

## European Philosophical Identity Narratives

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**Abstract:** This inquiry examines various philosophical conceptions of identity and the clash between different identity narratives in the history of philosophy. The main goal of this paper is to show how the European philosophical idea of identity was developed. This paper explores the emergence of European philosophical identity narratives, which have shaped the ideas of justice, truth and community in Europe. It studies the foundational identity narratives that underlie the contested idea of a shared European heritage in law and culture, such as the ideas of equality, tolerance, rule of law, pluralism and the rejection of totalitarianism, and their relevance for current debates on philosophical ideas of self and identity. Identity is an open process. It is a dynamic hermeneutic category, which is constantly reinterpreted and reinvented. There are various philosophical traditions of *Cogito* – some of them perceive it as foundation of all knowledge and some of them perceive it as a mere illusion. In all these philosophical perspectives, the self is understood only through interpretation. The self is constituted as a narrative, as a text. Understanding oneself means understanding oneself in front of a text. The self is reinterpreted all over again only in light of narratives provided by culture. The task of hermeneutics is not only understanding of a subject, but also rethinking the subject.

**Keywords:** identity, philosophy, hermeneutics, modern, poststructural, postmodern

### INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the emergence of European philosophical identity narratives, which have shaped the ideas of justice, truth and community in Europe. It studies the foundational identity narratives that underlie the contested idea of a shared European heritage in law and culture, such as the ideas of equality, tolerance, rule of law, pluralism and the rejection of totalitarianism, and their relevance for current debates on philosophical ideas of self and identity.

In philosophical tradition, identity denotes the correspondence of a being or a thing with itself. *Identity* comes from the Latin word *idem* (the same) and means to be in concord with oneself. The identity includes

related mental, spiritual and physical characteristics, common properties of nations, races, and social groups such as related cultural, historical, political, national and ethnic characteristics. The identity is produced through social and cultural interaction, which is always placed in a certain context. The nature of identity is dialectical, since it includes identification and distinction, because one individual (or a group) can be identified with other individuals (or groups), only through observation of their differences from other individuals (or groups). Identity is changeable because sociological, historical and biological facts that determine it are dynamic.

The meaning of the concept of identity is not exhausted by sharp definitions, since this concept includes numerous allegories, and it should be taken into account that this concept is flexible and dynamic, and therefore it has no fixed meaning and it is subject to continuous transformations. Although *identity* is derived from the Latin word *idem* (the same), this concept denotes not only identification but also diversity – without whose determination any individuality is unattainable. In the book *Oneself as Another*, Paul Ricoeur articulates the hermeneutics of the self, by which he exposes the complexity of human identity which is reflected in the dynamics and dialectics of the sameness and the otherness of the self. Ricoeur highlights the importance of recognizing the ambiguity of the concept of identity, depending on whether it implies the equivalent of the Latin *idem* or *ipse* (Ricoeur, 1992). Through this ambiguity Ricoeur analyzes personal identity and narrative identity. Ricoeur differentiates identity as sameness (“Latin: *idem*, German: *Gleichheit*”) on the one hand, and identity as “selfhood” (“Latin: *ipse*, German: *Selbstheit*”) on the other (Ricoeur, 1992: 116). He points out that that identity includes not only the self (sameness), but also otherness in relation to which it the self is constituted (selfhood). The Self always includes otherness as a capacity for transformation, change. The Self, according to Ricoeur is dynamic, dialectical process of self-understanding, self-interpreting and self-searching.

#### THE MODERN CONCEPT OF IDENTITY

The modern concept of identity is based on the logic of homogeneity that emphasizes the totality and universality, opposed to postmodern conceptions, based on particularism and contextuality. Postmodernists

destabilize the coherence and homogeneity of the concept of identity, in whose properties include heterogeneity, polymorphism, incoherence and dynamism. Identity is regarded as a product of discourse and different discursive practices. Representatives of poststructuralist and postmodern thought redesign the traditional notion of identity. Both modern and postmodern thought are complex ideas that contain many different, sometimes disagreeing theories. Consequently, the analysis of the basic ideas of the Enlightenment from the perspective of poststructuralism and postmodernism should not lead to the creation of binary oppositions Enlightenment/poststructuralism (modernism/ postmodernism and so forth), within which any of the two concepts would be considered dominant. Therefore, the analysis that follows will include dominant categories within the modern and postmodern notion of identity, with emphasis on different approaches within both directions.

The modern definition of citizenship is based on the Cartesian idea of cognitive subject. Modern political thought occurs with René Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Descartes' philosophical thought assumes that knowledge implies universal doubt and that the only certainty is actually the self that doubts, which is at the same time the basis of knowledge and doubt. Rene Descartes was the creator of a new foundationalist theory, the view that knowledge should be reconstructed from the ground up. In his reconstruction of knowledge, presented in the *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes relies on *the method of systematic doubt*, which questions all of existence. The aim of Descartes' methodical doubt is founding solid and stable knowledge in science. Descartes proceeds from the main principles of his beliefs, noting that demolishing the foundations would destroy everything that was built on them. He claims that everything he has received as the truest he has accepted by relying on the senses, assuring several times that they can be deceitful. The consequence of Descartes' method is the rejection of knowledge based on the senses and the outside world, since it has, as such, variable character.

