

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[7] Ana Pascaru (2003), *op. cit.,* pp.22-47.

increased their number but also established their own a-cultural environment in parallel with the local one. The new environment not only contradicted the existing one but also aspired to deconstruct it. These supreme values (that were in fact non- values) were fitting well the serving regime formula. Through them and on the local account the migrants ensured for themselves their family wellbeing or better positioning to goods distribution contrary to the level of their professional competences, managing to spoil the intellectual level in the cultural environment. In some cases, it led to forceful implementation of de-nationalization policies, invention of new historical, cultural, linguistic roots, "helping" the locals to decapitate their intellectual environment. Even if the assimilation policies can be found in traditional societies, however these didn't target their subconscious and did not abolish the private property. On individual level, these polices were implemented not only in the metropolis, but also extended to other domains (like in Great Britain)[8] .

Another distinct component of the postmodern society is communication, which due to the postmodern development and through postmodernism (at cultural level) became an incontestable presence in the societal daily-life. Thus, communication is seen as a mass challenge, as a tool for manipulation via political propaganda or as a "langue du bois" belonging to big organizations, of publicity seduction, of the panoptic concept of social control[9] . In some way, communication became like a turnsole paper through which the scientific achievements are perceived and individuals are perpetuated only virtually; while the postmodern society contributes increasing the number of those excluded (unemployed, income beneficiaries, etc.) but also the social responsibility of institutions that facilitate their application.

The analysis of the manifestations of the postmodern and postmodernism in societies seems to be a less accepted aspect, including the cultural dimension of the postmodernism. We are witnessing a greater emphasis on the postmodernism, even though the postmodern ensures the ascension of postmodernism. Going beyond the appeals addressed mostly to postmodernism, the last one (thanks

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[8] Ana Pascaru (2005). "The dimension of communication in multicultural societies. Comparative study: Moldova, Estonia, Northern Ireland (UK)", in *From Misunderstanding towards Openness and Collaboration in Multicultural Societies. Experience of Moldova, Estonia and Northern Ireland*, Kishinev: Pontos, pp.21-40.
[9] Judith N. Shklar (1991). *American Citizenship. The Quest for Inclusion*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

to the postmodern) serves as a change catalyze in all social environments, including the cultural-historical ones that are at emerging, conciliation or conflict stage. Moreover, transformations of changes through the postmodern exceed the intra- and extra-societal field targeting the human condition. While on the development level the postmodern opens opportunities to postmodernism to explore and interfere even at the human genes' level, paraphrasing Fr. Nietzsche: "God is dead". It is obviously that from the discretional power point of view the Human Being becomes like a God as has at his order the nature and also his peers. The issue of political philosophy is radically changing. The new scientific situation gained a political significance, while a political analysis remains valid as long as the human condition remains invariable[10]. Even more, in post-positivism the subject becomes the object of research, thus changing the relation from subject-object into subject-subject.

The focus on the actual situation of the post-totalitarian societies is an attempt to highlight the specific character of the postmodern through the postmodernism. Community milieus, including the Moldovan one, witness a different sensitivity often polarized to everything tangential to postmodernism. This is proved by the practices from respective societies, in which the tools and instruments specific to postmodernism are applied for solving problems with traditional causes – modernist – neomodernist and usually all blame being put on the postmodernism. In this way we can go beyond the discussions related to the nature of the postmodernism that comes, according to J. Habermas, as a continuation of the modernism and remains as an unfinished project[11]. Also, these are reflections concerning the impact of the postmodernism on the human being and social community that have their particularities in the post-totalitarian society like Moldovan once. Among the researchers who urged on lack of sustainable results concerning the medical and genetic testing on the human condition, we can mention H. Arendt, who refused to see in the violence or rage (as it is argued by a biology-oriented science) just some animal instruments. The human healing in that sense would mean dehumanization, getting to clone people and

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[10] Ana Pascaru (2005), *op.cit.*, pp.21-40.
[11] Cf. Jürgen Habermas (1990). *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Cambridge: MIT Press.

attributing the functions to transcendental[12]. Therefore, in community's desire to manage and control the behavior of its members and to maintain at any costs the equilibrium, the society came to use medicines exponentially without knowing in details its impact on the human condition. As a confirmation, the consumption of drugs/medicine both to adults and children (in idea to diminish their hyperactivity or any reason) does not solve but aggravates even more the social and psychological problems of the individual[13].

