

## NOÉMI VANDERSTEIN: Losses of human beings

### *Abstract – Summary*

Losses are essential in every human being's life. My goal is to make an attempt to introduce the main aspects of loss. I think that losses occur by two modes: in our cultural surroundings and in our identity. Culture plays an important role in people's lives, culture that we are born into. However, Otherness is a new field of investigating the individuals and of investigating the world at the same time. What is the end of losing culture? What is the end of losing Otherness? To reach the state of being a Subject is the unconscious desire of human beings' psyches. Every human being reaches a development in his thinking, and he becomes a Subject through his losses because these losses serve as profit at the same time.

### *1. Introduction*

In my publication, I look for the answer of the following question: 'What are the roles and the results of losses in human beings' lives?' I claim that the process of losses ends in profits which result in the becoming of the Subject.

Phenomenology, the philosophical school of Edmund Husserl examines how the human beings get to know reality. He says that the consciousness has an inner centre; there emerges an abstraction which is called the transcendental ego, and it separates itself from the level of reality with the activity of thinking. It refers to a disciplined study of consciousness from a first-person perspective (Husserl E., 1971).

I believe that human beings reach the state of identity when they can separate themselves from reality. By using language, the reality is broken up into two categories: the self and everything else. The child gets feedback that he is separate from Others, so it is the metaphor for social responses and environment.

According to Jacques Lacan, the primary repression is articulated in the mirror stage when the child has to give up the thought that he or she is identical with his mother. The loss of the Mother is the loss of the primary object. It is the first traumatic experience that must be repressed because our psyche is not able to stock negative experiences, so this trauma is sent to the unconscious. Following the primary repression, the child represses the desire to regain the mother and conforms to the rule of the father; and he is inserted into a symbolic order in the society (Webster R., 2002). I claim that the end of this process is to become a Subject.

Michel Foucault summarizes subjection as ideology and power never function through violence. They are exercised over free Subjects. He says that the individual has power through knowing things, and if we know something, we have the power. Ideology is a philosophical term. It is a mechanism which maintains cultural codes working by an interpellation to turn human beings into Subjects. *Interpellation is an operation in culture meaning that in power relations of society we are addressed by ideology. It makes cultural categories natural to us, and it operates through technologies of power. The human being subjects itself to ideology in order to survive in culture. We accept the cultural categories and oc-*

copy them because these are offered to us to make access to things which we desire (Gordon C. ed., 1981).

The technologies of power operate in society to situate the human being into Subject-position. The technologies of power have three main kinds: 1) dividing practices: they work to articulate reality to us in terms of binary positions; 2) institutionalisation of binarism: disciplines that regulate knowledge, they constitutionalize the binarism by legitimating them; 3) self-Subjection: human being is only an organism and should be turned into Subject, it is subordinated to the power relations (Rabinow P. ed., 1991; Gal J.–Janowszky S.–Juhasz-Fodor T., 2007). According to Sigmund Freud, Subject is a heterogeneous system consisting of two modalities: the unconscious and the conscious. The unconscious is the repressed region of primary processes. He adds that the social subject is constituted by the successful repression of primary desires through the realization of the Father's power and acceptance of the Father's rule. Jacques Lacan argues that the subject is constituted through losses, and the fundamental experience of the human being is that of lack (Webster R., 2002).

Attila Kiss summarizes Jacques Lacan's opinion that "The Subject is the product of language," and "The most fundamental experience of the Subject is the lack." (Kiss A.: *Who Reads? Postsemiotics*, 1995). I argue that Gertrud Szamosi is true in that the subordinated Subject, it is a common thing that people hide and suppress their feelings and they assert their desires on detours (Szamosi G.: *Postcoloniality*, 1996). I agree with Wolfhart Pannenberg in that the accomplishment of human beings' lives can be successful only if they help to the other people which results in the realization and the amplification of the human society (Pannenberg W., 1998).

I have two objectives in my thesis; first to investigate how human beings are influenced by their losses; second is to examine the most determining factors in losing something with the result of becoming a Subject. I claim that the loss of a human being's identity results in the profit of a new identity. The human being as a Subject is constituted through losses, and through these, the split Subject is constituted as a Subject which is subordinated to the rules of the culture he is born into.

Together with the 'Introduction,' with the 'Conclusion' and with the 'Literature,' my publication consists of five chapters. In Chapter 2, I show the power of the culture around human beings and the effect of the cultural influence we have to face to. When we deal with the topic of culture, we have to talk about the Otherness. It is an interesting theme because the meaning of Otherness is up to the point of view – as you can read it in Chapter 3.

In my paper, I use academic sources on these issues to explore how each factor influences the constitution of the Subject through losses. I mainly focus on secondary literature. These sources contain studies, articles in journals, personal experiences and observations.

The most important message of my thesis is what Judith Viorst suggests that "The loss is the price we have to pay for life. It is the source of our development and the source of our profit at the same time," and "The development is the sequence of the necessary losses lasting throughout life – the losses which end in profit." (Viorst J., 2002).