Rene Descartes concludes that the only certainty is the very subject who doubts. He argues that the only thing that is certain is his own existence, because even if he assumes that his senses are deceived, he himself must exist in order to be able to be wrong. Descartes argues that he is therefore, precisely speaking, a thinking thing (*res cogitans*), that is, a mind (*mens sive animus*), understanding (*intellectus*), or reason (*ratio*)

(Descartes, 2013). Descartes avoids the trap of solipsism in his *Third Meditation* in which he refers to the existence of the world independent of the subject, through the postulation of the existence of God, thinking beings and different widespread bodies. According to Ricoeur, by this procedure *Cogito* is suppressed into the secondary ontological rank (Ricoeur, 1992). The certainty of God's existence resolves the problem of certainty of the *Cogito*, which is transformed by the fact of the existence of the Other, whose representation is *Cogito*.

Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum* represents a performative, and not a substantive given. Cartesian knowledge construction is built on the soul/body dualism, which implies a binary opposition self/other and the idea of the conscious, thinking subject as an autonomous author of knowledge. Within the Cartesian epistemology, the mind is superior to the senses, and the thought is independent of its object. Such a conception of knowledge is based on the assumption that there is a reality independent of the subject that the mind can comprehend and describe. Descartes tried to derive an objective reality out of pure subjectivity. According to Edmund Husserl, Descartes first attempted to make an objective existence and truthfulness, and then, through them, an objective nature, dualism of finite substances, in short – the ground of metaphysics (Pažanin, 1968). Husserl criticizes the Cartesian project of methodic doubt, his main argument being that conclusions about the objective world cannot be drawn from apodictically pure *I* (Pažanin, 1968).

Descartes metaphysics derives existence of God, truthfulness, objective nature, the existence of finite substances, i.e. the ground of positive sciences (Pažanin, 1968). To the extent in which the *Cogito* freed itself from the traditional metaphysics, opening in itself a space for possible appearances of modernity, for the increasing radicalization of its own position, it unexpectedly or contrary to expectations, took on characteristics of the thing against which it always fought: the characteristics of another (old-new) metaphysics. Because today's necessary *sum*, as an effect of the liberal *Cogito*, is at the same time the reality which has been given to us in the coordinates of the market, therefore, performative and virtual. This (market, exchange and, finally, performative-virtual) reality was created against the background of the modern and to self-denial brought metaphysics of subjectivity. Descartes' philosophy is a product of the Reformation, and *Zeitgeist* that questioned the religious and politi-

cal authorities of the feudal era. The main disadvantage of Descartes' method is reflected in its universalism – the assumption that it can be equally applied to all scientific disciplines, which created the idea of universal science deriving from the absolute justification and foundation.

Humanist and Enlightenment conception of the subject relates to the individual as a conscious, stable, rational, coherent, thinking, autonomous and ahistorical category, which is endowed by will, reason, freedom and intentionality, and then expressed by language, practice and the public sphere (Butler, 1992: 36). Cartesian ego is located in the center of modern philosophy and the Enlightenment subject in the basis of truth and knowledge. By defining the self as an omniscient subject, Descartes banished everything else into the *object*, while determining the self as identity, he banished everything else into the *difference* (Weedon, 1987).

In the XXVII chapter, entitled “Of Identity and Diversity”, in the first volume of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke determines identity, starting from the premises of the Cartesian *Cogito*. Locke points out that *the self* depends on the consciousness – hence, consciousness constitutes personal identity: “For as any intelligent being can repeat the idea of any past action with the same consciousness it had of it at first, and with the same consciousness it has of any present action; so far it is the same personal self” (Locke, 1836: 226). Locke emphasizes that personal identity does not consist of the identity of the substance, but the identity of consciousness. It is also the answer to the question whether the personality changes if the thinking substance is changed or with this change multiple personalities may occur:

“I say, in all these cases, our consciousness being interrupted, and we losing the sight of our past selves, doubts are raised whether we are the same thinking thing, i. e. the same substance or no. Which, however reasonable or unreasonable, concerns not personal identity at all. The question being what makes the same person; and not whether it be the same identical substance, which always thinks in the same person, which, in this case, matters not at all.” (Locke, 1836: 226)

According to Locke, the limits of the self are limits of consciousness, and he completely excludes the irrational, unconscious and imaginary. Locke excludes otherness from his concept of identity, emphasizing the idea of the identity of a thing with itself, which is determined by comparing this thing to itself in different times. The identity, according to Locke, consists in the fact that the ideas attributed to a certain thing in

the present moment after comparison with the ideas that were attributed to this thing in some past moment show not even a slightest change (Locke, 1836). Locke's idea of identity is fixed and static, and he argues that the concepts of sameness and difference would have had no application if the identity was different, i.e. fluid and dynamic (Locke, 1836).

