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TRANS-DISCIPLINARY VOCATION OF THE TRIADIC THEMATA

Theoretical article

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Abstract

Thematic dyads (permanence - becoming, experience - formalism, complex – simple, reductionism - holism, continuous – discontinuous, structural hierarchy – unit) originate in our general faculty of imagination, and they represent ideas - power, ideas – myths, which meet a compelling choice, within the prevailing paradigm, between: matter - spirit, substance – form, analysis - synthesis, mechanical - organic, determination - chance, causality - finality. Themata means here "the well-established and widespread fundamental preconceptions that cannot be simply reduced to observation or analytical calculation, or derived from them" (G. Holton). This study aims to analyze the triadic themata and their fruitful application in the "hard sciences" as well as in the soft ones. In this respect, the dynamic model of the social self seems to be very similar to the one of the Holy Trinity, demonstrating a common "pattern of thought".

1. Introduction

It is noteworthy that when discussing triadic or dyadic explanatory or interpretive models, we start from the assumption that *they are expressions of a paradigm* that "embeds" itself creatively in various fields of knowledge. Paradigm, in this sense, *outlines the conditions under which something allows to be known as "true" or "false"* in an already epistemologically interpreted and meaningful world (Frank, 1995:5-32). Paradigmatic statements are not to be identified either with axiomatic ones or with metaphysical postulates that they produce and control:

- the paradigm is invisible, detectable in the subconscious and over-conscious areas, it is always virtual, existing only in its manifestations;
- the one who submits to a paradigm has the impression that s/he submits to facts, experience and logic;
- the paradigm co-generates a sense of reality, for example, the one who believes in determination has the impression that all other random phenomena are only apparent;
- a major paradigm results in a mindset, in a worldview;

Thus, the mechanisms by which a particular paradigm, belonging to a particular field of knowledge can "migrate" to other fields of knowledge are super-conscious or subconscious in nature, or according to other scholars, transconscious, conscious or unconscious. In the same respect, Michel Foucault proposes the concept of *episteme*, which encompasses the governing conditions of a science or science groups, postulating epistemic uniqueness within a culture, while Gerald Holton uses *themata* to name "the well-established and widespread fundamental preconceptions that cannot be simply reduced to observation or analytical calculation, or derived from them" (Flonta, 1994:32). Thematic dyads (permanence - becoming, experience - formalism, complex – simple, reductionism - holism, continuous – discontinuous, structural hierarchy – unit) originate in our general faculty of imagination, and they represent ideas - power, ideas – myths, whicht meet a compelling choice, within the prevailing paradigm, between: matter - spirit, substance – form, analysis - synthesis, mechanical - organic, determination - chance, causality - finality. (Flonta,1994 :30).

The word "belief" has also a special connotation in science. It is sometimes used to designate the spontaneous trust in opinions that are not scientifically well-grounded, or the voluntary decision to attach greater importance, on no obvious grounds, to a particular judgment. In this sense, *belief* seems to be (omni)present and active in all the spheres of human activity, including scientific research: "Einstein observed that what gives meaning and orientation to the scientist's theoretical work is the belief in the lawfulness and intelligibility of the natural universe. This belief cannot be supported by objective evidence, yet, it still has to exist to justify the scientist's action. "(Flonta,1994).

2. From dogma…

The dogma of the Holy Trinity represents the deepest "mystery" of Christian religion. It took more than three centuries for the clues in the Old Testament to be correlated with the experience of Death and Resurrection, and for the conception of God as Triune to appear. From the theological point of view, David Ford (1999/2004:45) states that the fundamental structure of Resurrection may be summarized as follows: *"God acts, Jesus appears as the content of God's action, while the human being is transformed by the Spirit which is manifested through Him. All these may be considered the future doctrine of the Trinity, in embryo."*

The dogma of Trinity claims that the being of God is personal in nature, namely it should be understood as a community of being. God is one person and becomes three in his instantiations. He is not a threefold identity, but one, having three personal identities forming a perfect unity. Although it exists as a whole, God has a triune way of subsistence: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, having their own personal identity, moving towards one another so that every one of them is open to and found in the other, without *merging, mixing or perfect identification*, but through mutual enjoyment. The three persons co-indwell, in a state of movement, of inner love, of perichoresis (*together - party*) (Buchiu, 1999).