## ***2. Culture and Human Beings***

In this chapter of my work, I give an introduction of the relationship between culture and human beings. I claim that the most important factor of every individual is the culture that is around him. I show the cultural aspects of life in the world making an emphasis on my belief that culture determines human beings' lives and their subjectivity, too.

When I hear the word 'culture,' I always think of the world where I live in. I believe that babies bear into families which determine all their lives because together with their family, they also get a culture. They grow up in the traditions of their families and they accept these rules as their own. Everybody collects experiences about himself and about the world that is around him. People feel their senses, have experiences and insert them into their conceptual framework that their culture gives them.

I agree with Attila Kiss that the identity, the subjectivity of human being is a cultural production. He says that "the identity, the 'I', the subjectivity that you can have is limited and determined by the culture you live in." (Kiss A.: *An Introduction to Semiotics and English Studies*, 2001).

László L. Szigeti says that "The individual flounders in a many-sided society among cultures with the help of his own culture but it is possible that he himself is a hybrid which means that he has no independent and original culture, so he creates a mixed culture for himself from the cultures around him. This mixed culture is just his own." (Szigeti L. L., 2002). This opinion implies that there are several cultures in the world, and human beings live according to the rules of these cultures. So, the individual tries to find his own way by creating a new culture from the old ones. This new culture is a mix of the olds and it is just the Subject's own culture. Gertrud Szamosi's study on the topic of culture also suggests that a new culture is born from the mixing of different cultures (Szamosi G.: *Postcoloniality*, 1996).

I believe that people – or I can say human beings – become Subjects in the culture where they are born into. What is more, I have no doubt in that human beings become Subjects through losses, losses they suffer from their culture, from the society living around them, from the society living in their culture.

I think that Janice Kulyk Keefer is right when she claims that the substantial social, historical and cultural differences should not be neglected but they should be emphasised instead (Keefer J. K., 2002). This statement implies that there are differences among human beings originated from their society, from their history and from their culture. It is really important to show these differences instead of ignoring them. I agree with Karl Marx in that "The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness." (Clements R. E. ed., 1993).

J. W. Rogerson suggests that culture consists of three levels: Infrastructure, Structure and Superstructure. Infrastructure involves the production of food in connection to the environment of a people; Structure includes kinship systems and political organisations; and Superstructure has myth and religion in it (Clements R. E. ed., 1993). Dawn Thompson's opinion is that "In the nation, through the nation and against the nation, the Subject is constantly reconstructed." (Thompson D., 2002). However, I believe that in the culture, through the culture and against the culture, the Subject is constantly reconstructed.

I think that Michel Foucault is true in saying that "The ruling power of multiculturalism has an effect in families and in communities." (Thompson D., 2002). Multiculturalism is an expression I use for the cultures that are mixed around us. Families and communities consist of human beings so as culture has an effect on human beings, it also has an effect on the group of human beings.

We are born into a system called culture. I agree with Attila Kiss in that human beings are subjected to culture, so we turn into human beings by culture. It means that culture determines the process of becoming human beings in the way of offering different versions of reality, and offering the chance to choose from these versions (Kiss A.: *An Introduction to Semiotics and English Studies*, 2005).

As a conclusion, I have to emphasise that culture and human beings are closely related to each other. Culture makes an effect on human beings since culture is around the individuals. It suggests that our identity is constituted through culture which leads us to become Subjects.

### 3. The Otherness

With the Otherness-concept, my aim is to show to the reader a new way of analyzing human beings. The Otherness is a modern trend of the sciences of the twenty-first century. The Otherness and being Other raises some questions: What does it mean to be normal or dominant? Whether being normal and being dominant do mean the same? What does it mean to be dominant and what does it mean to be Other? Which one is the dominant: the dominant or the Other? Which one is the Other: the dominant or the Other?

When we speak about culture and society, we often make a difference between 'I' and the Other. This concept also raises some questions. Which one is the dominant: 'I' or the Other? Which one is the Other: 'I' or the Other? What makes a culture working: 'I' or the Other?

In my opinion, the above asked questions are not easy to be answered. Every human being is born into a culture and he accepts the dominant as normal. For him, everything that is beyond or opposite the dominant is non-normal – I say that it is the Other.

I agree with Miroslav Marcelli in becoming the Other is a challenge. It is a challenge causing that the human being revises the pictures made about himself, his thoughts and his beliefs, so he revises everything that makes his identity. It gives a feeling of a fight, of a revolution. It means that the participant does not remain the same. Nothing remains unharmed, nothing remains unbroken and nothing remains in health. It also can result in the returning of the willingness of becoming the Other. Becoming the Other is the risk of a game where the success means the loss of the former position (Marcelli M., 2006). Furthermore, I believe that the loss results in profit. Reaching the profit is the final step in the process of losing something. I argue that the loss consists of stages.

