

## Identification as a basic concept in interdisciplinary social and humanitarian researches “personality – community”

Elena Mishailovna Kalashnikova

Perm State Humanitarian Pedagogical University, Sibirskaya street, 24, Perm, 614990, Russia

**Abstract.** The article examines disciplinary and content meanings of the phenomenon “identification” crossed at social psychological and philosophical and sociological levels. To cope with the task, there was constructed a logical and methodological scheme. A definition and characteristics of the process of identification are given. Their integrative and communicative functions are justified and explained. The level structure and the disciplinary structure are singled out. The social psychological mechanism of identification in the unity of its opposites of inclusion into and insulation from a society is considered. The methodological and the disciplinary levels of studying identification are differentiated, and their interaction in modern cognition is examined. The articles shows the diversity of psychological interpretations of identification and the impact of these interpretations on philosophical and sociological generalizations. Methodological grounds are paid special attention to, and flexible methodologies are emphasized. The author clarifies how polyphony of cross-disciplinary interpretations of identification influences innovation processes in shaping general theory of identification.

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### Introduction

The given article aims at studying “the crossing” of disciplinary and content interpretations of the phenomenon of identification, as accepted in philosophy, social psychology and sociology. To solve the task effectively, it is necessary: firstly, to expose the essential characteristics of the concept of identification, secondly, to examine the phenomenon in various epistemological disciplinary snapshots, thirdly, to provide a comparative analysis of diverse identifications and describe their polyphony, and fourthly, to apply the polyphony to constructing new identification models.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century psychologists and philosophers imbue the concept identification with various meanings. The term defines a social psychological mechanism identical to conscious imitation (H.Hiebsch and M.Vorweg [1]), identity of two persons’ emotional states (J.Piaget, P.Fraisse [2]), mechanism of interpersonal relations in group activity (A.V.Petrovsky [3]), unity of inclusion and insulation (E.M.Kalashnikova), sociological concept (V.A.Yadov [4]), national identity (S.Huntington [5]).

The multilevel methodology (philosophical, general scientific and interdisciplinary), the three applied levels being interdependent, is specified as flexible in using methodological tools, i.e. always shaped with scientific goals set by certain authors. In the given article the philosophical level is presented

in two guises: 1) use of philosophical methods (dialectics, hermeneutics, phenomenology) as a basis for conceptual schemes, in which the nature of logical identification models depends on the approach chosen, the specifics of the aspect of identification and the goals of a research; 2) use of logical tools – abstracting, idealization and modeling, which enable to reach the level of theoretical generalizations, for instance, to define identification, carry out a comparative analysis with close in their meanings concepts such as assimilation, conscious imitation and emotional identification, or model new types of identification (adaptive, creative, premise, etc.).

The general scientific, or “the intermediate” in-system level, formed with the philosophical level overlaid on the strictly disciplinary one, is vitally important for researches similar to ours, in which non-philosophical concepts are analyzed in philosophical terms and their heterogeneous character is described. A such-like symbiosis provides in our theory synthetic conceptual spheres of various identification models, similarities and differences between which are defined by real world situations and are achieved in the subjects’ social experience, social reforms and shifts in social value orientations. Every time certain social elements are analyzed in the framework of this or that discipline, the concept identification works according to a certain logical pattern that reflects geneses, functional, historical and

culturological ties, while the practice employing several approaches guarantees multi-variant descriptions based on objective and subjective determinants. The interdisciplinary level is founded on a selective result of previously exercised methods.

The interdisciplinary character is a specific feature of modern scientific knowledge. One and the same concept, employed in the frameworks of different separate disciplines, displays certain peculiarities. Thus, the concept “identification” that in every day use of the word means sameness, acquired scientific interpretation in psychology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, firmly entered philosophy, sociology and culturology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and filled modern humanities with anthropological meanings.

