

**RIGIDITY OF THE *GENERALIZED OTHER***  
**NARROWNESS OF THE *OTHERNESS* AND *DEMODERNIZATION***  
**IN THE FRAMEWORK OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM**

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**Abstract.** *Author of this article uses symbolic interactionism, social psychology and psychoanalysis to analyze modernization and demodernization phenomena. Due to application of Mead's symbolic interactionism, Author manifests how the dominance of the Generalized Other is present in the both phenomena. Author argues that in the process of modernization Super-Ego is being invested into modern institutions as the Otherness. This Otherness functions in the forms of automatisms and "recursions in the past" that postcolonial societies often demonstrate at the margins of modernity.*

**Keywords:** *symbolic interactionism, social psychology, psychoanalysis, otherness, modernization/demodernization*

From a sociological viewpoint, if *modernization* and *demodernization* phenomena wish to be seen as components of a pair whose elements are one the inverse of the other, then it is need to consider a minimal but rigorous theoretical construct which includes and explains them as such. For instance, the psycho-sociological construct of *Generalized Other*, as originally formulated by George Herbert Mead within *symbolic interactionism* context, might be able to accomplish this end.

### **Symbolic Interactionism**

To explain the fashion in which internal mental world is in relation with the external and social world of objects, events and persons, William James introduced the fundamental notion of *Self*, the primary datum of psychology, the articulation point between the individual (who knows) and the society (who is known), in which he identifies two main components or agencies, the *I* (the aware) and the *Me* (the known); they usually are distinct entities but cannot be separated of each other. The former refers to the aware subject, able to undertake own initiatives in regard to external reality besides to reflect on herself or himself; the latter is those parts of the *Self* which are known to the *I*, the objective and empirical aspects of the *Self*, what I see and perceive of myself, as well the manner in which I look to myself. The agency *Me* contains those constituent and real parts which build the known *Self*, including the material characteristics of the *bodily Me* (e.g., the perceived body and its self-representation by individual, the various things owned by the individual, etc.), the social ones of the *extracorporeal-social Me* (i.e., how the subject sees herself or himself with

respect to her or his relationships with others) and those spiritual of the *spiritual Me* (to be aware of herself or himself, able to think and reflect on herself or himself, to respond to given psycho-physiological mechanisms, to feel ethic and moral instances, and so forth). For James, everyone organizes her or his own *Me* according to a hierarchic structure which assigns different values and estimations to the various material, social and spiritual components constituting the *Me*. James puts the bodily *Me* at the lowest level, the Spiritual *Me* at the highest level, and the extracorporeal-social *Me* at the intermediary levels, so providing a rigid scheme to the Self construct. The rigidity or flexibility issues of the Self, will be a central problem of the next social psychology.

After James, Charles H. Cooley stated that only through social interaction the individual will develop the knowledge of herself or himself and the feeling of own identity. In this regard, Cooley introduced the notion of *looking glass self* to mean the basic idea according to which we are the result of the way in which others perceive us and work out an opinion upon us. Therefore, the awareness and esteem of ourselves arise in what we see mirrored from others, on the basis of the various appreciations, opinions, biases and presuppositions of the given membership group in which an individual lives, that is to say, of who is deemed to be relevant, important and meaningful (*significant others*), until up to mould our own sense of reality on the basis of their social-cultural models.

On the basis of James and Cooley ideas, Mead further deepen the social matrix of the development of the Self. He stated that the configuration of consciousness (of own Self) may be thought as the result

of the cooperative action of either the capability of producing as well as responding to the various symbols and the competence of undertaking the behaviours of others. According to Mead, the Self does not pre-exist at the birth, because the human mental functions begin to run only when two indispensable conditions occur, precisely when an individual is able to produce and respond to *symbols* (symbolic function), whence to symbolically appoint the objects of her or his environment, as well as when he or she is able to undertake behaviours and attitudes of others (*significant others*). Only when the individual is able to make reference to the objects of her or his own environment through symbols, then the Self starts to have a private and autonomous existence. From this moment onwards, the Self is one of these objects, and its minimal required components are the *name* and the personal pronouns with their use, i.e., I, me, my, and so forth. Thanks to the language, Self achieves its status of object. Indeed, with these basic linguistic terms, it will be possible to distinguish and identify the Self as one of the many objects of her/his own world. Before acquiring effective linguistic capabilities, every human performs reciprocal actions with others, mainly made by gestures which lead to the accomplishment of the act.