God's nature or being is personal, there is a community of being because the personal characteristics of the Trinity – of Father, Son and Holy Spirit are integrated into the divine nature. Hence, the Trinity is *a triad, not a balanced one, but hierarchical, since it asserts the absolute monarchy of the Father; at the same time, it is dynamic, manifested as perichoresis of the three persons* (Father works all through the Son in the Holy Spirit, i.e. Father never asserts Himself without asserting the Son and the Holy Spirit); furthermore, *each divine person manifests His self-giving love not only directly but also by means of the Third person*; the Triune God is rooted in Himself, in the *interpersonal communion*, while also opening up to the world through the flow of not yet created energies, having a personalizing effect on rational creatures.

It seems highly similar to Morin's dialogic principle (1991 apud Tonoiu 1997), postulating two or more logics open to each other/ one another, subject to a permanent dialectic, making up a

coherent whole, but not dissolved in each other/ one another at any time. It is, therefore, a unit without synthesis. In the same work, Morin mentions "unitas multiplex" meaning "to conceive the one as many and many as one". Every person of the triad is contained in one which, in turn, they contain and express.

3. ...to paradigm!

Before addressing "symbolic interactionism", the microsociological approach initiated by George Herbert Mead, we shall focus on the intuitive model formulated by Wendell Holmes in *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, III,* and analyzed by Miguel de Unamuno (Holmes in Unamuno, 1991: 23-25). Holmes notes that when two people, John and Thomas are involved in a relationship, this relationship actually involves 6 "egos":

The three "Johns":

1.The real John - known only to his Creator;

2. John's ideal John – John's image of himself; never the real one and, more often than not, quite different from this;

3. Thomas's ideal John – Thomas' image of John never the real John or John's ideal John, and, more often than not, differing greatly from both.

The three "Thomases":

1. The real Thomas

2. Thomas's ideal Thomas

3. John's ideal Thomas

This means that each of us is, simultaneously, the "real" one (1), that who we believe we are (our image of ourselves - 2) and the one that the others believe us to be (the image of the others about us – 3). These are not actually persons in their own right, but instances of the self. In other words, the self exists and manifests itself in three ways: the real I, to which I have partial access via knowledge, as ideal I, resulting from self-observation and introspection, so to say, but as any subjective entity having itself as the object of knowledge, it is biased to a certain extent, my image of myself cannot be 100% objective; finally, the third aspect of the ego is "your ideal I" (because you also cannot know me without a rest). What is very interesting is that this third aspect of the self (*the looking - glass self*, in Cooly's terms) operates as a mediator between "the real I" and "the ideal I" and helps lessen the distance between them. To put it in a nutshell, only through the medium of the Other, my image of myself comes closer to reality (Udangiu, 2006).

In what follows, we shall examine the similarities with the Christian Trinitarian model:

- here also we have *a triadic hierarchy*, with "the real I", never exhausted by knowledge, imposing in the relationship in an unknown way;

- here also we have *a dynamic relationship* in which the three instantiations of the self evolve together, *adjusting each other, expressing each other*;

- the reason of the self is in *the relationship with the Other*, even if the Other is purely external, but the other's objective exteriority becomes subjective interiority;

- whenever we act, *we express ourselves but also the Other in our actions.*

The model advanced by George Herbert Mead in his famous book *Mind, Self and Society* (1934/1994) to explain the emergence and the "functioning" of the social self follows the dynamics described above. It is important to mention that Mead was born into a Puritan family, his father being a member of the clergy, but that he himself labelled as "empiricist", "materialist", as a follower of John Watson, who aimed to deduct the "laws" of human behaviour from experiments carried out on animals. (Farganis,1993: 145). The findings of his research on human behaviour seem even more surprising.

The Self, Mead believes, is a social entity which cannot be located, as the Greeks did with psyhe, placing it in our heart, head or other organs. This entity represents the unity between body, behavior and environment and it is shaped in the interaction between the individual, the micro- and macro environment.

