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Postmodernity and the Solidarity Dilemma – a Challenge for the Contemporary Couple

Iulian APOSTU¹

Abstract: The analysis of the existing social researches in the field of conjugal couple shows that the contemporary social mentality still values solidarity as being an important value for the conjugal functionality. However, the increasingly frequent social tendencies show that solidarity alters more and more into becoming a type of solidarity “of the other towards myself”. It gets consistency up to the extent in which it is attributed to the other, not to one’s self. Therefore, from an individualist perspective, solidarity appears eminent understood as being the other’s moral responsibility. This new orientation tends to reconceptualize solidarity which is being pertained the very fusional aspects in favour of those related to the personal ideal. The reason to stay together no longer involves solidarity of purposes or mutual ideals, the partner becomes means of resource for fulfilling the personal ideals and the coherence of the new solidary orientations derives from the extent to which the other also fulfills his individual ideals through his partner. Thus, solidarity is no longer substantiated by commonly developed and fulfilled values, but it emerges as a consequence of individual fulfillment through the other. This article aims to present a possible theoretical explanation of social mentalities that could explain functionality through a structural reconfiguration of solidarity.

Keywords: solidarity; conjugal individualism; conjugality; conjugal values; postmodernity.

Introduction

A new orientation in conjugality tends to become more and more visible. The tendencies of conjugal individualism underlined by valuing the self, gradually enter into a competition with the classical values of conjugal solidarity. Solidarity becomes a duty of the other and the conjugal fusion is directly influenced by the way in which the individual manages to *incorporate* the other into himself.

Today, solidarity is doubled by a continuous reduction of social imperatives. In its traditional form, solidarity had a mechanic form, the

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individual being absorbed by the community and its rules, fact which made the imperative resources to condition him from three directions: traditional, theological and legal. Modernity brings a new conceptualization of the function of solidarity – organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1998). The individuals have their own personality, solidarity being the expression of common values that guarantee happiness and fulfillment. Thus, the tradition and religious consciousness lose their imperative character, modernity reducing the pressure of the community only at the level of legal requirements.

In postmodernity, solidarity gradually turns into individualistic landmarks of conjugal behaviour. It can rather be understood as a form of self-solidarity. This is the reason why “current postmodern ethics relativizes the moral values by relating them to the human referential” (Sandu, 2015, p. 40). The fusion with the life-partner diminishes, becoming a resource of individual fulfillment. This makes the imperatives specific to this social stage to decrease even more, up to the level of legislative simplification and associated procedures.

The challenge of contemporaneity is the way in which the individuals manage their cognitive dissonance perceived as a difference between organic solidarity and self-solidarity.

Conjugal individualism – new benchmarks in conjugality

The transformations that the family experiences are legislative or statutory. The legislation states today a greater equity between the partners. However, this democratization of the partners in a couple comes along with a transformation of its social role (Blöss, 2002, p. 72). Nowadays, the relationships tend to produce more families than the families tend to produce relationships, the individuals no longer being strained by culturally pre-established rules regarding conjugality, gender reports or role distribution.

The couple can be understood as a mutual fulfillment, but not through their fusion, but in individualism, each partner wishing to preserve as much as possible their personal identity because they do not want to suffer from accepting the other’s constraints. Him or her tries to live a double life, not in the sense of two conjugal lives, but rather a conjugal life associated with a personal life (de Singly, 2000b).

Separating the conjugal life from the personal life shows a new dimension of solidarity. It is no longer a couple’s creation, a need of redefining the conjugal identity; it remains a personal projection which

answers to a set of individual needs. It rather calls for the other's solidarity, and less to the solidarity towards the other.

De Singly focuses on the imaginary dimension of the social facts in the detriment of the symbolic and the real dimensions. Therefore, the family is reduced to *the horizontal*. Widely speaking, the sociological reality of this type of family limits to a small part of developing the interactions, and it has no other stake than the validation of personal identity (de Singly, 2000a).

In the sociological approach, the individualization of social relationships marks a process of un-affiliation, of diminishing the social relationships. The individuals matter more for themselves than for the other. They become aware of their role in defining the other, and in response, they use these resources to self-achievement through the other.

In this regards, the issue of ethics must be reconsidered. Reporting to external principles sabotages the individual development, and implicitly the personal fulfillment (Caras, 2014). The personal fulfillment sabotages the classic solidarity because it no longer involves achieving mutual values, but some strictly individual. Therefore, the functional coherence of the conjugal relationships is related to accepting the other as individual and not reporting to a set of mutual values as a result of conjugal negotiation.

Conclusions

Lipovetsky states that the postmodern society is also post-moralist (Lipovetsky, 2006). The social duty gradually goes down, in favour of personal fulfillment. Conjuality is subject to a different test of functionality – it needs to produce personal happiness, but also happiness for the partner, each of them in a personal context. Solidarity is no longer subject to mutual values because the fusion between the partners is maintained by mutually fulfilling certain personal values, dreams, ideals. Thus, solidarity is reconstructed with more autonomy, but it is being robbed of elements from the old fusional structure (mutual ideals, conjugally negotiated values, etc.).

All these show us that the new orientation of what we could call self-solidarity doesn't become the preamble of a risk of de-institutionalization because it doesn't exclude the communion with the other; the new solidarity is analysed and appreciated in a personal context, through reporting to their own desires, and the fusion is understood as an effect of mutually fulfilling these needs.

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