The consequence of Descartes and Locke's idea of rational, conscious and coherent subject is the creation of the idea of citizens as political atoms. New political atomism appeared in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, most notably in the theories of social contract by Hugo Grotius, Samuel Pufendorf, John Locke and others. Liberation from the cosmic order of the pre-modern idea of subjectivity meant that the human subject could no longer be understood as an element of a larger, meaningful order (Taylor, 1992). In traditional societies, according to anthropological and sociological folklore, the identity of a person was steady, stable and fixed. It was an expression of predetermined social roles and traditional mythical system, in which there were orientation and religious sanction by which man defined his place in the world, severely limiting the areas of thinking and behavior. People have been born and died as members of a particular group, or firmly established family system and movement patterns of a tribe or a group, or a certain individual, were predetermined. In pre-modernist society, the identity was not problematic and it was not subject of consideration or discussion (Kellner, 1995).

Modern understanding of the identity equalizes personal identity with self-identity, and the self is understood as an object that should be known. Being, i.e. personal identity is seen as an inseparable from self-consciousness. In contrast to the pre-modern identity which served the collective, tribe or a group, modern identity serves determining the personality (Kellner, 1995). Identity is self-identified category, which is unchanging, and internally coherent. At the same time the continuity of personality, coherence and self-consciousness are explained as essential attributes of personality, and not as socially, politically, historically and culturally established properties. Judith Butler notes that philosophical ontology cannot exceed boundaries of illusions of the substance and the being that sprang from the belief that the grammatical formulation of the subject and the predicate reflects earlier ontological reality of substance and attributes (Butler, 1992). It is on these constructs modern determination of identity is based on.

Holistic and hard objectivizing phenomenon elude Cartesian determination of the subject, based only on the rational dimension of human being, which inspired modern theory, which are variable and dynamic, and are in the process of continuous development and redesign. The modern concept of identity is based on a realist paradigm that ascribes to the subject attributes of consciousness, rationality and stability. The project of modernity is based on an abstract and simplified individual, abstracted from the diversity and change, and consequently, it cannot meet the demands of pluralistic societies. The Enlightenment idea of the authoritative, rational subject as the bearer of rights and master of theory went through the crisis in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The reasons for the collapse of the Enlightenment project should be sought in the Enlightenment's negation of the idea of value pluralism, which implies irreducibility of values whose potential conflict cannot be resolved by some metatheoretical principle or by any form of authority.

#### POSTSTRUCTURAL AND POSTMODERN IDEA OF IDENTITY

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a large number of authors, such as Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo, rejected the possibility of a coherent and objective comprehension of the world, highlighting the social and historical conditionality of the image of the world, which is always mediated by some interpretation and never independent of language and social actors. The most radical forms of this critique of realism, on which the modern theory in the United States is based on, are labeled "French Theory", while, on the other side of the Atlantic this school of thought is known as "postmodernism" (Butler, 2002).

*Postmodernism* is a concept whose meaning is manifold. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a radical critique of dualist and realist paradigms has been developed, especially with the advent of structuralists and poststructuralists, and then thanks to the appearance of various other thinkers who rejected the naive empiricism and rationalism (Richard Rorty and Ludwig Wittgenstein in philosophy of speech, Umberto Eco and Paul Ricoeur in semiotics, Paul Feyerabend and Thomas Kuhn in epistemology, Maurice Merleau-Ponty in phenomenology, Larry Laudan in the philosophy of science) (Semprini). These authors do not accept realistic standpoint of representational theories according to which the

representations are independent from the subject and have no effect on cognition.

Postmodernism is the direction that celebrates localism, plurality, fluidity and diversity. Michel Foucault and Jean-François Lyotard under postmodernism primarily imply the end of *grand narratives*, or the end of great philosophical systems and totalizing theories, such as idealism, psychoanalysis and Marxism, which proclaimed universal truths. Lyotard points out that modern history and science have created two metanarrative constructions (or *grand narratives*). The first is political in nature and it proclaims legitimacy of power and knowledge, because they promise emancipation and progress of mankind. The second is philosophical in nature and refers to the project of totalization of knowledge, by which various disciplines of science and empirical knowledge unite. Lyotard emphasizes that both *grand narratives* are exhausted and are nearing the end. Metanarratives of progress under the guidance of reason have collapsed during World War II. On the other hand, identifying science as just another grand narrative is reminiscent of its instrumentalization and use of technical rationality as means of social control.

