LUCIAN-NICU RĂDĂȘAN
”Petru Maior” University of Târgu-Mureș

THE DYNAMICS OF IDENTITY BETWEEN DIFFERENT FORMS OF REALITY

Abstract: The balance between surreal and real mental space has not yet been discovered in the cognitive sciences. It is definitely time for us to get used to the idea that mental space is not something impossible, unreal, but a different kind of reality. Moreover, the interdependance between the mind and the physical world cannot be dismissed as both phisics and philosophy have demonstrated that one cannot exist without the other.

*Keywords**:** cyberspace, identity, virtual, reality, catfishing.*

One might conclude that the distinction between mental and physical space, ergo, the difference between what we call the inner and outerworld is clear and cannot be changed. However, the connections between the two worlds is not defined by immuable truths.

The space of our personal identity is more likely to be perceived as a fictional world or a world parallel to the real one.

The innerworld is most often associated with fictional lands belonging to mythology, literature and, as of recent, the virtual culture.

The balance between surreal and real mental space has not yet been discovered in the cognitive sciences. It is definitely time for us to get used to the idea that mental space is not something impossible, unreal, but a different kind of reality. Moreover, the interdependance between the mind and the physical world cannot be dismissed as both phisics and philosophy have demonstrated that one cannot exist without the other.

The existance of virtual culture and of cyberspace [1] helps us undergo a necessary identity mutation. This virtual culture determined psichological mutations as well onto the individual looking for his own identity.

Virtual space has favoured the aparition of catfishing[2], a term which is defined as assuming another identity or projection into alterity in order to try and find oneself in a certain blueprint or, moreover, placing oneself within the realm of the unreal.

The concept of catfishing describes the person who is assuming a false identity on the Internet by using different social sites: Facebook[3], Twitter [4]or Instagram[5]. This is not something to be desired given the created profile.

[1] The term comes from the novel Neuromancer by William Gibson. In this novel, the idea of a direct link between the brain and computers is mentioned.

[2] A catfish is someone who assumes a false identity on the Internet using various platforms including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. A catfish is often undesirable in comparison to thier profile, as an actual catfish would be to a premium "catch" fish like Alaskan salmon, după *www.urbandictionary.com*

[3] It is a network website created by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 in order to offer the possibility of contacting close persons but also unknown people. Facebook is currently one of the most extensive networks on Earth. Users can login from anywhere as long as the have an internet connection by using a password which is given after filling ot a registration form. Facebook is part of the WEB 2.0 phenomena initially created by Harvard SUA. Facebook was originally just a campus network running on the closed circuit for these people alone. At the beginning

BDD-A21809 © 2014 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 15:16:47 UTC)

Whether we are talking about revenge, lonelyness or boredom, a large number of internet predators finds various reasons to fraud their way onto the social network scene and in the hearts of unknowing victims.

By adopting a false identity, these persons make everyone believe they are someone else. Complex lifestories, accompanied by photos, a CV, friends or workplaces and personal experiences are forged in order to fool users.

The existence of this complex system was brought to light in 2010 by means of the documentary *Catfish* which brings to us the case of a young 28 year old man, Nev Sculman, who was in love with a young woman on Facebook and with her voice on the phone. It was ultimately discovered that behind this fabricated persona was Abby, a middle-aged woman with two children.

The construction of her hew identity was so complex that it even featured other social network elements such as Angela – Abby's mother, Vince- Angela's husband and Megan- Abby's sister.

At the end of the documentary, the truth about Abby is discovered but what is really interesting is the statement Nev gives to Vince: he said that when fishermen send the cod (fish) alive from North America to Asia, the fact that the fish is inactive makes its meat less tasty, soft. The fishermen have discovered that if you flace a catfish into the tank along with the cod, it becomes active and it's quality is preserved. Vince goes on to state that in eveyone's life there are certain people which keep us active, on our toes and thinking clearly. He seemes to be saying that Abby was one of these people.

This dissociative identity is mean to make up for an indiviual's inability to express himself in the world in which he is living. The actor assumes this new identity in order to have his innerself from his personal failures and adops an image which gives him safety, surrounded by imaginary friends while looknig for a family to provide a sense of fufillment.

Possible victims usually give a positive response in these situations but they also ask themselves: Why isn't it possible to ensure a satisfactory real existence? Why is it too good to be true?

If we take a look at this phenomena from the outside, we can see that people which are drawn into this catfish game are not at all reluctant, most likely because their lives until then has been dull. By means of social networks, the isolated inner being is palced into contact with the imaginary being.

When faced with each other, these two instances have nothing in common and the attempt to mix them is a temporary one which causes negative effects onto the person.

We need a fictional model inorder to understand our live, which is actually an incomplete story – said Paul Ricoeur[6], regarding the search for oneself by means of fiction. According to Ricoeur, Alsdair MacIntyre and Daniel Dennet, the self is narrative gravitational center because ni the absence of a narration or in the case of it going into a crisis, the self falls

---

updates could be checked over the email account but as of 2006 this changed as facebook went public. The network became very popular but also raised disapproving glances as it was forbidden in the Middle East. By means of this network certain protests within The Republic of Moldova and Iran were organized

[4] It stands for both the website created in 2006 which allows users to write and send messages of up to 140 characters by means of the Intenet as well as the company offering this social network service

[5] it is a social network site which allows users to share photos, videos, apply video filters and share information onto other social platforms. A distingtive trait is the square shaped photo resembling the Kodak Instamatic as well as the Polaroid. It was created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger and launched in 2010. The site quickly became very popular and grew to have over 100 million users in 2012.

[6] Paul Ricoeur, *Soi-même comme un autre*, apud. Andreea Deciu, *Nostalgiile identităţii,* Edit. Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2001, p. 6.