Any scientific research opens with ontological characteristics and a definition of the phenomenon under study. Identification is a social psychological mechanism of peoples’ integration into a community on the basis of common social substance [6] (be it cognitive or axiological). For instance, an individual’s identification with a scientific community presupposes conventional consonance, acceptance of a scientific paradigm shared by other members of the community, ... while joining a political party sets the priority for cohesion of political views (political identity) with presumable disparities in world views, attitudes to ethnic values or family modes, etc. Anyway, in the above given illustrations there functions integration in its major attribute, which binds individuals into a community.

Multidimensionality of approaches to the processes of identification is assigned by human life itself, sociality of a person, immersiveness with the Other, all of which manifest in ontogeny, sociogeny and innumerable developing formal and informal community structures that need both apprehension and re-apprehension.

There are two conditions in the basis of identification: a community and a subject, who either out of necessity or out of interest starts representing several communities, from territorial (country, region) to socio-cultural (political, ethnic, religious). In general, it is possible to examine identification processes in various modes. One of the modifications is by an agent, or subject. This is a sort of identity with a clan, a group identity, self-identity. A second modification is by stages of socialization in ontogeny. A third modification is by a subject’s involvement with the values of diverse communities. But with any kind of modification, the process of identification has both social and psychological foundations. This dual complex is expressed in the following: the conception of identification, guided by the intra-individual approach (considering distinctive features of an individual), has not only a personal

determinant, but also a social one, and if guided by the inter-individual approach (considering social ties of an individual) – not only social, but also psychological determinants.

Upon the completion of a general characteristic of the concept identification, its integrative function and conditions for realization, let us pass over to the analysis of identification in the disciplinary fields of our interest. It was S.Freud who introduces the notion of identification, having fixed it in a dictionary of psychological terms. He clearly outlined the content and the functional characteristics of the phenomenon. S.Freud underlined that “first, identification is the original form of emotional tie with an object; secondly, in a regressive way it becomes a substitute for a libidinal object tie, as it were by means of the introjection of the object into the ego; and thirdly, it may arise with every new perception of a common quality shared with some other person who is not an object of the sexual instinct” [7]. As we see from the quotation, identification takes a substantial place in Freud’s psycho-analytical conception and plays a considerable role in his instinct theory. In the quotation we have resorted to, S.Freud interprets the term identification in the framework of psycho-analysis as assimilation, and conscious of insufficiency of the interpretation, he adds: “... a suspicion may tell us that we are far from having exhausted the problem of identification, and that we are faced by the process which psychology calls ‘empathy [*Einfühlung*]’ and which plays the largest part in our understanding of what is inherently foreign to our ego in other people. But we shall here limit ourselves to the immediate emotional effects of identification, and shall leave on one side its significance for our intellectual life”. Psycho-social aspects of ego formation introduced by S.Freud were further developed by E.Erikson in his psycho-analysis of a new type. Maximizing social factors in the process of socialization, he carefully exploits Freud’s ideas about the significance of the biological factor. E.Erikson uses two terms in his works: identification as a process of ego formation, and identity as the formed ego, i.e. a psychological state of a person. Besides, he underlines the significance of both the terms: “... so it comes about that we begin to conceptualize matters of identity at the very time in history when they become a problem. ... The study of identity, then, becomes as strategic in our time as the study of sexuality 'has in Freud's time” [8].

Erikson’s “Childhood and Society” contributed greatly to the solution of a new “strategic task”. He examines consistently and in detail the evolution of identity in the processes of socialization at different stages (eight periods), and, unlike Freud,

believes that personality develops during all life and each of the eight periods, or cycles, has its own peculiarities and identity. E.Erikson goes beyond psychoanalytics. Considering childhood as a basic step of sociality formation, studying the route of formation of the strong ego, he assumes that social factors are to be researched in the parameter of social interaction: "... the best clue to the understanding of the infantile ego is the study of the child's play - 'fantasies woven around real objects'". Analyzing specificity of unadaptive children in the industrial civilization, E.Erikson points at a contradiction between upbringing of children and social reality: "some of our troubled children constantly break out of their play into some damaging activity in which they seem to us to 'interfere' with our world; while analysis reveals that they only wish to demonstrate their right to find an identity in it. They refuse to become a speciality called 'child', who must play at being big because he is not given an opportunity to be a small partner in a big world."