Postmodernism represents refiguration of metanarrative constructions such as the Enlightenment, Marxism and idealism and the disappearance of narrative discourse, which was given legitimacy due to the variety of language-games whose meaning is a free game of signs. In this way the world ceases to be uniform and monolithic, centered, and becomes decentralized, pluralistic and therefore fundamentally different from all known worlds. Gianni Vattimo argues that modern age is a period of metaphysical and historical legalization, which calls into question the postmodern era (Vattimo, 1988). Lyotard defines the very concept of “metanarrative” in his book *The Postmodern Condition*. This term refers to any comprehensive explanation and understanding of the historical, social, political and scientific knowledge and experience. Therefore, metanarrative is totalizing explanation of events and concepts that leads to the unification of knowledge and justifies different structures of power. From a postmodern perspective, the entire science, religion, as well as various political theories represent metanarratives. Therefore, metanarratives homogenize the human experience.

Lyotard describes “the postmodern condition” as skepticism towards all kinds of comprehensive narratives that aspire toward the absolute truth. Lyotard’s vision of politics includes different *language-games* in the

Wittgensteinian sense, implying a pluralist idea of the truth. Language-games construct different truths, established by a variety of contexts and the very starting point of the idea of postmodernism, as already mentioned, represents discontinuity and fragmentation. Critics of Lyotard's idea claim that he is not aware of a metanarrative nature of his own theory, and by criticizing grand narratives of modernism, he, in fact, produces new ones (Habermas and Benhabib, 1981). However, such criticism reflects misunderstanding of postmodernism and apply modernist experience to the postmodern image of the world, which is wrong. These criticisms homogenize postmodern ideas, and in that way fail to observe their polyphonic nature based on flexible and multiple identities.

Grand narratives do not examine their own value system and conceptual framework. The end of "grand narratives", which occurred with postmodernism, also signifies the end of ideologies and politics of exclusion and marginalization. Postmodern thought rejects any foundation, since foundation, according to the postmodernists, is not based on the identity, but on the difference. Therefore, postmodernism declares the end of rigidity of identity, which creates exclusivity. Postmodernists seek to reconcile antagonisms of modernism. Different philosophies of history that dominated from the Enlightenment onward imposed unity, homogeneity and linearity to historical narratives. Postmodernists strive towards redefining the modern political theory. They reject the universalist ideas, affirming the plurality of discourses that reflect the fragmentation of social, cultural and political relations of the modern era. The Enlightenment's fiction of philosophical reflectivity, of *episteme*, which is established through the uncritical practice of everyday *doxa*, is exactly that, a fiction of legitimation which ignores the fact that everyday practice and tradition also have their own criterion of legitimation and criticism (Benhabib, 1994).

Critics of the Enlightenment's ideal of reason, such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, representatives of American pragmatism, representatives of the French critical theory, philosophers of science such as Thomas Kuhn, Imre Lakatos and Paul Feyerabend, as well as representatives of poststructuralism and postmodernism, reject the idea of absolute truth based on reason and correspondence theory of truth in science, according to which science is the *mimesis* of reality. These thinkers, in fact, reject the idea of language as a neutral medium. Correspondence theory of truth determines truthfulness as a relation between

language and reality – the statement is considered true only if what is claimed by the statement is accurate portrayal of extralinguistic reality. Poststructuralists and postmodernists believe that language systems are unreliable cultural constructs, and that the relationship of language to reality is not a given. Correspondence theory of truth is based on logocentric confidence in language based on the conviction that the meaning of words is based on the structure of reality.

Jacques Derrida believes that this phenomenon creates the wrong metaphysics, which he calls “metaphysics of presence”. In the opinion of Christopher Butler, in this way Derrida creates his own grand narrative or metaphysical system based on the incorrect assumption that the Western tradition did not dispute that the language is *mimesis* of reality (Butler, 2002). Although Derrida fail to observe the great conflict between realists and nominalists, the contribution of his philosophical position cannot be disproved. Derrida points out that all conceptual frameworks can be questioned, pointing to the hierarchies – the binary oppositions – on which they are based. These hierarchies, or binary oppositions, in which preference is given to one concept over the other, organize our experience and observation of the world. In this manner wrong fundamental relations are created, within which the primacy of the literal versus metaphorical, natural versus cultural, male versus female, speech versus writing is emphasized. These hierarchies are not indicative of the true order of things, but are only linguistic and thought constructions. The meaning only mediates reality and prevents direct approach, since it is the result of socially constructed discursive practice, and not reality.

Consequence of the application of correspondence theory of truth in political discourse is the reduction of various categories of identity, such as race, gender, class and so forth, to a single concept, which is considered essential. In this way homogeneous conception of identity is created, which is given primacy over any form of diversity. For example, different individuals are reduced to only one concept, such as *human being* or *woman*, thus neglecting their differences and the possibility of recognizing diverse and multiple identities. Certain social groups are seen as homogenous and based on identical narratives, experiences, preferences and interests, thereby creating the discourse of power, which determines their status. The discourse of power implies not only the dominant theory (based on the *grand narrative* in the form of a legal or political paradigm) which labels certain groups (e.g. *immigrants*, *terrorists*, *asylum seekers*, etc.), but at the same time expresses certain political authority.