On the basis of Darwinian evolution theory, Mead considers *gesture* as the key of any social act. This gestural conversation has also a symbolic nature and precedes the proper language, becoming just this latter when the symbolic meanings conveyed by gestures are commonly accepted and shared within a given social group according to an organized and collective representational system which will structurate the mind of each group's

member. So, the individual is able to give, through interpretation, a meaning to her or his own gesture and those of others, as well as forecasting consequences and controlling related actions and responses. Accordingly, when an individual may intentionally use the pre-existent symbolic systems commonly shared within those social groups in which he or she is involved, then he or she has acquired a *Mind*, i.e., the chief mediating symbolic means between the individual and the others. The more the language enriches, the world of objects richer and enlarger, so comprising objects of everyday life, physical things and phenomena, relationships, and so on.

Language, meant in its widest sense, is the chief tool allowing each individual to take part to a given *social action*. The social organization of the action is closely related to either the unavoidable dimension of social hierarchy and its control, and the subjective usage of social norms. Every object undergoes to valuations, comparisons, and expectations. This also concerns the Self that, in such a manner, it is the result of the various behaviours, evaluations, comparisons, and expectations of others. These latter – who surround the child puts inside a certain social group where the main communication means is the language – adopt certain behaviours in her or his regard, and just these behaviours are the basis for the inferences that child performs with respect to the particular type of object who he or she is deemed to be. In this way, child shall become more or less differentiated with respect to either the others and herself or himself. The capability of developing further the Self, depends on both the intrinsic

meaning and organization of the family (or else, the caregivers), of the social groups, and of the community, these latter all together considered.

Consciousness, therefore, is not a pre-social endowment that distinguishes humans from animals, but rather it is the outcome of the interpersonal interaction allowing both the communication through meaningful symbols and the capability of individual to identify oneself with others and looking herself or himself from that standpoint. This takes place through the sequential performance of two main processes: a *simple play* and an *organized game*. Through a *simple play*, the child undertakes, one after the other, roles, attitudes and behaviours of the individuals who are in touch with her or him, learning and regulating the development of her or his own Self, introducing into herself or himself the organization made by the other personalities (so giving rise to the *Significant Others*). He or she plays in doing mother, father, policeman or policewoman, teacher, fireman, doctor, and so on; often, also animal behaviours are imitated. In this first phase, for instance, the social role is loosely interiorized, starting to become an object of herself or himself as she or he sees herself or himself just from the role that she or he is undertaking, for example playing to buy something that herself sells to her if, for instance, she has undertaken the role of mother. But, in this first phase, the interiorization of the given social role is only partial, that is to say, the child is able to build up only partial traits of her or his Self, not organically joined together. In the second phase of the organized game, instead, the child acquires the capability to undertake all the possible roles (*role-taking*), attitudes and behaviours of all the others involved in a common activity with her or him.

He or she will be able to coordinate the social task required by the role undertook by him or her.

Differently from the first phase, where the child undertakes all the roles, attitudes and behaviours in a sequential, automatic and indiscriminate manner, at most temporally ordered, in the second phase instead the child must possess and interiorize, at the same time, all these roles, attitudes and behaviours of the others, which must be owned in herself or himself. In this last event, in some way, he or she should interiorize all these roles, attitudes and behaviours of all the participating members of the given game in which he or she is involved. Only in this latter phase, therefore, all the partial components of the Self, already acquired in the first phase, may be harmoniously organized to give rise a unitary, organic and even more mature and structured Self in dependence on the related reactions and responses of the these others. In this manner, child will acquire and internalize in herself or himself the set of all the perceived roles, attitudes and behaviours of all the others who are in touch with her or him, so giving rise to the *Generalized Other*, say , that is to say, the individual expression of the explicit and structured responses of all the other members of the given social group, the universalization of the process of undertaking roles, attitudes and behaviours of the others, so that the Generalized Other is the set of all the roles, attitudes and behaviours of the whole social group. Furthermore, once acquired this latter, he or she should be able, in dependence on his or her degree of free will, to intentionally (hence, individually) choose some members belonging to his

or her Generalized Other, to give rise the subset of the *Significant Others*, say, for him or her.