BDD-A21809 © 2014 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 15:16:47 UTC)

victim to an identity breakdown[7]. This center is the abstract inner circle of the character and it holds all which is most important: values and experiences.

In her essay, *The nostalgia of the identity*, Andreea Deciu, uses Ricoeur's terms, namely the instance of the traveler, the castaway, of the entity which has set out, more or less willingly, to find its own center: the IDEM and IPSE identity.

By drawing an analysis based on the origins of the word, the French scholar establishes two types of identity: *idem* – designating *the same* and *ipse* – which does not live on expectations of lingering in time given the temporal aspect of existence (made of of physical and mental continuity).

The *ipse* identity is the one which tolerates and actually regenerates alterity whereas the *idem* side is a nostalgic one. Ipse consequently creates a new world, therefore it has a stimulating effect.

It is interesting from the point of view of the identity-*ipse* relationship as, for example, in the case of exiled writers, the problem of defining oneself is made by comparison to traditional values, historical values thus involving the temporal aspect but also by comparison to the status of the exiled, which involves the spatial aspect. *Someone who is exiled manifests two identities, one forced onto him by the world he lives in and one which he refuses to let go of.*[8]

Maintaining the linguistic identity intact is the same as fighting against a destabilizing identity. Insinuation in a foreign language involves a number of steps. Especially for a linguist, writing a journal in a foreign language is the same as freeing oneself from the *idem* and showing availability towards ipse even if this does not happen immediately. The owner of a threatened identity may be inclined to created an identity discourse, which can be quite camouflaged at times.

The ipse dimension of the persona is like a Russian doll: it can fit more elements inside, each having an identity at its nucleus and each identity is entitled to a different person which created a different reality around it[9]. If linguistic alterity is an accepted and assimilated aspect, then we still need to search for a favorable fictional context in order to define a new identity.

The question now is whether a special identity matrix for emigrants exists?! If it is accepted and shared, then it can be identified: As long as he jumps between past and present, the exiled person is a translator: *he travels constantly between two universes, trying to shape according to the terms of the other. The translation itself is a metaphor for the exile, because is is born within the realm of the analogy […] The exiled person is free from nostalgia the moment he leaves behind his duty as a translator accepting the bilingual existence as a dual perspective […] The universe where the bilingual self dwells has no center and within each of us is an emigrant. Emigrants thus become, by definition, the protagonists of an artistic marginality .*[10]

Such a writer makes his reader look for a certain identity within the discourse. The identity model can be found at the intersection between author-narrator-character.

---

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 9.
[8] Andreea Deciu, *op. cit.*, p. 46
[9] *Ibidem*, p. 50.
[10] *Ibidem*, pp. 57-58By borrowing the distinction histoire/dicourse from the french structuralists, Manfred Putz seeks to find the self by means of fiction, the relationship between the elements of the reality and the Ego, by discovering some likely forms of self definition in the essay *The identity fable. The american novel of the sixties*, translated by Irina Burlui, Institutul European, Iasi, 1995. A decisive characteristic of the new prose from that time seems to have been as follows: ‚the subject and themes become problems of the fictional character and corncers of the reader'
Narration about identity is a'recogniseable themed subgenre of american prose'of the sixties (page 15).

BDD-A21809 © 2014 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 15:16:47 UTC)

References

1. Antohi, Sorin, *Utopica. Studii asupra imaginarului social*. Bucureşti, 1991.
2. Blanchot, M. *The Infinite Conversation.* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
3. Boia, Lucian, *Pentru o istorie a imaginarului*, Bucureşti, Humanitas,2000.
4. Buber, M. *Eu şi Tu.* Bucureşti, Humanitas, 1992.
5. Codoban, A. *Filosofia ca gen literar*. Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1992.
6. Corbea, Andrei, *Ego, alter, alter ego*, Iaşi, 1993.
7. Cornea, Paul, *Introducere în teoria lecturii*, Iaşi, Polirom, 1998.
8. Deciu, Andreea, Nostalgiile identităţii, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2001;
9. Fiala, A. *Tolerance and the Ethical Life*. New York, Continuum, 2005.
10. Gugu Silvia, Călin Dan, Florin Tudor, *Contemporary*, Bucureşti, Simetria, 2005.
11. Hours, Bernard, *Ideologia umanitară sau Spectacolul alterității pierdute*, Iași, Institutul Europan, 2010.
12. Levinas, E. *Apropos of Buber: Some Notes.* în *Outside the Subject*. London, Continuum, 2008.
13. Levinas, E. *Existence and Existents.* London. Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988.
14. Liddicoat, A.J. *An Introduction to Conversation Analysis.* London: Continuum, 2007.
15. Marian, Rodica, *Identitate şi alteritate*, Bucureşti, Ideea Europeană, 2005.
16. Marinoff, L. *Înghite Platon, nu Prozac.* Bucureşti, *Trei*, 2009.
17. Martin Buber, *Eu şi Tu*, Bucureşti, Humanitas,1992.
18. Nancy, J.L. *Being Singular Plural.* Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2000.
19. Nemoianu, Virgil, Postmodernism & Cultural Identities. Conflicts and Coexistence, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C., 2010;
20. Pichois, Claude, Literatură şi progres. Viteză şi viziune a lumii, Traducere, prefaţă şi un capitol privind literatura română de Dim. Păcurariu, Ed. Univers, Bucureşti, 1982;
21. Rădulescu, Monica, Realms of Exile: Nomadism, Diasporas and Eastern European Voices, Lexington Books, USA., 2002;
22. Simion, Bărbulescu, *Din perspectiva alterităţii*,Scrisul Prahovean – Ceraşu, 1999.

BDD-A21809 © 2014 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 15:16:47 UTC)