Human Development III

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Edited by

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Series: New Horizon

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This book first published 2017

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

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FOREWORD

The challenges faced by contemporary societies are increasingly more complex and difficult to address. Human beings, on their "voyage" to build and redefine their identity, are becoming more and more involved in matters of great concern, but without the proper tools to take on and resolve them. Individuals are called upon to play a role in the different areas of community life (suffering, studying, working, etc.), which oblige them to reflect on themselves and the consequences of their behavior and their decisions, decisions which require a wealth of knowledge and experience that surpasses the contexts of early modernity.

Humans must face this seismic change, working along paths of life that may lead not only to satisfying their individual needs and desires, but also to questioning their role in society. The multidisciplinary focus characterizing this edition of *Human Development III* is the same one that pertains to human beings, mankind and individuals. As human beings we must recognize our limitations in order to overcome these shortcomings, learn how to find every type of psychological, social and cultural resource that society makes available to us, and at the same time, learn how to learn, discover and find new resources, identifying new tools that allow us to face our own existence.

Based on these premises, the authors of this book, through different disciplinary focuses, present the reader with the topic of human development in all its complexity, multidimensionality and applicability to different human contexts, thus providing rich and detailed coverage of the different topics present in society. This includes a careful analysis of linguistic and semiotic inter-objectivity in Spanish-language television commercials; a critical look at the educational function of teachers of therapeutic psychology, impregnated in ethical and social values, as well as a characterization of respect for students as individuals; a sensitive reflection on the relation between humanity, nature and the artist, in which ecological values are stressed that are transmitted to the beholder through a work of art; the importance of interpersonal skills in the profession of journalism, with specific reference to the analysis of those related to emotional intelligence; an analysis of the concept of apparently modern

leadership and traditional discipline in the training of the Roman centurion and the role of this figure in ancient Rome; a critical presentation of the Movistar case from a linguistic-semiotic perspective, focusing on the analysis of the brand identity; the use of an innovative methodology, based on the scientific research offered by neuropsychology as a resource for effective learning; a sociological analysis of the "uncomfortable" presence of death and its role in our contemporary society, through two case studies; and a careful consideration of the fragmented self in late modernity, suspended between crisis, options and opportunities.

Media, brands, education, art, journalism, leadership, training, identity, change and late modernity: different topics, different areas of life, but ones that characterize human existence, in the construction of identity and in social and individual aspects, our natural and cultural heritage; they are truly multidimensional, multifaceted, ever-changing and complex, even for this.

As a result, with *Human Development III*, the international Personal Development research team intends to continue the work begun in 2011, with the first edition of *Human Development* (Visionlibros), and continued with *Human Development II*, only because it was felt and believed that such a sensitive topic, which is found increasingly more at the center of contemporary debate, deserved continuing and profound attention, as well as a discussion on multidisciplinarity: a clear example of the richness of the contributions from the different intellectuals gathered here.

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CHAPTER I

THE INTEROBJECTIVITY OF ADVERTISING IN SPANISH COMMERCIALS: A SEMIOTIC-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

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1. Introduction

We live surrounded by objects. The function of the world is reduced to a network with outstanding filaments corresponding to the frequent exchanges of objects that occur between the human groups or individuals and those associated with the continuous interweaving of messages that carry information from one place to another with multi-purpose and varied effects. In this dynamic plot, we can perceive the warp of the interwoven influences by the messages and the massive exchanges that impersonally reach large groups of people in order to face them with the same stimulus through the creation of existing signs, based on an individual producer as the structuring principle of the discourse of brand identity, as indicated by, among others, Aaker (1997), Floch (1995), Kripke (1971), Lacey (1998), Lombardi (2007), Marrone (2007), Maslow (1991), Moragas (1976), Murphy (1989), Sánchez Corral (1997), Vilchez (1990), Violi (1997), and Volli (2003).