Therefore, the type, the qualitative and quantitative features and the related amplitudes either of and , just depend on the modalities and forms of development of these two Meadian phases of the simply play and of the organized game, with a particular attention to the second one. Mead defines Generalized Other as the community or the organized social group that, perceived by individual, allows her or him to build up and structure the unity of her or his own Self. The constitution of the Generalized Other is a chief undertaking act of roles, attitudes and behaviours, which is therefore realized in its widest universality. Thanks to this last universality feature, the individual acquires an objectivity skill: in fact, with this basic process of integration, inclusion and participation to a given community or social group, the individual is sure that world appears to the others as it appears to her or him. In such a manner, he transcends her or his own personal experience and, just thanks to various forms of communication (among which is language), he or she discovers that his or her experience is shared by others, and with reciprocal comparisons, he or she becomes able to distinguish his or her private experience from the public one. In a few words, undertaking roles, attitudes and behaviours of the Generalized Other, the individual becomes an organic, integrated and included aware member of the given communities or social groups with which he or she is in touch. The social life is thus founded, interpreted and established upon the set of the social interpersonal relationships, as well as on the roles, attitudes and behaviours which such a set gives rise (Doise et al., 1980;

Ferrarotti, 2011; Palmonari, 1989; Waters, 1994; Palmonari et al., 2002; Contarello & Mazzara, 2002; Gallino, 2006).

Roles, attitudes and behaviours of others, organized and implemented into the Self, give rise the *Me*, that is to say, the 'rational' part of Self which reflects the social structure. The *I*, instead, is the creative and reconstructive part of the Self, built upon the *Me*, the principle of personal action, thanks to which the individual is not fully alienated and uniquely determined by society, but he or she may act upon the same social structure in which he or she lives, with an extremely variable degree of change depending on many variables. The Self springs out from the interactions between *I* and *Me*, which are its reciprocally correlated and inseparable founding parts. The basic dialogue between these two agencies, is a transposition, at the individual level, of the various processes which link together each individual with the others, and their reciprocal interactions. The manifestation of the Self, thus, always entails the presence, current or past, of some *other*, since it cannot exist any normal psychic experience of herself or himself simply provided by ourselves. In fact, vegetals and animals only react to their environment, without the possibility of making any experience of themselves. Furthermore, it is well-known to which severe pathological conditions of psychic deconstruction every human being incurs when is subjected to extreme conditions of isolation. Indeed, in many case of psychoses, *Me* agency is quite frail, or not functioning, or else not grasped by individual, with a net predominance of a non-controlled *I*. The *Me*, as is the personal reflection of society or community, becomes a convergence point of many and often contradictory

social expectations, so that the crucial relations between *Me* and *I* lead to a mediation between conformism and innovation, between impulsive responses and controlled ones. Mead furthermore claimed that both components of the Self, i.e., the objective (with censorship functions) *Me* and the subjective (individual action promoting under *Me* control) *I*, may be empirically picked up. The study of the *Me* is the comprehension of herself or himself as object, while the study of the *I* is the knowledge that every subject has of her or his own experiences of continuity, distinction, volition and reflection on herself or himself. Mead's work has casted the foundations for the psycho-social study of *Self* (Doise et al., 1980; Brede, 1980; Conti & Principe, 1989; Palmonari, 1989; Waters, 1994; Palmonari et al., 2002; Contarello & Mazzara, 2002; Gallino, 2006).