Of no less interest is E.Erikson's analysis of adolescence cycle of moving into adulthood: "I define the major crisis of youth as crisis of identity. It happens at that very moment of our life cycle, when out of active elements of childhood and hopes for the forthcoming consent age, each young man works out his major prospects and way, a definite functioning whole; he must see the essential similarity between what he expects himself to be and what others, by the witness of his subtle sense, expect him to be"[9].

E.Erikson examines thoroughly the impact of suppressed sexual instincts on an individual's understanding of his or her own ego, which may be blocked amid "the identification confusion", the impact is especially strong with adolescents, - an assumption which, in our view, is an urgent reason for further elaboration of theoretical questions relative to the crisis of identification in terms of public and personal cataclysms. Modern Western psychological researches into identity of children of different ages in different social environments are of no less interest. For instance, Elsbeth Neil studies the process of preschool-age children's integration into adoptive families and states: "Children in the "unproblematic" group expressed mainly positive feelings about their birth parents. They were interested in their birth family, but this was not a topic that preoccupied them. For those children who found adoption "complicated" a whole range of views of birth parents were expressed, ranging from children who avoided thinking about their birth family e.g. "I don't want to know really... I just don't want to speak about him" through to children who found it hard to stop thinking about their birth family. The valence of children's views also varied»... and

then «Although children themselves felt fully integrated into their adoptive families, and saw their family as ordinary or normal, comments and questions from other children brought home that this is not how adoption is viewed from the outside. A particular area that parents may need to think about (and professionals support them with) is helping children manage disclosure or nondisclosure of adoption in the social situation (especially at school), and an understanding of how adopted children feel would be useful for teachers» [10]. Interaction of moral norms and moral behaviour becomes problematic and of vital importance. Observations prove that these are hypothetic models mediated with other motivations, rather than accepted moral norms, that serve the basis for certain behaviour acts. Ro'i Zultan, Tobias Gerstenberg, David A. Lagnado: «...models should be developed to account for probabilistic structures. These can include probabilistic processes at the level of performance, e.g., through expectations, and at the level of outcomes, by a probabilistic integration function. The model is based on the causal structure of the team task, and as such abstracts from characteristics of the agents who are assigned responsibility» [11].

Our speculations about the crisis of identity have driven to logical "bridges" between the psychological level, which defines what traits of character facilitate identification, and the philosophical level of analysis, i.e. the process of developing the culture of self-conscience.

To continue the theme of the crisis of identity, initiated by E.Erikson, let us proceed from an adolescent to a person of any age who experiences the same state of being. The crisis of identity is related to search of objects for identification, as a person has no stable awareness about his or her own self, and therefore needs some condition to express the subjective substance of his or her ego. The subjective substance of ego is connected with immersion into self and is perceived through self-conscience following self-identification. We understand self-identification as an acting subject's perception of his or her self in the unity of its physical, psychological and social traits as seen in the self-esteem. But the self-esteem capability appears, when there is a necessity for the awareness of the integrity of self. This integral oneness consists of the versatile selves that manifest at various levels in various situations, that's why the ability "to catch" and "to collect" is a result of the developed self-conscience, which ensures the process of self-determination and self-identification.

We also associate E.Erikson's name with a breakthrough in the studies of identification via the interaction of the social and the psychological

elements, including, on the one hand, the lowest physiological substrate, and on the other, social peculiarities. That's why, when speculating about the interaction, we see the social and the individual experience of a person accumulated and comprising a unique psychology of an individual. The investigation of these processes is effective not only in the psychological science, but also in pedagogy and philosophical anthropology – and we again witness the psychological and the philosophical disciplinary levels crossed.