According to Foucault, insistence of the Enlightenment thinkers on universal principles of reason is a specific form of totalitarianism, because the authority of reason represents a control system that excludes and marginalizes all what is considered irrational. Power and knowledge are in essential interaction, for example, when medically trained *reasonable* people define themselves in relation to the *unreasonable* and, as they passed judgment, put the latter in asylums (Foucault, 2006). Sexist, racist and imperialists use similar methods – they are trying to force their normalizing discourse, and by doing so, create and produce what can be considered deviant or what postmodernists call the *Other*. Their discourse is actually helping create the subordinate identities of those who are excluded from it.

Therefore, the discourse of power avoids decentralization of dominant social groups, and through their homogenization tends to marginalize all those who do not belong. Under the *excluded* i.e. *others*, Foucault implies women, homosexuals, the mentally ill and so forth. In books *History of Madness*, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* and *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, Michel Foucault presents an important analysis of the emergence of European subjectivity. Foucault shows how cultural, political, economic and institutional mechanisms produce historical identity and shape the imagination, ethos, values, culture and self-understanding of Western European civil society. According to Foucault, the foundations of the whole experience of modern man were formed in mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, in the era of classicist rationalism, when the sensibility that is the basis of binary hierarchies: identical/different, own/someone else's and mind/madness appeared (Foucault, 2006).

The flaw of Foucault's theory reflects in his failure to show the ethic dimension of criticism of power or construct new ethics not based on rationality. Reality is no longer seen as a given and self-understanding, it is mediated by a game of discursive practices and power hierarchies. The discourses represent practices that shape the theoretical strategies and conceptual frameworks that influence the production of representations. Every political and theoretical system in general produces its own truth of power through discursive practices, and Foucault's archeology of knowledge precisely aims to provide historical-critical reconstruction of knowledge, by exposing the systematic history of discourses. Although Foucault identifies oppressive discursive practice, he does not offer a

strategy for their resolution, unlike Derrida, deconstructive postmodernism and poststructuralist critique of the modern legal theory, and it is questionable whether Foucault's philosophical thought exceeds boundaries of modernism. Foucault speaks of power as a force of nature, like gravity, therefore his criticism of power does not express sufficiently moral and political standpoint (Butler, 2002). Jacques Derrida criticized Foucault that he had succumbed to *structuralist totalitarianism* in his work *History of Madness* and that he subsumed Descartes' philosophy under one totality, under which it may not be subsumed. The question may arise whether Derrida did the same when presenting Western metaphysics as a single homogeneous system. Under the concept of Western European metaphysics, Derrida implies the essence of spiritual activity of the Western European world and everything that looks new or as a discontinuation in this activity is just an illusion, a phenomenon that owes its reality to hidden and hardly noticeable foundation.

Paul Ricoeur portrays "demystifying" hermeneutics whose representatives are Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud as a critique of the Enlightenment subject and knowledge in general. Ricoeur claims that, starting from them understanding becomes hermeneutical, because they do not proceed from a particular consciousness of sense, but from deciphering of its expressions. Marx, Nietzsche and Freud create an immediate science of sense irreducible to the immediate consciousness of sense. All three of them, in different ways made their conscious methods of deciphering (*déchiffrage*) coincide with the unconscious activity of ciphering (*chiffrage*), which is attributed to the will to power, social being and unconscious psychism (Ricoeur, 1991). What is common to Marx, Nietzsche and Freud is the general hypothesis concerning the simultaneous process of "false" consciousness and methods of deciphering. Freud deals with the problem of false consciousness through dreams and neurotic symptoms, Marx through problem of ideology, and Nietzsche through problem of values (Ricoeur, 1991). All three are initially skeptical about the illusions of reality, but they proceed by mastering the skill of interpretation.

Marxist ideology, which is based on a comprehensive metanarrative that is centered around class, decentralizes Enlightenment subject using historical analysis of the relations of production, economic determinants and class struggle. Therefore, the subject of Marxist ideology is not an abstract being, which exists independently of the social sphere, but it is

exactly a product of society and social relations. Beliefs, attitudes and purposes of each individual are not innate, but are the result of the zeitgeist and social circumstances.