For Mead, the consciousness has therefore a social origin. The child observes and undertakes roles, behaviours and attitudes of the others, especially those showed toward herself or himself, so inferring to what classification type of individuals he or she belongs, in respect to the eyes of others. As said above, the Self arises when the individual accrues the capability of becoming object to herself or himself. This takes place by means of the primary process of undertaking roles, attitudes, behaviours and perspectives of others. To be precise, as already said above, the configuration of consciousness may be thought as due to the *internalization* (so providing the Meadian *Me*) of: *i*) the roles, attitudes and behaviours that living community, or its sectors, have manifested with respect to either her or him, and other subjects belonging or not to this community, but however in touch with her or him (*Generalized Other*); *ii*) the customs, norms and

rules prescribed by the living community that human being has learned to accept and generalize by means of the development of different roles and behaviours as well as interpreting the roles and behaviours of other persons, and acting on her or him by the influence of a certain historical series of *Significant Others*, accordingly determined. The latter include every individual, or group of individuals, who, as inserted into a certain net of established social relations, plays, or has played in the past, a social-cultural role having special and remarkable importance as well as relevance for a given human being until up to be able to modify or shape her or his behaviours, and, in certain situations, the related social actions. As said above, the Generalized Other is meant, by Mead, as the whole community or all the organized social groups, which provide the Self's unity to each individual member; the roles, attitudes and behaviours of the Generalized Other are nothing but the roles, attitudes and behaviours of the whole community or social group. With the undertaking of the attitudes and behaviours of the Generalized Other (role-taking), together its related symbolisms, the individual becomes an organic, included and aware member of the society.

Thanks to Generalized Other, the social process influences roles, behaviours and attitudes of the individuals involved in it, who, in turn, partially contribute subjectively to develop such a process. Thus, the Self is mainly a process which arises from the past (i.e., social-cultural memory, which is deeply rooted in every human being) and builds up with the interactions and contacts of the individual with other individuals belonging to her or his community, so mirroring ideas, judgements, social-cultural

models, ideas and ethics that the given community or social group provides to her or him. As recalled above, the Self cannot yet manifest itself without the presence of some other, that is to say, its existence necessarily relies on the *Alterity* or *Otherness* (see later), precisely on the general reference frames provided by the society or community which is always symbolically present in the mind of every individual or member of it, through the *Me* agency. To be aware of herself or himself, an individual must interiorize the roles, attitudes and behaviours of others to control the actions who he or she is undertaking. Nevertheless, the (creative) *I* has either the individual function to subjectively face and reply to the *various* social-cultural agencies, roles, manners and instances internalized through the *Me*, trying possibly to modify them, and imprinting a personal character to every member of a community or social group, who has internalized its roles, behaviours and attitudes by means of communication with others. As said above, the communication among members of a given social group, takes place thanks to the occurrence of the *language* which employs commonly shared organized symbols and which are understood just thanks to a mediated capacity to use symbols that Mead, as said above, calls *Mind* (Doise et al., 1980; Palmonari, 1989; Assmann, 1997; Palmonari et al., 2002; Contarello & Mazzara, 2002; Gallino, 2006).

### **Psychoanalysis and Sociology**

Notwithstanding that, there may exist different social groups to which a given individual belongs or, however, is in touch, and which may often provide contradictory or antagonist roles, attitudes or behaviours, within

Generalized Other, along the route of formation of the Self. Mead has provided scant answers to this last question, to whose lack perhaps psychoanalysis might supply. Indeed, some psychodynamic notions, tools and concepts, amongst which is the *identification* process, enable to understand and explain how an individual may conform or adhere to social-cultural models, customs and traditions. Likewise, the psychoanalysis, making appeal to certain defence mechanisms suitably extended from individuality to collectivity, may concur to explain in which fashions *institutional constraints*, besides to contain and restrain human drives, are able to produce heterogeneities and make distinguishing individual differences, which allow to go beyond conformism. But, importantly, Mead reconnects institutions to his concept of *Me*. Indeed, an *institution*, according to Mead, is meant as the collective organization of a certain set of roles, attitudes and behaviours commonly shared and symbolically recognized by each member through her or his *Mind*, hence internalized by means of the *Me* agency which will determine, regulate and control (often unconsciously) the consequent social action and conduct; accordingly, the *I*, in its relationships with the *Me*, will provide the awareness agency. In passing, we recall that the influence of culture and society in the formation of human personality, from a psychoanalytic standpoint, has been above all studied by neo-Freudians and anthropologists of the *culture and personality* trend, amongst whom are E. Fromm, K. Horney, V. Kardiner, R. Linton and Margaret Mead, for instance through the introduction and use of the central notion of *basic personality* and its multimodalities. Furthermore, many relationships amongst the theoretical construct of Generalized Other and the notion of Freudian