When we speak about people, we have to consider that every human being is full of emotions and is full of willingness. These facts suggest that we are influenced by ourselves and by our egos. Gertrud Szamosi claims that it is interesting to investigate how the ego and the Other make an effect on each other (Szamosi G.: *Postcoloniality*, 1996) with the scope of human beings have an attribute that they are able to identify with the Other from the aspect of emotions (Szamosi G.: *The Manicheus / Postcolonial Aesthetics*, 1996). I accept László L. Szigeti's statement that "The more closed a community is, the more backward it is, and vice versa: the more open and is ready to meet the strangers, is ready to meet the Others, the more developed a community is." (Szigeti L. L., 2002).

In our world, we can find some pairs of oppositions which give essential importance of understanding human beings. Some oppositions are the following: eyesight and blindness, hearing and silence, war and peace, young and old, traditional and modern, old and new, loss and profit, etc. I raise the question of 'Which is the dominant and which is the Other in each of these pairs?' In my opinion, both can be the dominant and both can be the Other. The exact position depends on the human being, it depends on the society and on the culture.

I agree with László L. Szigeti in that "The Otherness should not be oppressed, ignored and assimilated; on the contrary, it should be emphasised, shown and appreciated because human being becomes 'superior' (I mean becomes 'more') with the digression of the customary." (Szigeti L. L., 2002). This declaration is in harmony with Michel Foucault's

thought as “A dominant class isn’t a mere abstraction, but neither is it a pre-given entity. For a class to become a dominant class, for it to ensure its domination and for that domination to reproduce itself is certainly the effect of a number of actual pre-meditated tactics operating within the grand strategies that ensure this domination.” (Gordon C. ed., 1981).

Everybody and every action have a value in itself. It does not matter whether the person or the thing belongs to the category of the dominant or he belongs to the category of the Other. Above all, I believe what László L. Szigeti says: “Just because something is strange or deviate from the dominant and from the normative values, it also can represent a value in itself.” (Szigeti L. L., 2002).

To conclude, I make an emphasis on the fact that being dominant or being the Other cannot be distinguished because it is always culture- and society-dependant that which spectrum of the scale is called the dominant and which one is named as the Other. What is more, loss also appears, it appears in changing between these two groups. If you lose being dominant, you profit being the Other, and vice versa: if you lose being the Other, you profit being the dominant.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In this publication, I introduced the main aspects of loss in the outside world.

Being the Other is person-dependant. The science dealing with the Otherness involves the question of ‘Which one is the dominant and which one is the Other?’ I argue that two perspectives exist at the same time: if one of the human beings calls himself the dominant, the rest of the society is called the Other; and vice versa: if that human being is called the Other, the rest of the society is the dominant part.

Catherine Belsey argues that “The ‘identity,’ the subjectivity is not else than net and matrix of Subject-positions in which the different positions do not absolutely are in harmony with each other, contradiction can also occur among them.” (Belsey C., 1995). I call these contradictions as struggles. Human beings live their lives in struggles. They decide between tradition and modernity, between accepting of being blind, silent or not and between having the same identity or getting a new one.

Culture is one of the major influential factors in human beings’ lives in the way of becoming Subjects. Human being is an operationally closed system, and this system builds up its own reality only through interpretations. I agree with the statement I read in Catherine Belsey’s study which says that according to Louis Althusser “The Subject is not only a grammatical subject, not only the centre of different ventures, not only the author of his own actions and the person who takes the responsibility of his activity, but also a submitted human being, a Subject who bows before the prestige of the social formation.” (Belsey, C. 1995). As Szabolcs Csontos suggests the Subject is constituted through power, and “The Subject is determined by society and is not an integral whole closing to himself; on the other hand, it is not a completely amorphous human being.” (Csontos Sz., 1995).

Michel Foucault speaks about accepting the society and the culture around human beings and he claims that “The individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces.” (Gordon C. ed. 1981) According to Freud, a human being appears to behave in levels that he is not aware of, and that he does not control. Losses create splits in the psyche, and these splits result in human beings to become heterogeneous. Our rational consciousness is only one part of ourselves; there is another part: the unconscious that is not accessible to the rational thinking, however, this part greatly determines and influences us. (Webster R., 2002).

I argue that every human being becomes a heterogeneous Subject through his losses. He becomes a Subject as the result of losses. On the other hand, I believe that these losses also give profits to the individuals. The loss of culture involves the profit of a new culture. The loss of your ego equals with winning the position of the Other, and vice versa: losing the Otherness brings you a new ego. These factors play the most significant roles in the fact that losses and profits cannot be separated, and that the losses end for human beings in becoming a Subject.

All in all, I agree with Judith Viorst in saying that “We are not able to become self-governing, responsible people, who live in relationships and who are reflective, without losses.” (Viorst J., 2002). Losses involve profits as a development. This development suggests the human being as a Subject is constituted through losses, and through these the split Subject is constituted as a Subject which is subordinated to the rules of the culture he is born into.

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