When born, the *Self*, in the psychological common sense, is only a potentiality, or, in other words, a *latency* of the Ego, which will gradually become fully real by experiencing the physical world and the Other. First, in early childhood, we gain *the consciousness of the physical world*: the meaning of objects is generated in the contact with the objects and then handling and using them, alongside the organization of increasingly complex movements. Later on, we acquire *the consciousness of the Other* due to total dependence on the others around us, and the last to be formed, in a slow and complex process, it is *self-consciousness*.

Once the corresponding physical and mental development stage is attained, the child begins to play. Play in early childhood, with real or imaginary partners, is the fundamental process by which they begin *to acquire roles*. They learn to be *another person*. Moreover: at the same time, they learn how to look at themselves from the others' perspective. It is the beginning of the process of shaping that part of the self that Mead calls *me*, an instance that will allow *self-awareness*. Therefore, *me* is that part of the Ego that has become the *object* for itself through the *Other*.

The ontogenesis of the self continues in a different social matrix, i.e. in the game. Unlike play, game is rule- or norm-governed behavior, it is played by the rule. Then, each team member must assimilate the specific roles of all the others to be able to coordinate individual actions in a new form of reality called "team". At this stage, crystallization of a new instance, which proves to be of paramount importance in the shaping of

personality, begins; Mead terms it the *Generalized Other* and it represents the attitude of the entire community, internalized by each member of the community. The *Generalized Other* as representative of the broader group to which it belongs, as a representative of the rules of the community or society to which it belongs, is in fact our *moral conscience*.

The self and its socialized instances, i.e. *me* and *the Generalized Other*, make up the personal and personalized unity of the self. By using the term *personalized*, we refer to the fact that all the individuals socialized under the same circumstances should be identical. Yet, they are only alike, since beyond the "Ego- object", shaped through socialization, there is the "Ego-subject". The Self as subject can never be observed directly but only through *me*. Its existence can be inferred only from sustained observation of the Ego-object (me). The Ego-subject is the source of spontaneity and creativity as shown by the fact that no matter how deeply we think (thought is defined by Mead as a form of interior dialogue) and no matter how far we plan an action, it will differ more or less from the initial planning, not only because it has to adapt to the surrounding reality, but also because it is bound to express the Ego-subject (*I*). In other words, we are always partially unaware of our actions, or, the *ego cogitans* is not a completely autonomous entity. The Freudian model of human psyche is also a triad (ego – superego – id) with a similar dynamic. There is no need to repeat the analogy with the triadic model. The analysis of Holmes's model remains valid in its entirety, as long as "the real I" corresponds to the Ego-subject (*I*) or to the Freudian "id" and also to the hierarchical term of "Trinity". (Udangiu, 2006)

Conclusions

In his book *Ways of thinking* (1987) Solomon Marcus asserts that mathematical thought has an analogical nature. It notices the correspondences among concepts, ideas, objects, theorems. In mathematical sense, the analogy is considered the main form in which processes of abstraction express themselves. A special place among different ways of thought is occupied by so called *triadic thought* which Marcus describes as "an intuition, a tri-dimensional thinking, essentially distinct from the linear or two-dimensional one." (Solomon,1987:44) If we have in semiotics the triadic model of Ch. S. Peirce and later, the one of Ch. Morris for instance, in the triadic thought of matter we can find the fundamental perceptions of space and time and surprising biological characteristics (Solomon: 37-49):

- The triad of matter: substance - energy – information

- The temporal dimensions of perception: past - present – future
- The three-dimensional space
- The person's triontic system: I – thou - he
- Narrative and dramatic structures
- Trivalent logic
- Tri-chromatic human sight: red, green, blue (the other colors are derived)
- Genetic structures are based on sequences of three elements
- Game Theory: stability of the structures with three partners

Besides this list and the examples already discussed, it may also be mentioned the power structure organized as a balanced triad "the legislative body – the executive body – the judicial body" or the classical studies on changing attitudes, social control, social networks and social cohesion. Mechanisms of network influences in bilateral cooperation are also studied considering different types of triads: null, partial or unclosed triad. An important network influence and a fundamental network property was called *triadic closure*. (Kinn, 2013)

Biographical sketch

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