Freud's theory of the subject is another example of decentralization of Cartesian subject. Freud bases the subject on the domain of unconscious, thus rejecting coherence, rationality and fixity. Freud exposes the misconception about the existence of an independent, unique *I*, well circumscribed from anything else. He argues that psychoanalytic study shows that such *I* is just an illusion, noting that every conscious *I*, especially the inner one, without clear limits, passes into unconscious mental event which we refer to as *It*, of which it is a facade (Freud, 2005). By stressing that reason conceals what is happening in the subconscious, Freud affirms the importance of irrational and unconscious, which calls into question the individual character of the consciousness. André Green believes that the unconscious *I* undermines the idea of the individual *I*, since *I*, as pointed out by Freud, is not master of his own house (Green, 2001). Many critics of Freud's conception of the subject, such as Baudrillard, claim that Freud created new metaphysics, which places unconsciousness at the center instead of rationality and consciousness (Baudrillard, 1990). In this way, Freud's theory is nothing more than a metanarrative based on a different metaphysics – the metaphysics of the unconscious. However, one cannot deny the importance of Freudian psychoanalysis, since Freud first thoroughly addressed the issue of the (individual) unconscious.

Nietzsche expands Descartes' argument about the demon to the whole language. Nietzsche believes that the basic misconception is that reason produces truth, while, in fact, it does not reach beyond the metaphors that do not correspond to authentic entities. This misconception has its roots in equalizing things that are not equal, and upon which the definition of every concept is based. Nietzsche emphasizes that the truths of reason are nothing more than a network of metaphors, metonymies and anthropomorphisms, and, therefore, the truthfulness can be equated with the use of conventional, accepted, metaphors. For Nietzsche and Derrida any claim to absolute knowledge and universal truth proceeds from the wrong perception of the language, which misleads the thought. Nietzsche, therefore, doubts the *Cogito*.

Regardless of the criticism that can be directed towards their conceptions of subjectivity, the significance of Marx's, Nietzsche's and

Freud's theory is reflected in unmasking deceits of consciousness, in indicating that the subject cannot be reduced to a stable, rational and autonomous category. The philosopher of Cartesianism knows that things can be called into question, that they are not what they appear to be. However, he never doubts the consciousness itself. Sense and consciousness of sense coincide in the consciousness. From the time of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud even this belief is doubted. After doubting things, the consciousness is also exposed to doubt. Unlike Descartes, who triumphs over his doubt of things through the evidence of consciousness, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud triumph over their doubt of consciousness through the exegesis of sense (Ricoeur, 1991).

According to Baudrillard, here we are faced not with three kinds of doubt, but with three kinds of deception. When the consciousness is not what it seems, a new relationship between the manifest and latent must be established. The main category of consciousness for all three thinkers is the connection "hidden/revealed" i.e. connection "false/manifest" (Baudrillard, 1990). What is essential is that Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, as critics of consciousness deception, by using means that they possess create – with the help or against the prejudices of their epoch – mediating science of sense that is irreducible to immediate consciousness of sense. All three have tried in different ways to overlap their "conscious" methods of decoding with the unconscious activity of establishing a code, which they attributed to the will to power, social being or unconscious psyche (Ricoeur, 1991).

The reality of the unconscious can be reached by hermeneutics in epistemological and transcendental sense (Ricoeur, 1991). The unconscious can be deciphered by a set of hermeneutical procedures. Jean Baudrillard believes that the theories of false consciousness critics are simplified and that they are still attributed the limitations imposed by the prejudices of their time. Marx is associated with Marxist economism and absurdity of the theory of consciousness as reflectivity, while Nietzsche is associated with biologism and apology of violence, and Freud's theory is limited to psychoanalysis wrapped in simplistic pansexualism.

In the opinion of Douglas Kellner, postmodernist texts and figures call into question the continuing importance of in-depth hermeneutical models, such as the Marxist model of essence and appearance, true and false consciousness and ideology and truth; Freudian model of latent and manifest meaning; existentialist model of authentic and inauthentic exis-

tence; and semiotic model of signification of the signified. In general, postmodernism signifies in that manner the death of hermeneutics; instead of what Ricoeur called “hermeneutics of doubt” and polysemic modernist reading of cultural symbols and texts, postmodernist standpoint appears, according to which there is nothing under the surface of the text, no depth or ambiguity which critical examination could detect and explain (Kellner, 1995). However, by abandoning the idea of a coherent, stable, rational and autonomous *I* the ideas of the subject and sense are not rejected, but their position is redesigned. The identity is not an independent category, but always includes a network of relations and oppositions, which constantly redefine it. The same can be said for the meaning and interpretation of the text. Poststructuralist and postmodernist critique of the Enlightenment is reflected in the revision of the fundamental principles of the Enlightenment concerning language, reason and subject.

Poststructuralist philosophy and Jacques Derrida bring linguistic twist in the philosophy that focuses on language issues. Derrida believes that the fallacy of traditional philosophy is that the reason can ignore the language and reach the universal method. Derrida’s philosophy is focused on language and text – he observes the whole world as textuality, arguing that there is nothing outside the text. The language always contains certain metaphysics, which is reflected in its metaphors and metonymies. There is no knowledge *per se* or absolute truth – therefore, everything is mediated by language. This points to the original anachronism – linguistic construction is always late, the subject of the story has already passed (Derrida, 1974). Poststructuralists reject the possibility of an absolute truth and universal knowledge. On the other hand, they do not reject the scientific theories as false, understanding the truth not as necessary and universal, but as contingent and particular, arising from the interaction of competing discourses, and without stable and fixed meaning.