In this regard, Marrone emphasizes the statements of Baudrillard (1968) and more recently of Latour (1991, 1996) intentionally about the inserted technical actor in the world for the service of society. As a result, the objects acquire an active role of the individuals, the social actors:

> [...] gli oggetti sono soggetti, attori sociali che, alla stregua di noi attori sociali umani, compiono azioni, svolgono compiti, in breve inter-agiscono fra di loro e fra loro e noi (Marrone, 2002: 166).

We have an example that Propp (1928) refers to as *adyuvante mágico,* and Marrone (2002: 168) categorizes as *oggetti neo-magici* highlighting the manipulation of a man by the subject:

> Baudrillard (1968) parlava giá del fatto che siamo manipolati e sedotti dagli oggetti e che nelle nostre societá i veri 'soggetti forti' sono gli oggetti.

In this way the "objeto neo-mágico" of the postmodern society, or like Giddens (1990) says "tardo-moderne", is a kind of hybrid in a constant evolutionary innovation like a new class of an "object-subject". In this article we are going to analyze how the "object-subject neo magical" is represented in a semio-linguistic way in the Spanish advertising spot of Movistar, the Company of Telecommunications in 1998[1], in order to show that object centrism is constant in the society in which the human being finds self-fulfillment through his attachment to the valuable object transformed into a "neo-magical" subject-object capable of performing any function, becoming, in this way, a sign.

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[1] Perez Yuste (2002: 26-31) reminds us of the historical context of the implementation of mobile telephony in Spain and points out, with regard to this year 1998, that after the phase in which a "duopoly" was established between Telefónica and Retevisión, the next step was to begin the process of allocating the assets of both companies. On 18th January, 1997, 20.9% of Telefonica, which was owned by the state, was put on sale by the most publicized initial public offering (IPO) of all time (in 1994, 12% of Telefónica was privatized); it ceased to be a public company within a month. This would also happen to Retevisión on 11th July, 1997, going to the consortium formed by the Italian operator STET (Telecom Italia), Endesa Power and Union Fenosa. After this phase, the government decided to balance the conditions of the service which inevitably affected Telefónica and Retevisión and mobile telephony. To this end, a new contest on February 26, 1998 granted three licenses in the form DCS-1800 (Digital Cellular System), a system very similar to GSM mobile communications working in the band 180 MHz convened and specifically designed for microcellular environments. On April 24 1998, the General Telecommunications Act was passed and two months later, on June 24, 1998, the third license was granted to Retevisión Móvil (a subsidiary of Retevisión) to exploit the mobile telephony service in competition with Telefonica Moviles and Airtel. Subsequently, on July 16, 1998, Retevisión Móvil was established as an independent limited company with the majority stake in its ownership of Retevisión and Telecom Italia; and on January 24, 1999, the new company started service in 10 major Spanish cities under the suggested trademark of "Amena". While this was happening, Telefonica Moviles had reached a record five million customers with an approximate distribution of four million subscribers in Movistar. Airtel, meanwhile, at the same time exceeded two million customers reaching mobile penetration in Spain as a whole, the figure being close to 18%.

2. Intersubjectivity in commercial advertising.
The neo-mágico object

2.1. The centrism object

"There are machines that are part of us." This is how the story begins, told by the narrator of the chosen spot, linguistically highlighting objectivity as the "part of" humanity in which it is included. What machines is he talking about? What does "being the part of" mean?—through identification and the fusion between the subject and an object made in time. Now, how is this time represented?—on circularity, in a sepia tone, and by watches in constant motion. Close to these there is no lack of a vertical extension or the presence of the well-known bird of the cuckoo clock.
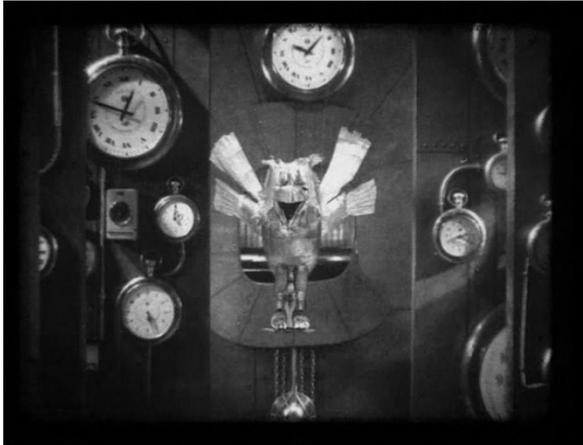
Fig. 1. The object-subject neo-magical. Movistar (Telefónica, 1998)

