

**Lorena Stuparu (editor), *Identitatea individuală în contextul globalizării. Studii și interviuri/ [Individual identity in the context of globalization. Studies and interviews]*, Craiova: Aius, 2013, 250 pages, ISBN 978-606-562-272-2**

*Review by Gabriela GOUDENHOFT*

The volume brings together a number of seven studies on identity, resulted from a research developed by academics and researchers as Lorena Stuparu - "Individual identity: between inner perception and external reception", Ana Bazac - "Identity and globalization: epistemological perspective", Adriana Neacsu - "The self like its own duration. Individual identity in the view of I.D.Gherea", Georgeta Ghebrea - "Social-political identity and occupational aspirations of youth in Romania", Gabriela Tanasescu - "European identity - a reconstruction?", Liliana Popescu - "The Moldovan identity and European aspiration/ orientation of Moldova" and Gabriela Blebea Nicolae - "An identity's trunk ring". The author's studies are followed by six focused interviews on philosophic and political dimension of identity with personalities from Romanian Academy and senior Professors as Mircea Flonta, Alexandru Surdu, Gheorghe Vladutescu, Alexandru Boboc, Aristide Cioaba and Constantin Nica.

An important research hypothesis visible due the philosophical and epistemological approach is the one that individual identity became the more problematic, the more modernity tends to define the individual in a dual perspective: both as subject and object of knowledge. Invested from the beginning with a symbolic power, individual identity became more and more prominent in the public and political life.

Given the discourse on identity or on own existence which seems to be inherent to everyone, the discourse of informed intellectual could be a reliable source in an area as political science is or political philosophy. A „cultivate' self-perception could be also useful in any attempt to present the contemporary Romanian spiritual climate.

Lorena Stuparu's study on identity (pp.21-48) assumes the idea that the very special place where identity is crystalized depends on the way self-perception or selfhood meets others perception of being. Notwithstanding the logical principle of identity, the space where individual identity is built is not a immutable one but a space of an eventual dialogue between the image that one has about oneself and the image of

others on the subject. This criteria of identity crystallization became inherent to the nowadays discursive space. Though, according to Francesco Remotti, cited in the study, the concept of identity has a conventional nature, being totally dependent on our decisions, not staying somewhere waiting of being discovered, but “built” or “invented”, like in a narrative way as Paul Ricoeur also stated, or built by denying and reinventing as difference like in poststructuralist vision.

Tackling the problem of identity Lorena Stuparu finds as necessary not only a presentation of the liberal or neoliberal philosophy but a comparatist binomial liberalism-conservatism, where it is to find a perspective of liberty as a genuine expression of selfhood, assisted by a rational control of behavior (Flathman), or in opposite way, a perspective where the society is prior to the individual, starting from Aristotle’s thinking and continuing with the modern conservatism, conceiving individual liberty conditioned by the existence of home, place, society.

Narrative identity, in an phenomenological and hermeneutic approach, assume the human being “able to say” (Ricoeur), the human being who tells himself to the world, in a context where the narrations are activity of expressing and exteriorizing self-consciousness in a process of self-remembering like in Plato’s philosophy or like in Kant’s idea of *recognitio*, where “identification” it is “establishing an identity relation between a thing and another one”.

By building a narrative the human being became self-consciousness and also able to make himself known by others. There is a dialectical motion of *idem* and *ipse*, like Hegel suggested the dialectic of “identity and otherness”, confronting the public and the private space of being.

Contemporary Romanian research on the philosophy of identity are facing, according Stuparu (p.35), a journey to a particular nebula, where one can notice recovery attempts of Interwar age models or abandonment of some disturbing patterns such as Romanian communist false identity.