Super-Ego exist, and, in this regard, particularly interesting and useful is, above all, Talcott Parsons interpretation and use of Freudian psychoanalysis in theoretical sociology.

Along this line of thought, on the other hand, there also exist further strict relationships amongst the constructs of Generalized Other and Freudian Super-Ego, even to reach the ideological notion of *national identity*. For instance, due to the chiefly unconscious nature of the Meadian *Me*, a possible link between the Freudian Super-Ego and the Generalized Other might be, for instance, identified just through the Meadian *Me* agency upon which, as we have just seen above, relies the notion of social institution, so being able to justify its deep unconscious features as, for instance, claimed by Claude Lévi-Strauss, who had already spoken and treated of an unconscious structure of social institutions (Pagnini, 1977; Mueller, 1978; Doise et al., 1980; Brede, 1980; Carotenuto, 1992). In a few words, along the axis Parsons-Mead, just due to the close relationships between the Generalized Other and the Meadian *Me*, we are able to consider those deep and unavoidable (collective) unconscious features which link together Freudian Super-Ego, Generalized Other and *Me* agencies in account for the possible unconscious relationships which join together collective (official and, above all, non-official) institutions and organizations with the formation of individual personality and its action, and vice versa. Since second half of 20th century, many studies of sociology have pointed out the relevance of certain unconscious aspects underlying institutions and laws (Contarello & Mazzara, 2002: pp. 74-77). We are of the opinion that such possible unconscious aspects should not be fully

negligible at a sociological level simply because social-political organizations, institutions and structures are however made by individuals who act and think according to their wills, desires and drives, even commonly and socially shared by a community. This is partially supported, for instance, by those postcolonial studies on the persistence of past traces of previous colonial dominations in those modern states where however related decolonization processes taken place. This stands out the importance to take into account, in terms of a historical-dialectic relation, past colonial situations in understanding, at any level, the current or present setting of any state which may be classified as an ex-colony. So, the unconscious realm, as depositary of the archaic dimensions of human existence, is under the thin layer of civility, so underdetermining contemporary life (Bastide, 1972; Turkle, 1978; Collins, 1980; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994; Goodrich, 1995; 1996; Goodrich & Carlson, 1998; Contarello & Mazzara, 2002; Cuhe, 2004; Armstrong & Obholzer, 2005; Mellino, 2005; Meloni, 2005; Dei, 2012; Lanteigne, 2012; Matera & Biscaldi, 2012a).

### **Formalizing modernization/demodernization phenomena**

On the other hand, many of the above concepts, in first place those concerning the others, may be usefully related with the wider and complex notion of *Alterity* or *Otherness*, which refers to what is *other* from that is given as one, as identical, as subject, and as person. Thus, alterity is a basic and crucial notion, dating back to Aristotle, closely related to these latter and inseparable from them (Pagnini, 1977; Laplanche, 1999; Abbagnano, 2008; Aime, 2008; Costa, 2011; Kilani, 2011): with respect to what is given