Notice how the bird's body is identified with the squareness of the movable body. Above it, the wings are spread. This movement allows access to the interior of the object. We are facing a visual flashback represented by chromaticism and by the "portrait" of the "machines". The inward journey is divided into two parts as the narrator recounts: the conquest of time and the conquest of communication. The first conquest implies the idea of circular motion.
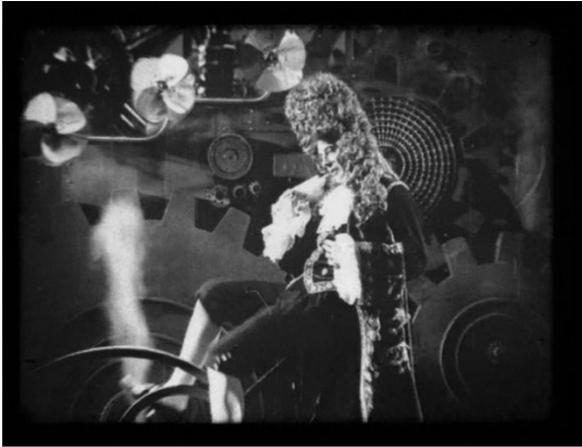
Fig. 2. The object-subject neo-magical. Movistar (Telefónica, 1998)

As we can see, we are facing the subject-object's fusion where the chromatic subject from the past is found on the circularity as an adjunct to the movement. The gestures of the subject are characterized by the asymmetry in the extension of the arms, because while the right hand is bent close to the ear, the left maintains its normal extension. Everything forms a part of a message of identity of the sign. Therefore, subject-moving machines are assisted minimally by the presence of the human subject. We are facing the centrism object in which the human being plays the secondary role.

2.2. The conquest of communication

How is communication visually represented? Through the following images:

- ❖ The moon;
- ❖ The stars;
- ❖ Chromaticism.

The brightness, the circularity and the universe as a brand image introduce a new combination of the subject-object where the representation of the human being acquires a greater spatial presence in addition to playful complicity with the communicative bodies. Front to make the time, communication is characterized by the action of taking.

Let us see how the female image of Fig. 3 presents the asymmetry of the arms that we noticed in the subject of the weatherman, but with a different layout: she is catching the star.

Contact is one of the constants of the identity of the brand discourse at this stage; it is necessary to take the sign. So here is the human being between the two natural and spatial subjects forming a part of them.

The human subject from the past is installed outside its habitat as it takes its place in the universe of the future where there is no lack of stars and circular elements.

Let us see how the human being always appears attached to the object, experiencing all the identifiable object-dependence on the sign; a dependence manifested in the anaphoric multiplication sign on the scene.
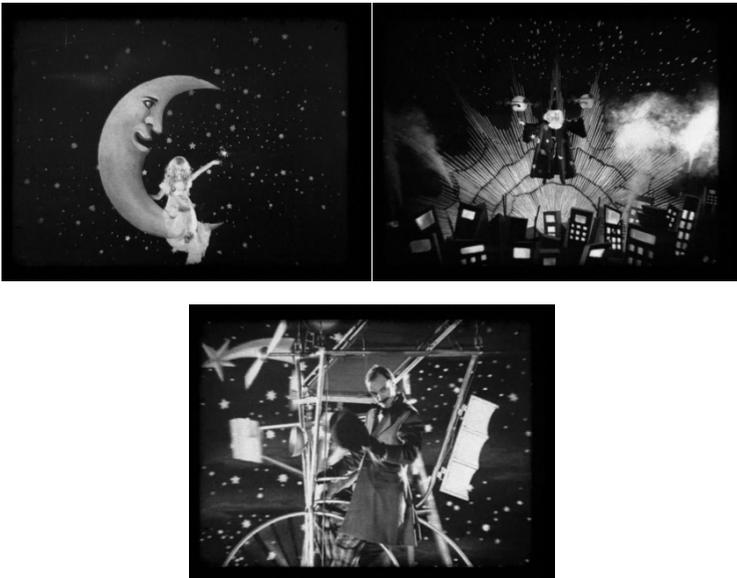
Fig. 3. The object-subject neo-magical. Movistar (Telefónica, 1998)