The greatest significance of Derrida’s deconstruction is that it points to the symbolic violence that exists within the Western metaphysical tradition of philosophy, law and thought in general. Derrida emphasizes that his idea of deconstruction is not a method. The purpose of Derrida’s deconstruction reflects in transformation of hierarchical structures whose existence indicates the metaphysical character of philosophy. Derrida proceeds from the determined binary opposition nature/culture, within which gives primacy to the nature as universal and unchanging

category over culture, considered particularistic, arbitrary system of norms. He quotes Levi-Strauss's example of the idea of incest prohibition, which does not tolerate binary opposition nature/culture: The prohibition of incest is universal; in this sense it could be said that it is natural; but it is also a prohibition, a system of norms and taboos – and in that sense, it could be described as cultural. Derrida believes that by citing this example, which is one of the many, Levi-Strauss denies the difference that has not been questioned within the rationalist tradition and shows the way in which the concepts of Western metaphysics can be deconstructed. Each concept carries the specter of another. For example, *the cultural* forms the identity of *the natural*, just as *the natural* forms the identity of *the cultural*, hence, the essence of the law can be understood only in the free game of meanings and interpretations of the “natural” and “cultural”. On the other hand, binary hierarchies can still be used as useful instruments, but they cannot be attributed the value of truth.

A large number of authors misinterprets postmodernism as a negation of modernism that contradicts the very nature of postmodernism, which, after failing to cope with aporias of modernism, becomes just another of its forms. Binary opposition modernism/postmodernism is most often incorrectly set, which entails a series of dichotomies: purpose/game, hierarchy/anarchy, totality/deconstruction, synthesis/antithesis, presence/absence, metaphor/metonymy, interpretation/game of meanings, metaphysics/irony, semantics/ rhetoric, centrality/dispersion, determination/uncertainty and so forth, where the first concept is attributed characteristics of modernism, and the second characteristics of postmodernism. However, postmodernism does not advocate absolutization of any concept, but points to indecision of the fate of the relationship between identity and difference, and all other factors of binary oppositions. Accordingly, postmodernism does not represent a negation of modernism, but its relocation by undermining its foundations (Jameson, 1983).

Jacques Derrida believes that identity is primarily based on semantic function – tautological identification of the language it indicates. Identity is a product of metaphysical logic, which Derrida subjects to deconstruction. Deconstruction questions every  $A=A$ , because it indicates the inability to determine the subject or a concept through identification procedure. The deconstruction of identity is not the deconstruction of politics; rather, it establishes as political the very terms through which

identity is articulated (Butler, 2002). Deconstruction questions the identity dogma based on logocentrism and redefines the *difference*.

Identity is not reducible to the ideal construction that can be logically expressed by statement  $A=A$ . Therefore, signified sameness cannot be reduced to signifying difference and therefore logic cannot answer questions of practical field of action. It escapes the everyday life and vice versa, everyday life cannot be reduced to the postulates of the logic of identity. In fact, logical and analytical procedure deals with ideal constructions that do not exist anywhere in reality, so that the very principle of identity ( $A=A$ ) necessarily overlooks (and actually abstracts) the fact that the irreducible feature of the first  $A$  is that it is the first, that is the *signifier*, not just signified, and, as such, will never be identical to the second  $A$ . In other words, the *signifier* cannot be reduced to the *signified*.

Pointing out the limitations of formal logic does not completely challenge its validity. This only indicates that the domain of its validity cannot include the field of human practice. What characterizes the idea of truth is that it is governed by the principle of noncontradiction and that negation of the truth can only be what is false. If what I claim is true, the one who contradicts me can only be mistaken. However, when it comes to the philosophy of action, philosophy of practice, philosophy of values, different perceptions can also be wise. This fact explains the philosophical pluralism and justifies the tolerance in philosophy.

Poststructuralist and postmodernist thought reject the ideas of coherent self and integrated consciousness. Subjectivity is recognized as a product of plural, interlocking discourses. Human being, therefore, is not primarily “endowed with reason and conscience”, as it is emphasized in *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, it is not autonomous and unique, but represents a process of constant redesign. Poststructuralism and postmodernism do not accept the unity of the subject, which is a prerequisite for rational, moral and social order. The aim of the subject deconstruction is overcoming the limits imposed by different ideologies. Classification of reason as just another metanarrative does not mean relativism, since it is still possible to separate the just from the unjust, legitimate from illegitimate, but without relying on universal standards, because these concepts are considered contingent and contextual – historically and socially constructed. Liberalism, political and social project of the Enlightenment, established the man of reason (St. Pierre, 2000). Jacques Lacan reconstitutes Enlightenment subject by pointing out that it is

discursively produced. Lacan argues that if consciousness cannot produce coherent, stable self, then unconscious certainly cannot do it. According to Lacan, the purpose of psychoanalysis is not discovering the unconscious, but primarily understanding how the subject is established in language (Lacan, 1951).