There emerges a sort of problem, when we differentiate the social philosophical and the sociological levels in modern cognition, as both social philosophy and modern sociology interpret society as an integral whole, - hence is similarity in considering identification, since scientists, with their non-linear thinking, reconcile macrosocial, social-psychological and sociological paradigms.

This specific trait of a modern scientist engaged in humanitarian questions is observed by R.Aron: "...we speak of social philosophy of a new type and a way of sociological thinking, which is specifically scientific and definite, and with unique understanding of the social, we mean the way of thinking that became widespread in the latest third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century" [12]. It undoubtedly indicates methodological pluralism in modern cognition. In any humanitarian disciplinary research both scientist and non-scientist (axiological) means are tolerated, and this kaleidoscope of methods and categories doesn't deplete the cognition field, it rather points at versatility, multidimensionality and rich content of the philosophical and sociological research. So, if dealt untraditionally and in a nonclassical way with, the problem of identification widens and deepens the significance of variants and newly generated concepts. Proceeding from Husserlian (phenomenological) approach to social environment, which is seen fundamentally heterogeneous (dissimilar) and is in fact a quantity of so called particular horizons, i.e. ways of perceiving the society and choosing objects for identification in the society, we can propose the suprasituational identity, which synthesizes various forms and types of identity overlaying each other. Identification is a substructure of conscience, which constantly inculcates the other's conception of you and your conception of the other, producing an intentional infinity of interpretations of identities.

On the other hand, proceeding from Western philosophy, which treats communicativeness consistent with Jaspers' existential philosophy as life with the other, identification can be considered in the sense of "communication existence". This immanently inherent identification is traced in ideas

and works done by Jean-Paul Sartre (co-being with others), M.Buber (relations I-Thau instead of I-It), Hans-Georg Gadamer (free flow of I into You) and Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida (self-being for the other).

Let us dwell further on the investigation of interactions in group activity. Identification emerges at the initial stage of group making and facilitates successful functioning of individuals both in spheres of emotional and psychological orientations and for further cooperation (as optimal as possible). That's why vitally important becomes the question of responsibility in such groups. Oriel FeldmanHall, Dean Mobbs, Davy Evans, Lucy Hiscox, Lauren Navrady, Tim Dalgleish believe that: «...our moral beliefs may have a much weaker impact on our decision-making if the context is enriched with other compelling motivational forces, such as the presence of a significant self-gain. This raises questions about whether hypothetical moral decisions generated in response to decontextualized scenarios, act as a good proxy for real moral choices» [13].

## Conclusion

Identification and identity are undoubtedly a key element of the subjective reality, and the modified reality demands innovations in the cognition of this vital for the society phenomenon.

## Results

In our opinion, the theoretical guidelines for studying identity which we put forward in the article, as well as the premises for interdisciplinarity and polyphony of approaches we approve of, will contribute to broadening the foundations for identification structuring.

Identity is modeled in an endless spectrum of individual horizons and is modified in case various types interact and intersect.

The forming identity manifests in emotional and behavioural forms, and "imaginary" and "symbolic" forms are fundamental.

"Understanding" identity differs from emotional and behavioural in its comprehensiveness and logical organization, achieved due to rationally motivated agreement with the other (others) on the basis of constructive interaction of various positions capable of generalizing knowledge.

"Conformist" identity is connected with stereotypical perception and uncritical choosing of objects for identification.

"Premise" identity rests on the previous experience of former identities realized later in new practices.

“Selective” identity is a reflexive attitude to the universe which tends to minimize damages from taking decisions.

“Suprasituational” identity is a process of synthesizing various forms and types, overlaying each other.

“General cultural” identity is a modern individual’s integral identity, a collective one, mediated by various interests (national, religious).

“Virtual” identity acts as an endless regeneration of senses plotted by a controlling subject.

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#### Corresponding Author:

Dr. Kalashnikova Elena Mishailovna  
Perm State Humanitarian Pedagogical University  
Sibirskaya street, 24, Perm, 614990, Russia

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