The space has contextualized an attached being: the mobile human subject. Look at how the magic human being, by the symmetrical extension of his arms, is attached to the object of value that is presented metonymically by an iconic color-circularity of the communication elements: the answer and hang-up buttons. The body of the valuable object is characterized by its

darkness, although it is presented with lights inside. At the top of the image on the right-hand side of Fig. 3, the magician occupies the center of the stage surrounded by the light of the star, on the repetition of the valuable object located at a low level.

2.3. The object of syncretic value

The object of value has multiple functions in different scenes that aesthetically cover it, as Dusi, Marrone and Montanari (2002: 183) point out. What functions does the valuable object acquire?

1. *It can be your bank*

Fig. 4. The object-subject neo-magical. Movistar (Telefónica, 1998)

The practical value of the object acquires magic in motion, so that we are witnessing the creation of the new aesthetic, everyday concept "bank" through the following representation:

- ❖ Linguistic verticality of the title;
- ❖ The gateway of the valuable object devoiding its exterior coverage;
- ❖ Circular bodies over the valuable object (chromatic circles colored in red, green and yellow as icons of communication and the identified opening on the globe);
- ❖ The shrinking of the human group world figure in black shade, occupying the bottom part of the scene.

2. *The guardian of your house*

Fig. 5. The object-subject neo-magical. Movistar (Telefónica, 1998)

The visual representation is the following:

- ❖ Two guardian soldiers in motion with an asymmetry of their arms at the entrance of the house;
- ❖ A central door between rectangular and oval lines sharpens as a star;
- ❖ Two phones at the sides with the screens on, preaching excellent coverage;
- ❖ A stellar background;
- ❖ The moon with circularity represented in the oral surface.

3. *Your doctor*
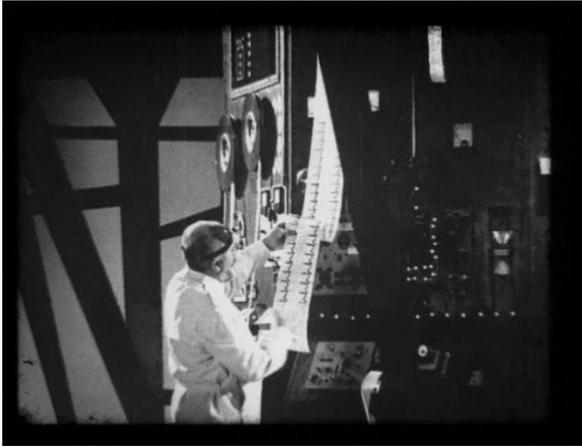
Fig. 6. The object-subject neo-magical. Movistar (Telefónica, 1998)

This concept is represented from the outside whose imagery is:

- ❖ Verticality of a space tower;
- ❖ Triple circularity around the tower.

And from the inside:

- ❖ A human being wearing a doctor's uniform focusing on the lighting;
- ❖ A rectangular tower;
- ❖ A rectangular paper held by the doctor.

4. *Your postman*

Fig. 7. The object-subject neo-magical. Movistar (Telefónica, 1998)

- ❖ Rectangular mailboxes in which are displayed the turned-on screens of the valuable objects with excellent coverage;
- ❖ Messenger flying fairies around buzz;
- ❖ Messenger fairies flying around the mailboxes, with outstretched wings moving to place the mail in the mailbox.

5. *Your key*

Fig. 8. The object-subject neo-magical. Movistar (Telefónica, 1998)

- ❖ A rectangular image of the medieval castle;
- ❖ A mobile-shaped bridge.

