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Safety in the dialectics of mental state, socio-psychological process and social phenomenon

S u m m a r y

The text presents the thesis of the understanding of safety as a category existing in everyday and over-day understanding. Safety is defined and analyzed as a dialectical phenomenon, which contains in a unity safety and lack of safety, security and insecurity. This unity manifests itself at a level of a psychological state, of a socio-psychological process and of a social phenomenon. The dialectics of safety and lack of safety is possible as an idea of completeness and integrity understood in different aspects of social human existence.

Key words: safety, security, insecurity, integrity, identity, freedom

Safety is one of those phenomena that seem self-evident, everyday, self-explanatory, and exactly because of that, the most difficult to be defined and problematized. As with all clear phenomena, here it turns out that it is most difficult to understand the “clear” because these understandable things provide new and new dimensions to the explanations and patterns of their experience. At the same time, such social facts and their intellectual rationalization become the basis for building the legitimacy and identification of science sociology. Durkheim unambiguously predetermined the decades-long reproduction of the problem of sociological imagination with the notion that “a sociologist must ... stand against social facts, forgetting everything he thinks he knows about them as if it is a totally unknown thing” [1, p. 36]. And so – safety as an unknown thing ...

Confronting the difficulty of defining is also with the use of the word „safety”. It occurs in a variety of contexts – we speak about physical safety, psychological safety, normative safety, etc. It is even more difficult when another, almost identical, term intervenes. It is security. We talk about international security, national security, public, corporate, computer, information, home, human, economic, social security, etc. It should be noted that they are not only words but have the status of terms. To outline the boundaries between the two terms – safety and security – turns out to be impossible. So the definition of the phenomenon should be by expanding the horizons for its perception, not by limiting and „cutting” the meaning. We assume that these are two sides of the same phenomenon. At the same time, safety also implies a psychological and socio-psychological context of understanding. Security has more objective dimensions and social manifestations. A. Maslow developed an idea about safety as a very fundamental need. He interpreted safety needs as a combination of needs of security, order, and stability. This theory is classical, well-known and accepted in social sciences. Its reference in the text is with a view of the idea that safety and security are aspects of the same phenomenon.

It can be said, with confidence, that this multi-plane and multi-layered appearance of these two words – safety and security is not accidental, nor it is a manifestation of the inability other words and symbolic forms to be invented. Moreover, this observation concerns not only the English language. The starting point of explanation is much more relevant to the idea that the spirituality, the soul, the psychological phenomena and processes of the human community find their form in the symbolic construct of language. Following this a priori point, it can logically be concluded that this is an existential category related to the ontology of human existence.

One possible integrative view at the term „safety” is that it is related to the idea, state, experience, feeling of completeness, integrity, equilibrium and balance. In this sense, safety is a psychological state related to the need for the integrity of the human personality. At the same time, safety is a socio-psychological process

of interaction of personality and community with social structures, and with supra-social structures in the process of seeking balance and equilibrium in this communication. An inseparable part of these two areas of safety is its existence as a social phenomenon. In social terms, the phenomenon exists as „security“. This third aspect is manifested in publicly-created institutions whose purpose is to ensure the stability of society, communities and individuals in them. Such are the institutions of social security and support, i.e. the social security system, such as the army, the police, etc., related to ensuring public order and internal and external security, such are supranational institutions such as the EU, the UN, and many others searching security above the local plan.

The thesis that will be developed within the text is that all these spheres of safety exist in a dialectical whole. They are interpenetrating and interrelated. In addition, safety is the initial state of human being and existence. Consequently, the movement of social subjects is aimed at the realization of a state and states of safety. No imbalance and fragmentation are the eternal principles of existence, and the searching, the achievement and the maintaining of a state of integrity. It is clear that the social is only possible through the interaction of the subjects in it. In this sense, the dialogue between the subjects could be a principle for achieving a degree of safety. Interaction and interdependence are not related to the impairment of autonomy. T. Parsons expressed this idea clearly by saying that one of the most common serious mistakes is the notion that interdependence implies a lack of independence. The author added that two units may be interdependent if they are independent in some respects [2]. Therefore freedom and safety are not mutually exclusive categories. The existence of freedom presupposes safety and vice versa.

Safety, understood as integrity is threatened, on the one hand, by the misunderstanding of the dialectics of dependence and independence and, on the other, by the risks of being. In today's postmodern time one of the biggest risks is the speed of change. Changes happen so quickly that it is beyond our ability to predict them and also to perceive them. We cannot stop the change, nor point out the possible sources of risk, so we should focus on the available resources. The mechanisms, which human civilization, or the phylogenetic and ontogenetic human development have provided for achieving certainty in the individual development are of crucial importance for human existence. Such mechanisms are: social adaptation, socialization, psychosocial identity, etc. They all reflect human relationships with the social environment. It is the „proper“ realization of these connections that provide the psychosocial safety of the individual. An important and problematic idea is that our relationships and our interdependence on the social plane that move us to safety and security do not make us unfree. It is no coincidence that among the numerous perceptions of identity there is also one saying that it is an intimate experience of freedom [3]. Our personal and

social identities have the function to give us stability, safety and security in our functioning in the social environment.

For the implementation of these mechanisms, social institutions have emerged and established their existence in the civilization development. There is a huge variety of social institutions designed to meet human security and safety needs. The family and the school have the task of introducing us into the social environment by providing us with a degree of safety for our functioning in the socio-cultural reality.