As Judith Butler notes, humanistic and Enlightenment idea of the subject is based on the assumption of the existence of a substantively determined individual as a carrier of different attributes (Butler). Poststructuralists believe that there is no stable reference for the subject. This does not mean that poststructuralists reject the idea of the subject, but that they are exposing it to constant reconstruction and reconfiguration. Within the framework of post-structuralism, all categories are unstable, all experiences and narratives are constructed, every reality is imaginary, all identities are only produced, and every knowledge is uncertain and prone to errors (Britzman, 1995). Therefore, the poststructuralist conception of identity is heterogeneous and undetermined, since every meaning can be reinterpreted and postponed, because the subject lacks signifier.

Richard Rorty, Emmanuel Levinas and many other authors suggest that deconstruction is unable to resist the metaphysical discourse. Derrida and Lyotard are aware of this danger. Derrida in many of his earlier writings points out that it is not possible to fight against metaphysics, and thereby completely exit the metaphysical circle. It is, in fact, a problem of language, because we do not have another language (other than metaphysical, based on the logic of identity) which could completely reject metaphysical categories. Critique of identity strategy is impossible without its prior identification. It is impossible to be open to other without establishing what is the same, therefore, without the same shaped into a procedure that is directed specifically against the strategy of identification. Deconstruction has a starting point in the metaphysical term – the difference, the Other, and by relying exactly on the concepts of metaphysics, tries to degrade metaphysics itself, because imprisoned by language limitations it cannot achieve more. However, it is not metaphysics, since it does not aspire to absolute, but rather to difference. Regardless of the fact that reconsideration of metaphysics does not represent overcoming of the bounds of the metaphysics language, it, however, transcends the limits of metaphysical conditionality, since it is not based on any principle – it allows anti-purposeful movement, and does not guarantee complete deliverance from the pitfalls of metaphysics.

Derrida's critique of the discourse of Western metaphysics is significant for political theory, since his examination of metaphysical structures based on binary hierarchies can be applied to legal and political institutions. His criticism calls into question the fixity of concepts and identities and, by reading them as a place of power, denies them the ability to still represent the basis of law and justice. According to Derrida, the binary hierarchies at the root of all philosophical concepts reflect the practices and discourses of domination. Genealogy of these concepts always adheres to certain hegemonies in whose favor it is adjusted, and it is based on the ideas of European philosophical modern. Political discourses, used by Western democracies and the so-called Marxist, Soviet societies, are built on metaphysical philosophies. Whatever the difference between them, they continue the great metaphysical discourse. The concept of the state present in the West and in the East follows solid, stable, metaphysical tradition. In our modernity there is nothing that is not deeply metaphysical (Derrida, 2005). Derrida argues that the entire Western political tradition is based on the concept of identity. By determining every human being as coherent personality, metaphysical tradition encourages every human being to search for its own identity within groups such as family, class, state, and nation. The main problem is that these groups or categories are perceived as homogeneous.

Poststructuralist and postmodernist redesign of the logic of identity stems from the belief of the performative nature of identity, which have no basis in the sphere of real. The starting point of speech act theory, developed by John R. Searle and John L. Austin, is the distinction between two classes of statements – performative and constative. Performatives have the ability of acting by saying, voicing the words in the first person singular present indicative (Ricoeur, 1991). The actual statement executes what is said, and the best example of the performative are promises. To say, “I promise” is to simultaneously perform an act of promise. Performatives are not considered neither true or false, because they perform an action to which they relate. On the other hand, constatives describe a state of things, they assert something, and can be true or false. The distinction between performative and constative has found its application in narratology, and poststructuralist and postmodern theory.

## CONCLUSION

Poststructuralists and postmodernists reject modernist fixed and homogeneous idea of identity. Identity cannot be abstracted from the difference – identity is constantly changing and reinterpreting. Deconstructive procedure is always open for the Other, and it is directed against the forcing of identity. Every construction – semantic, metaphysical, semiotic and so forth – contains a difference. Therefore, there are no final meanings or established interpretations. Signifiers are only performatives, and the reality which they make, appears as something whose meaning is constantly postponed. Because identity always contains a difference, the contradictions of binary oppositions are never static, and cannot be fixed within the values hierarchies. Identity is always both the invalidated and subordinated *otherness*. Postmodernism is an antifoundationalist thought. Accordingly, postmodernism cannot be reduced to a thought that expresses the triumph of the Other, because the deconstruction would then only establish a new hierarchy, i.e. new power relations.

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