6. *Your break*

Fig. 9. The object-subject neo-magical. Movistar (Telefónica, 1998)

- ❖ A rectangular dragon;
- ❖ A child taking a mobile with which it destroys the dragon.

Let us see how the intersubjectivity is perfectly portrayed in this announcement in which, as Marrone (2002: 192) notes about the theory of Floch (1925), the interobjective

> é solo nell´incontro tra cose e tra persone, nella loro reciproca trasformazione, che i vari oggetti si costituiscono.

Meeting and granting the reciprocal identity of both the object and the human subject, acting as a valuable social actor, as the authors themselves point out in relation to the statement of Latour (1999: 126-127):

> Latour invita a considerare gli oggetti quotidiani, non solo quelli tecnologici, alla stregua di attori sociali. Rispetto al sistema sociale gli oggetti non 'simbolizzano', non 'riflettono', non 'reificano' le relazioni tra soggetti, ma *contribuiscono a formarle*, perché, scrive. Latour: 'il senso non preesiste mai ai dispositivi tecnici'. Gli oggetti, considerati come *agenti*, funzionano come mediatore incaricati non tanto di veicolare messaggi, ma de costituire, riscrivere, modificare il senso. L´intermediario tradizionale non era che un mezzo per un fine, mentre il mediatore é mezzo e fine insieme. (Marrone, 2002: 192)

The syncretism of the "object-subject neo-magical" combines the practical value with the utopian and playful, the latter being the everyday to create a magical, symbolic, beautiful, new and immaterial space where the user joined with his valuable object is fully self-realized.[2]

3. Conclusion

Throughout this article we have analyzed how the human being auto-realizes himself next to his valuable object, which experiences an alchemical transformation of the labeled product, structured by its materiality and practicality to sign-brand the creator of new needs and values with the self-fulfilling identitarian attached to the social deprivation in the need for the growth (self-realization) of the user, as Maslow (1991) points out, its own identity is made by conjugating with their spiritual, symbolic brand image recognized beyond the physical and practical material.

Far from being publicized in a practical way, Movistar is gestated in the process of creation as a sign-essential brand to a necessary recognition by a user-sign combination. In this regard Klein points out the differences between the act of advertising and the creation of a brand highlighting the following:

> Advertising the products is only one aspect of the larger plan of the brand, as well as the sponsorship and commercial licenses. We must consider the brand as the core meaning of the modern corporation, and advertising as a vehicle that is used to convey this meaning to the world. (Klein, 2005: 33)

Therefore, there is a need for the identity to create that essential meaning of the company:

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[2] Floch (1990: 176) presents a semiotic square of the axiology of consumption by analyzing the communication of the Citroen 80, establishing four valuations in the user/object relationship:
  - A practical valuation with what is considered to be the object character of the instrument;
  - A Utopian valuation, in which the subject performs its own identity conjugating with his valuable object;
  - A recreational and aesthetic valuation, which is considered to be the object away from formal and physical qualities of practicality;
  - A critical valuation, in which the object is chosen for its convenience.

> What distinguished the first attempts to impose the current marketing brands was the fact that the market was flooded with almost identical mass-production. In the machine age, the competition between the brands became a necessity: in a context of identity production, it was necessary to make both products and their differences by brand [...] The advertising has changed, and stopped to consist of newsletters on the outputs to build a related version of the image that were manufactured products under a given brand. (Klein, 2005: 34)

In conclusion, as Minestrone (2002: 157) notes "non basta essere mark note per essere Brand", as in order for notoriety to exist, the name must have a meaning. The universe is full of emotions, values, and suggestions that transform the materiality of the labeled product to an object-subject "neo-magical," capable of any function, with spirituality transgressing its physical meaning for the sake of a further symbolic and immaterial meaning with its own representation, with a brand image to the user necessarily attached to the identitarian, becoming self-realization and, a subject maker.