as one, it is indicative of multiplicity (*ontological alterity*); with respect to the identical, it is the opposite (*logical alterity*); with respect to the subject (Ego), it is the object (Alter) (*epistemological alterity*); and, with respect to the person (Ego), it is the other, or the Other (Alter) (*existential or transcendental alterity*). This polisemantics of the notion of alterity, gives rise, therefore, to a founding problem of philosophy because such a term entails the difficult task of establishing all the possible relationships between the main constitutive terms of the Being, so that such a really crucial problem, dialectically refers as well to the total unity of these last basic constitutive elements of alterity, as well as to an integration of their various meanings. So, in rigorous terms, we might not separate sharply one type of alterity from the remaining ones (Michele F. Sciacca). However, we are particularly interested in that alterity's term which refers to the person, namely the *existential alterity*, in which the notion of *Self* is placeable, but in general the complex Meadian dynamics between the constitutive and inseparable elements *I* and *Me* within *Self*, reflects and comprises almost all the above terms of aspects of the alterity: for instance, the dialectic and inseparable relations between *I*, which is the subjective part of the *Self*, and *Me*, which is the objective part of the *Self*, reflects the epistemological alterity, while the attendance of the Generalized Other with respect to the *Self* reflects almost all the remaining aspects of Alterity that, as seen above, may have a pluralistic sense due to its wide meaning variegation whose aspects or terms are all potentially or implicitly, universally available, establishable and actualizable. What we wish to mainly point out in this contribution, is a possible correlation between the Alterity and its semantic variegation on the one hand – this being meant as more or less

'institutionally' established, actuated and actualized, collectively and largely recognized, more or less equally guaranteed and suitably available – and the modernization-demodernization phenomena on the other hand, correlation which is established inside the symbolic interactionism framework by means of the contributions of either psychoanalysis and social psychology. The Generalized Other, is nothing but the set of those terms of Alterity which are, within a given social-cultural context actualized, established and available in a certain historical moment considered together its legacy (i.e., its social-cultural memory), so that we may write . Finally, the set of Significant Others, is then individually chosen, more or less freely and knowingly, among the possible elements of, even individualistically acquired (by *Me*) but at unconscious level, so that formally . Therefore, . Any collectively organized community or group is basically called *to institute*, or to establish, just by means of those which will be said to be its *public institutions*, those elements of the set which will give rise to the individually available (albeit unconsciously acquired by *Me*) from which, then, each individual member will choose, again more or less freely and knowingly, via Meadian *Me*, her or his set of Significant Others, so allowing the acquisition of her or his social-cultural patterns with which her or his *I* will be in dialectic relationship (with the *Me*) to build up her or his own *Self*. This last, as said above, builds up upon the acquired *Me*, with which the *I* will then enter in dialectic and inseparable relation, the former being just provided by that, in turn, arises from the available . From that, the primary importance of the latter for the rising and building of the *Self*, the number, nature, structure and the reciprocal

interrelations of its subsequent components depending just on the variety of, hence of .

Thus, the range of the set of all the Significant Others enables the personal rising, acquisition and development of the more or less pluralistic sense of *Otherness* (or *Alterity*) – as seen above – provided by public or collective institutions, in dependence on its amplitude, heterogeneity, diversification, flexibility and variety of composing elements considered together with their interrelations. The larger is the set of the institutionally recognized, actualized and rightly settled, terms available of the Otherness, the wider is the series of possibilities can be individually chosen, via , to get . This set of Significant Others, may give rise therefore to a formal structure whose composition and dimensions might be formally characterized also in terms of dynamical system theory, for example following Lévi-Strauss' use of thermodynamic notions in working out his theory of *cold* and *hot societies*, and the related theory of progress (Remotti, 1971; Nannini, 1981). In any case, this formal internal parametric characterization of the Otherness (or Alterity) by means of the individual series of Significant Others , in turn may imply a further, possible formal characterization of the individual Generalized Other , as it contains the former, that is, . So, we are inclined to think that modernization-demodernization phenomena might be influenced by this possible formal parametrization of the Generalized Other by means of the series of the Significant Others . In this regard, we are also disposed to think formally that a *paucity* of the series of the Significant Others , as well as a *rigidity* of the Generalized Other , or else a certain *narrowness* of the sense of Alterity