Another challenge for the selfhood in contemporary world it is the self-emerging from a private space out of its personal boundaries and linking to the national and the global sphere, shaping a national identity and a global one (p.39). This process involve civic terms, the idea of citizenship as belonging to a *polis*, or to a *supranational* entity as European Union is and has to fight the cleavage between West and East visible even on discursive layer. This challenge induce a paradigm shift, because contemporary European crisis of legitimacy and of identity at least it’s greeted by Romanian and by the East, generally speaking, with a high openness to a political and cultural Europeanization, with a fast adaptation and assimilation of the values of Economical Europe, Political Europe, Social Europe (p.43). There are still some nostalgic thought,

against a quasi-unanimous “chorus of European integration”, readable in an old westernization wish and in a today Eastern consciousness, where human identity is fighting for survive under the pressure of so many global influences. The nostalgia of a post-political world (Pierre Manent), the promises of a saving Europe for the simple citizen in search not of one’s identity, but of a dignifying existence are features of the current approaches on individual consciousness for an “timeless human being”, paradoxically captive in a temporal dimension.

Ana Bazac’s study introduces an epistemic perspective on identity, according to the idea that building an image is a response to a logic necessity (49). So the rationale of building identity relies on the same functional principles as math’s laws, or more generally on an ontology of the real.

Maybe not the easiest but the more fecund way to tackle identity is through linking it to worlds in terms which is particularly cognate: “national identity and culture”, given the fact that “the national identities are cultural and social determined” (p.61), “identity and mediation” because human being creates its own needs through multiple mediations, “identity and action” because identity involve the effort of emerge one’s boundaries towards other’s., “the dialectic of closeness and outlying”, the relationship between globalization and identity etc. The last one raise a special issue, the one of massification, which is a challenge and even a dissolution of selfhood, because masses are related to the idea of multiple while selfhood relates to idea of singularity.

The idea of temporality is valued also in the study of Adriana Neacsu, bringing back to the public interest the vision of I.D. Gherea, related to Bergson reflection on the “pure duration”. In order to solve the problem of individual identity, Gherea conceived our aggregate mental life as a process running continuously (p.72), but related to the “rational kingdom of the unconsciousness”, to the “inner self” having one’s “own duration” – the key concept for understanding individual identity.

An interesting approach it is to be found in Georgeta Ghebrea’s study on a special group, youth, Romanian 1989 Generation and after, with a specific social identity. According to Van Dijk “...ordinary people are more or less passive targets of text or talk, e.g. of their bosses or teachers, or of the authorities, such as police officers, judges, welfare bureaucrats, or tax inspectors, who may simply tell them what (not) to believe or what to do” (p.88). The author uses the critical discourse analysis to explore the latent content and the social control keys, concluding there are some discrepancies between the latent content of employment policies and youth employment aspirations. Also she found a positive correlation between the level of education fostering awareness and the socio-political development which promote empowerment, civic and politic mobilization (p.101).

The layer occupy by the European identity, an issue continuously debated is the object of Gabriela Tanasescu's study, trying to crystallize an operational concept of European identity beyond the multiplicity of national or regional loyalties or the plurality of individual identities. Is there a European identity as a conceptual layer or only at an argumentative level? Is there a philosophy of European identity? Which is the official position of European institutions and which the theoretical contribution of European thinkers? This are some questions the author try to answer in her study. The author synthetized and reassessed perspective of European identity definition agglutinating "the Greek concept of individuality", "the Roman concept of justice", "the biblical concept of person", "the distinction between Good and goods", with respect to the Christian heritage, the Greek one and the Roman heritage. On the other hand the European crisis of identity came into sight not only by the failure of European Constitution but also through the "crisis of the continental utopia of perpetual growth" (p.111) or through the cleavage between the savage capitalist Anglo-Saxon model and the "obsessive social model" promoted by EU members like France or Germany.

The current approach on identity is made considering the importance of communication, relation, dialogue and not least the informational society. Hanging between national and supranational, cultural and multiculturalism, identical and different and struggling in finding new ways and instruments for legitimize the European action, could create a fragmentation in the idea of European identity. Some functionalist solutions as the "constitutional patriotism" promoted by Habermas could be a basis of European identity in a liberal logic (p.123), but towards a democratic recourse the acceleration of the integration process would question the choice for a "more Europe" versus "a better Europe (p.131).