Apart from mechanisms and institutions, there are "Eternal Values" in the millennial existence of mankind. They have the function of being a measure of human integrity. Tradition, religion, the connection of human communities to nature can be accepted as fundamental values. On the one hand, their existence in human beings is important. On the other hand, it is important to rediscover their value, to experience their value and to live up to these values. The phenomena of tradition, religion and nature are connected with our understanding of eternity and with the desire to overcome relativity. The lack of our safety is probably due to relativity. Relative values do not bear the permanence of integrity and completeness. Therefore, existential security should be sought in eternal values.

Here is the question why the integrity and completeness of the world, society and man are so essential. Postmodernity highlighted the fragment and fragmentation as existential phenomena. The fragmentation of the world has manifested itself in a number of "separations" and "differentiations". The man is not only emancipated by nature, but is also distinguished from it. By itself, it probably was a regular phenomenon in the development of human civilization. However, the increase in the gap between the human and the natural causes a number of dysfunctions. The destruction of the natural environment that the man perceived as something outside himself/herself reflected on the deterioration of human living conditions and not only. And now, experiencing the stage of separation from nature, we are looking for ways to re-establish our relationship with it. This is how we try to trigger a mechanism to restore human integrity and safety.

Another fragmentation is the separation of people from religion and the formation of a secular and a sacral sphere as relatively independent ones. This line of development leads man and mankind to the loss of meaning and purpose, to a valuable vacuum due to the lack of spiritual orientations. These losses and absences imply a lack of certainty about the valuation of human life. Returning to the value of religion is an attempt to restore the lost connection of man with eternal values. This is one of the significant ways to restore the safety of the direction of life.

The separation and differentiation of man from tradition fragments human world into traditional, modern and postmodern. This process leads to a loss of sense of roots, a loss of confidence about the continuity of existence. Losing the idea of „yesterday“ also breaks the idea of „tomorrow“. Therefore, after modernity,

the person finds that continuation is immanently connected with the support of tradition.

All these processes, which have led to the fragmentation of the world, society and man, reach their denial. Societies are fragmented by the growing inequality within and between societies. This leads to a loss of communication, to a loss of trust between the unequal countries and consequently leads to a loss of safety and security. Trust connects us with others and is not accidentally defined as the invisible axis of society. Trust is also defined as a “strategy to deal with uncertainty, chance and uncontrollability” [4, p. 31]. A widely shared idea in the scientific area is that trust is one of the foundations of social capital. So the fragmentation of our world leads to impairment of the social capital.

For the personality, the dysfunctions of fragmentation are manifested in the separation of biological, spiritual and social part of the personality and thus the loss of safety of the identity, i.e. the feeling of continuity and sameness [5].

After understanding the problem, an essential part of the concept is to look for possible outcomes, pathways and solutions. It is extremely difficult to distinguish the theoretical perspective from the applied direction. The reason for this is that any good practice should be based on a fundamental idea with which to form integrity. An easy outcome is to establish the illusory homogeneity of man and human communities with the highlighted values - tradition, religion, nature. Probably like all easy things, this is neither reasonable nor possible. There is nor a way to go back to the traditional way of life or back to natural existence. In other words, “the idea of a living entity is a quasi-idea, and it is doomed to be forever a quasi-idea” [6, p. 546]. In this case, awareness of constraints is a powerful tool of development.

Accepting the constraints does not mean denial, but even more persuasive realization of our relationships with eternal values, their appreciation and the search for our way through them. Of course, there are many security illusions on our way. For the person they are numerous, one of them is related to social networks as an imagined niche of psychological safety. Zygmunt Bauman, in an interview for the Spanish newspaper *El Pais* in 2016, noted that people use them not to open their horizons, but to form their own zone of comfort where the only sound they hear is the echo of their own voice. Thereby social networks became a trap, as the scientist defined them. Even stronger and brighter were his insights about contemporary reality as „Liquid modernity” and „Liquid life”. Our life is liquid because there is nothing stable and solid in it. That is why safety is one of our greatest existential problems.

For societies, some of the illusions of security are linked to the systems of social assurance and social support. Through them it is possible to create and reproduce the attitude that someone else has to provide your being. Safety is not deprivation of man of the struggle and responsibility for their own life and the lives of the people around him. The idea of safety should not put aside our natural resistance.

It is not accidental to think of Christian clerics that comfort and success are dangerous to man [7]. Mistaken use of safety can lead to trouble. The escape of controversy, not only does not bring harmony and balance, but also provokes them.

In this sense, safety at its various levels should be seen as a dynamic phenomenon, as a road, as a unity of safety and lack of safety. Perhaps, the lack of safety best defines what safety is. And our Euro-American so-called Western civilization has gone through the path of empiricism and rationalism, should well understand and define uncertainty. All of this gives us the cognitive basis for even more precise problematization of safety. Now, owing to our empirical and rationalist way, we can say that safety is achieved by constantly overcoming uncertainties.

Once again, defining safety is as completeness, as integrity, as unity with uncertainty. In this sense, it is possible to distinguish the everyday meaning of safety, which is opposed to freedom and involves a loss of freedom, from the understanding of safety as a dialectics of safety and lack of safety. Our relationships with eternal values best show these oppositions. In our secular world, the logic is that safety deprives you of freedom. At the same time, there is a religious logic that is paradoxical. The relationship with God and the dependence on God makes you free, just as the fear of God releases you from your other fears [8]. In this sense, the notion of safety must be perceived by cognitive senses that have grown beyond everyday meanings. Our orientation to these well-known, apparently clear phenomena will also depend on where we are on the path of seeking integrity.

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