(or Otherness) or again a shrinkage of the set of its terms (as seen above), are all sufficient conditions which lie at the early and deep structural bases of demodernization phenomena because, for example, such formal conditions may shrink the variety and nature of the dualistic and dialectic relationships between *I* and *Me*, i.e., the unavoidable basis for building up own *Self*, with a consequent flattening towards the latter (conformism), while a narrowness of the Otherness, anyway institutionally imposed, would surely entail a scant assortment of the Generalized Other (i.e., *Me*) individualistically acquirable, whence a shortness of the series of the Significant Others, as for example surely implied by a social-cultural-political institutional lacking just related with . Therefore, deficiency, rigidity or unilaterality of collective institutions are conditions which would imply a narrowed sense of the already polisemantic Alterity (or Otherness) and vice versa, hence a rigidity of the Generalized Other, whence a poorness of the series of the Significant Others, that is to say, demodernization pushes.

Often, restraints or limitations to modernization and progress rely on *unconscious* places, on which, as said above, lean public institutions themselves (Lévi-Strauss and others). On the other hand, possible unconscious phenomena may be also contemplated within this our framework just through the unconscious features of the Generalized Other, individually belonging to the Meadian *Me*, if one takes, for instance, into consideration what has been said above on the relationships and the many common points between the *Me* agency and the last Freudian conception of Super-Ego agency. In this respect, as a first example, we would like to

look at that particular sociological phenomenon of persistence, in the social-cultural memory (also meant in the sense of Jan Assmann (1997)) of *local unconscious vestiges* regarding public institutions and general law, as witnessed for example by the meaningful and emblematic case study made by Mikhail M. Minakov on *post-Soviet demodernization* (Minakov, 2015), who has opened, for first, an international talk just on this phenomenology which deserves further considerations and investigations. Indeed, notwithstanding the appreciable efforts toward modernization *explicitly* claimed by post-Soviet constitutions of 1990s, beyond twenty years later, these claims of novelty have been replaced with the *implicit* search for the old, the comeback of the “unburied past” which had not been properly reflected upon, within a cyclic circuit in which modernization and demodernization phases alternate of each other. This, according to Minakov, is just due to an unexpected *rigidity* of Soviet society whose modernization did not lead to the full elimination of the traditional forms of life – which, in our terms, have lain tacit or dormant, that is to say, unconscious – characterized by recurring disruption forces throwing post-Soviet societies from attempts of fast modernization back to neo-traditionalist regimes referring to archaic values, rules and practices, even to be similar to certain ones dating back to the medieval period, as a kind of unconscious persistence of vestiges of ancient values, rules and practices (mainly by enculturation); this, in perfect coherence with that trend of postcolonial studies, just mentioned above, which is turned to identify, in the current setting, the still present traces of past dominators politics and institutions of those countries which have been variously involved in colonization historical processes (Mellino, 2005). The main

common features of post-Soviet *archaization* can be just seen in comparison of related post-Soviet regimes and institutes. Minakov points out just the paradoxical behaviour of these processes, i.e., modernization leading to new traditional rules, directly related with a kind of “track of history” seen as a failure of reforms, revolutions and other modernizing forms of political creativity and innovation. This is a remarkable and emblematic instance of how an institutional lack, i.e., a narrowness in the official actuation of the Otherness, may entail or promote a demodernization phenomenon whose early origins should be retraced in the local history of a given region. This because of the deep and tangled spatial-temporal structure of demodernization phenomena.

All this seems enough to corroborate what has been proposed in this contribution about the pivotal role played by Otherness (with its related more or less individualistic constructs and ) and its official institutional actuation and establishment, in trying to formally mould modernization-demodernization phenomena, although in a very elementary fashion. Therefore, the case studies quoted above are simple but emblematic instances of the persistence of local unconscious vestiges in official institutions through the Otherness construct , which still persist and hand down in the social-cultural memory of a given organized collectivity, so influencing its nature, structure and further development, hence, through the related and (more or less) individualistic constructs, contributing as well to affect the formations of the social character of any social member of it, from the standpoint of symbolic interactionism. This discussion is therefore carried out according to that trend of sociology which confides in

the strong influence exerted by social factors, structures and relations in the constitution and development of human personality, just through the social-cultural memory operating via the institutional actuation, establishment and recognition of the Otherness (or Alterity) and its related (more or less individualistic) constructs, meant according to (Meadian) symbolic interactionism. On the other hand, this last sociological trend cannot be fully neglected because otherwise, from an anthropological standpoint, those observed cultural diversities among various peoples and societies (even present at a local level) might not be explained except referring to genetic differences and racist motivations which does not have any scientific basis.

