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## **The Temporal Becoming of Human Beings**

### **I. Philosophical Perspectives upon Time and the Sense of Becoming**

The task of selecting the most relevant theories in the study of time is definitely a difficult one, as long as time has always been conceived in various contrastive and complementary ways. There are cultures that conceive it as 'moving' in either linear, cyclical or circular fashion, as being dynamic and progressive (in the sense that new goals and higher levels of achievement are linked to its passage), static or recurrent (stating that a move back in time is essential in order to maintain a basic set of values that identifies a given culture), among numerous other possible conceptions.

The objective interpretation of time as a process of becoming and not merely a form of human experience has strong support in common sense. We are conscious of our own organic and psychological growth in time. What we call self, person or individual is experienced and known only against the background of the succession of temporal moments and changes constituting one's biography. Such views date as far back as Heraclitus, who considered Becoming as the very essence of life. Moreover he believed that the logical nature of physical things is a series of different states in time and that it is not necessary for physical identity that these states be exactly alike. A human being is the same identical person all the time, although the body grows and changes its chemical building blocks. Therefore, a physics of things does not deny the time flow.

Our emotional response to the flow of time is largely determined by the irresistibility of its passing away. Reichenbach considers that there has always existed a positive attitude towards time flow, an affirmative emotional response to change and Becoming, for which the future is an inexhaustible source of new experiences and a challenge to our abilities to make the best of emerging possibilities.

### **II. The Dynamics of Becoming**

The starting point for the theory developed by Alexandrescu (1988) is stating that the human condition is that of becoming. The human being is subjected to biological becoming, just as any other animal

species, and to dimensional becoming, which is proper to humans. In becoming a member of a social group, in being placed on a certain position within that group, and in fulfilling his roles according to the conventions and rules imposed by the community, the individual turns into a 'persona'.

This process of becoming does not lead to the loss of identity of the individuals who are affected by it. On the contrary, the two dimensions of the human being remain the same. The persona may pass through different stages in its biological evolution and may assume several roles as a social being, but it essentially preserves its identity.

An important aspect to be highlighted is that the persona, free by its nature, is subjected to becoming and becoming at this level is actually history: the history of the making of the persona, of its integration into a social role and the history of its activity within a social group. It follows that there are two presences of history as a real dimension of the persona: an inner one, the history of the self, and an outer one, the history of the social group which the individual belongs to. In the end, the persona humanizes time through this historical dimension.

The anchoring to history also implies a persona's anchoring to culture as the persona is accepted to have a cultural dimension added to four others: rational, value, ethical and creative. Being an essential part of the persona, culture continually shapes it, by producing simple, energetic and spontaneous personas (in primitive cultures) or by stimulating the multiplicity of the self (in more evolved cultures). Thus, man becomes a cultural being, a creator and user of spiritual values, of which the ethical code seems to be essential to human improvement.

### **III. The Human Being between Permanence in Time and Variability**

The emergence of time into the foreground of modern consciousness is reflected in literature, too. Time in literature always refers to elements of time as given in experience: the consciousness of time as it is part of the vague background of experience or as it enters into the texture of human lives. Its meaning is sought only within the context of this world of experience or within the context of a human life as the sum of these experiences. Time so defined is private, personal, subjective or psychological. There is another way of thinking about time as public, objective, which we use, with the aid of watches, calendars, etc. in

order to synchronize our private experience of time for the purpose of social action and communication.

The experience of time is characterized not only by successive moments and multiple changes, but also by something which endures within succession and change. From a psychological point of view, continuous flow and duration are often said to describe the aspect of extension and duration of the momentary experience of time against the single, abstract point defining the moment of physical time. Therefore, time has the quality of duration because some function of the self endures through time. Or, conversely, we gain a primitive notion of an enduring, identical self in and through the experience of temporal duration.

According to Ricoeur, human identity is an oscillation between absolute permanence in time and variability. If the two poles manifest themselves as irreconcilable tendencies within the same person, the risk is that of annihilation. Bearing several names may turn from an act of sinking into nothingness into an act of extreme endurance and the satisfaction of preserving oneself is the best possible reward. The evolution of Dickens's David Copperfield implies passing through different stages, in which he is bestowed upon various appellations. Despite the preservation of his "gentlemanly" status, David runs the risk of dissolution of his core identity, under the avalanche of names he gets in his contact with the others. His decision to run away from London to find his aunt and put himself under her protection will alter the course of his life. From this point on, his identity is being negotiated by an odd "couple of guardians" and the "new life, in a new name", that is Trotwood Copperfield becomes fully acceptable.

The binary opposition between disrespectful misnaming by Mrs. Crupp ("Mrs. Crupp always called me Mr. Copperfull: firstly, no doubt, because it was not my name; and secondly, I am inclined to think, in some indistinct association with a washing-day") and over-naming by the messenger of a letter from Agnes point at the constant dialectics of naming. However, he reaches stability and achieves an identity that stands the test of time.

To conclude, we think that the implications of defining concepts such as time, becoming and persona dimensions, as well as the positioning of a fictional character between permanence in time and variability led to a personalized conception of the temporal becoming of human beings, be they real or fictional.

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