Liliana Popescu is tackling a particular issue in her study, the Moldovan identity the cultural orientation of this Eastern country towards Europe and its political orientation towards the EU. Issues as citizenship, ethno-national identity, civic identity and civic nationalism are issues covered in the study, with a critical perspective, considering even the critical outlook of some scholars that the Moldovan identity could be a root fallacy in the context of public discourse. However Moldova's situation is split between politicians and Government's political aspiration vis-à-vis an eventual accession in the EU and Government's performance in providing welfare, good services, quality policy for people.

The final text is written by Gabriela Blebea Nicolae, a fresh perspective on the academic dialog with the world abroad, made possible through the activity of the New Europe College and the amazing journey "over the seas" of a Romanian experiencing liberty.



The second section of the book is bringing together interesting ideas of prominent Romanian intellectuals, interviewed by Lorena Stuparu and Gabriela Tanasescu. Mircea Flonta, for instance emphasized a lack of the Romanian public life: the absence of a genuine dialogue culture, amid large discrepancies between East and West. He pointed on the identity bench-marks: rationality but also religious feelings, culture and civism, patterns of relating to otherness, national or ethnic solidarity and provincial and regional identities and also consequences of ones choices in a challenging world: solitude, dissociation, indifference, selfishness.

Alexandru Surdu underlines the lift between ethnic and national consciousness in multinational and multiethnic states, where sometimes conflicts on cultural, religious, political, social, professional cohabitation occur sooner or later (p.181). But civic consciousness edifies beyond this differences, because it suppose respect for legality and political legitimate order. The Romanian philosopher expressed some doubts on the possibility of a supranational identity, as the European identity pretends to be. An identity card can give rights but not necessary a proper consciousness.

The relationship between self and otherness, the reflection on and in other mind contributes to crystallize individual identity according to Gheorghe Vladutescu. The national and supranational identity are linked to the philosophy of culture conceptualization but is based and totally dependent on the layers preexistent: supranational identity depends on national identity and the national one is based on individual identity (p.186). So a boycott of self cannot help in constructing a European identity.

Alexandru Boboc, chose to talk about identity from a perspective of the “European spirit” forwarding in a global era. With a Latin linguistic derivation, the term “identity” it is to be found in the principle of identity and has a remarkable interpretation in Heidegger philosophy of *das selbe* where the formula “A = A” couldn’t be considered as containing two terms in an equality but one and alone, a self-identity (pp.189-190). But in order to be defined, “identity” needs the support and the relationship with the “difference”, the two terms being in an indwelling correlation. The Romanian philosopher proves confidence in the natural human reason, showing that the European spirit will always be associated with humanism, in a context of unity affirmation through difference.

Aristide Cioaba fills another side of the very complex approach of identity, in the book, the political identity of the post-communist Romania, with a normative reflection, including the ideology of the social state as an instrument of political legitimacy. Both on national and supranational (EU) layer, the identity and legitimacy are interconnected conditions of maintaining political regimes, concurrent with a political consensus and

with a public and continuous public attachment with the values particularly with the values of democracy (p.213).

The values topic was reached also with Constantin Nica, who appreciates that beyond the existence of several “identity series”, the social values (cultural values, political ones, moral, national legal, religious etc) embedded in the “spiritual memory” of every people define identity as a virtue and pattern of relating to higher concept as Good is. Political parties have an important role in crystallizing social values and the European parties should do in order to achieve a supranational legitimation.

As the book editor, Lorena Stuparu stated, the research was based on a transdisciplinary methodology and using a comparatist approach on political theories (p.242) in deciphering several key concepts as self, individuality, identity on specific layers: individual, national, supra-national, universal.