To summing up, therefore, we think that Otherness (or Alterity) with its related (more or less individualistic) constructs and, of (Meadian) symbolic interactionism, together with its various psychoanalytic features as provided by the last Freudian framework, may be usefully employed to try to formally explain modernization-demodernization phenomena. Moreover, the case studies mentioned above, above all that provided by Minakov's investigation, show too what role may play the past institutional history in the current institutional setting, its structure and functioning, which might be explained only making reference to certain unconscious constructs, as recalled above (Super-Ego and Otherness), which are the humus for the various *automatisms* and *recurrences* of the past; postcolonial studies support too these arguments. From these specific case studies, it seems that the history of past general institutions (or collective social-cultural history) has a great influence (just unconsciously, mainly through )

on the present state, structure and development of the current institutions, social-cultural orders and their functioning, in certain cases (as those seen above) hindering modernization processes, or social changes, when suitable and functional norms or other juridical tools and means, have not been planned to face and adequately reify it and its irruption, as for Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1997), according to whom the *reality*, meant as the set of all external things which lie outside our own voluntary control, is due to the interrelationships with the other, and does not exist without this latter. Such a reality is independent of us, is invisible, is intersubjectively shared by all individuals through *language* (the most important symbolic system) and *sign systems*, and is immediately manifested and showed by the interactions with the other, above all through the so-called *common sense*. According to Berger and Luckmann, in order to an *institution* there exists, two main conditions have to occur, namely, that it has either an historical development and schemata of behaviours (conventions and typings) and patterns of actions; they hold thanks to cultural memory (Assmann, 1997) and different *symbolic systems* historically built up and in reciprocal interaction among them, ruled and ordered by certain *norm systems*. According to Berger and Luckmann, a generic institution arises from the “crystallization” of customs, habits, typings and practices, in certain collectivities or social groups (see also Bourdieu *habitus*), which have proper historical routes providing patterns of behaviours and attitudes. This typical process of institutionalization is the basis for any further form of social relation. Once established this, an institution undertakes an objective status as *historically* created and inherited by humans through symbolic systems, and playing the role of

reciprocal integration within society; in turn, humans are moulded by these institutions (*homo socius*) just according to symbolic interactionism, while such symbolic systems become meaningful through systems of *collective legitimization*. In any case, the variation of the Otherness is closely related with the *social change* which, in turn, is based on *social reproduction* processes which are like those biological processes guarantying the life maintenance of a living organism, without which it is destined to die, so that also a given society, to remain in life, must undergo to these social reproduction processes ruling social change according to those modalities and aims politically prevailing at a given moment (Gallino, 2006). As each human individual has an her or his own (personal) unconscious ruling her or his life, so any society has an its own (collective) unconscious ruling its life (Barel, 1974; Robertson, 1991).

In conclusion, we may say that history plays a very crucial and fundamental role in sociology and politics and their phenomenology. The theoretical pattern we have outlined here, in regard to an attempt to formalize modernization/demodernization phenomena, and mainly worked out within (Meadian) symbolic interactionism, has highlighted this role, standing out the primary intervention of unconscious mechanisms in the occurrence and settlement of the present state of a society. As emblematic cases, just the current studies and researchers on post-Soviet transitions are liable to be pursued along this way.

**Acknowledgements.** My deep thanks to Mikhail Minakov for having always showed interest in my recent studies on post-Soviet situation, of which this

is the first one kindly accepted by his unique and renowned journal, since our first (quite indirect) encounter at the International Congress *Demodernization: Perspectives and Approaches*, held at the *Centre de Recherche en Histoire des Idées* (CRHI) – Université de Nice *Sophia Antipolis*, in Nice (FR), last year.

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