There were some attempts to monitor the relation between the postmodern and postmodernism inside and outside the society and their reflection in the level of culture. Some authors are unable to accept postmodern reality and assign to society only a radical modernity where the postmodernism brings together some "aesthetical reflections" and plays an important role in raising awareness of specific transition to a distinguished social order[14]. It is impossible to convert totally the individual and collective consciousness of the social environment, as it is really difficult to give up the traditionalism, conservatism, etc. In the other case, in the post-totalitarian societies, the postmodernism comes over other components that appear to be much more powerful through their dimensions due to circumstances. Yet in both cases the challenge of the profound changes of the contemporary society highlights the presence more or less obvious of the postmodernism. This evidence raises multiple controversies from contestations, mitigations or marginalizing, until evocations or substitutions with new "isms"[15].

The delimitations of the postmodern focused on the development level as a continuity but also as a difference in comparison with the modern. However, the level of development achieved by the postmodern, different from that of the modern, includes the continuity and does not mean at all its break. The postmodern level of development relates to the basic values, i.e. the quantum constituted in time and not the various means of enjoying its outcome. This is contrary to the idea that the radicalism of the postmodern contributed to values re-dimensioning that cannot be considered just values

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[12] Cf. Margaret Conovan (1994). *Hannah Arendt: A Reintepretation of her Political Thought*, Cambridge University Press.
[13] Francis Fukuyama (1999). "Second thoughts: The last man in a bottle", in *The National Interest*, 56, Summer, 16-33.
[14] Ibidem.
[15] Anthony Giddens (1990). *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

consumption; otherwise the development would be undermined[16].

Usually, the postmodernism is compared to modernism regarding the opened communication opportunities, including the aggressive influence coming from outside the community environment. It relates to the development components of the postmodern that include clear possibilities through which the postmodernism succeeds to involve itself and the awareness of social development. In this way, starts the process of accession to a new type of social order and a new institutional configuration. While the postmodern that spreads to societies is becoming visible even in those societies with a traditional mix of traditional-modern-revitalized modern features.

Tackling the relation between postmodern and postmodernism as a connection ring in the transformation of changes in and between societies facilitated the identification of the additions which find themselves in contemporary societies. The insufficient knowledge about them catalyzes the cognition upheavals and the use of urges within intra/extra community framework focused on searching solutions. Supporting the chain of the postmodernism highlights the level of cognition of the manifested realities or their defiance. The support for the postmodern dimension through conducted research makes possible multilateral cognition of reality in which the relation between the postmodern and postmodernism, even though it is marginalized, cannot be integrally avoided. Beyond the polarized interpretation of the reality the relation between postmodern and postmodernism is finally jeopardized in the process of establishing a new social order and designing the institutional framework. Thus, through studying this relation it would be possible to increase the efficiency of the research promotion and raising awareness opportunities. At the same time, it would be possible to understand how much can the postmodernism advance in social settings with a modern tendency of development and what is the difference in relation to developed societies.

Those boundaries are denied by the impossibility of strict delimitation, finding themselves in the relation between postmodern and postmodernism. Manifestations of the relations between

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[16] Ana Pascaru (2002). "The value of education in establishing tolerance in community environment: similarities and differences", in *Education and Tolerance in Multicultural Societies*, Kishinev: ARC, pp. 111-131.

postmodern and postmodernism influence more and more strongly the relations within and between the contemporary societies. The postmodern is in fact a continuation and not a substitute of the modern, as some argue. Especially in a community setting where the strict differences may be declared not implemented yet, the postmodern constitute for half a century now, the basis of the contemporary societies' development. This framework lacked the communist societies till beginning of the '90s of the 20th century, in which the modernism was tried to be artificially stopped or re-channeled, thus the postmodernism that for more than half a century represents the perspective of contemporary societies perpetuation was substituted with the socialist realism. Hence, the knowledge of the relation between the postmodern and postmodernism could facilitate the identification of the boundaries not of its effects/consequences. Therefore, the study of postmodernism continues to remain at extremes, populated by various confrontations of opinions and approaches.

The initial undertaken studies on the situation of Moldovan society have been subsequently completed with the approach concerning developed/stable society/societies and then the authoritarian/totalitarian societies. The examination of the democratic values contribution in the assurance of their manifestations started from the value pillars on which a society develops, on the fundamental/national/general-human values' continuum from its own cultural space, until the co-influence of the spaces occurred in a society. As a consequence, the following characteristics were obtained and reported to Karl Popper's classification concerning the open *versus closed society*[17] .

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