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CHAPTER II

FACING THE CHANGE: IDENTITY, REFLEXIVENESS, AND TRUST IN THE TOOL KIT OF RADICAL MODERNITY

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1. Narration, identity, reflexiveness

Self-narration is a form of representation: we do not experience real life as it is, but filtered through mentality. If we rework the social facts surrounding us and build our autobiography through narration, it is likely that the stories collected will tell us something about people in society.

Jerome Bruner and other authors have spotted a fundamental function of storytelling: that is, building ourselves as texts through the biographical stories collected in life stories. In building and telling our own story, we mix our own life stories with public stories (those told by others) and conceptual stories, in an articulate, well-ordered totality. This cannot be an individual process: autobiographical narration is the result of the work of the storyteller and of the listener covering the role of the interviewer, where the context in which this happens affects the contents and the way they are held together.

The dynamics described above develop on the basis of criteria allowing us to associate new stories to the ones already stored away, thus creating what Bruner defines as an "accrual of narratives", that is, a personal historiography built on the stories acquired through media, books, and daily experiences presented as stories.

Our personal reality is processed through storytelling as though it were a book, with a title referring to the sense we intend to give our life, and chapters highlighting the most significant events, as well as notes explaining the most obscure points, etc. The book is obviously always subject to changes and revisions, since social experiences enrich us with new stories.

Through storytelling, each of us acquires materials useful to build our personal identity, keeps the collective memory of our own cultural contest, and reaches out to share the contents.

The interest in narrative thinking has developed only recently, especially after media analysis transformed storytelling into a study of the metaphor of life, where stories are considered universal means to give and share meanings of human events.

Jerome Bruner must be given credit for his studies on the validity of narrative thinking as a possible approach to understanding reality, especially the social and biographical facts.

Bruner distinguishes paradigmatic from narrative thinking, where neither of them excludes or overwhelms the other since the research areas they cover are different.

Paradigmatic thinking is finalized to the creation of scientific stories, demonstrated by proofs showing that the theory is always valid; it develops vertically and each case falls within larger superordinate categories and analyzes the interaction between the phenomena in terms of causality.

2. Narration and the building of the self

Besides the fact that communication is complicated by the excessive number of languages available, another phenomenon characterizes the 21st century: the increasing number of people obsessed with identity. The explanation of the problem of identity in modern society is almost redundant: it is a modern problem because investigations regarding it were started in modern times. Until the 19th century, human sciences were mostly concentrating on the public sectors of work and power, while giving the private sectors a negative implication.

Moreover, until the early twentieth century, social scholars believed that the subjective field was limited to a series of feelings perceivable only

from a personal point of view: social psychologists revolutionized this perspective changing the direction, from the outside to the inside, considering each action not only from the actor's point of view, but also from that of the surrounding social context.

Nowadays, identity is the subject of psychic, social and personal analyses, since the features so far detected in modern society complicate the process of building a personal identity.

Narration is the means through which people produce reflexiveness on events.

The intentional structure through which humans understand the existence of motivations that guide the others' actions, becomes more concrete during adolescence, when the patterns learned as children and considered valid until then, start to show their inconsistency. In fact, it is most of all during adolescence that the first significant comparison with non-ordinary events occurs, in trying to place them in a consistent frame through narration.

During adolescence a first distinction between personal and narrative identities takes shape: at first, the self is considered the only cause of action. Later, from the ages of 5-7 to adolescence, we start to understand the difference between the narrating self and the acting self. In other words, we understand the possibility for the same persons to narrate about themselves and to be the main characters of someone else's story, as well as the limitations that the acting self may meet. Finally, in late adolescence and all through adulthood, the narrating self is joined by the unconscious self that safeguards the accrual of the narrative so far accumulated. The task of the unconscious self is to suggest the past stories that the narrating self should refer to in the present.

Before the possible misunderstanding created by the various contexts that we all need to sort out, Bruner and other authors such as Giddens detect the additional fundamental function of storytelling, that is, using autobiography to create the self as text. In creating our autobiography, we place our life stories and the public stories in a consistently tidy totality. This is not an individual process: an autobiography is also created by the narrator and the listener, and the context in which it occurs affects its contents and how to keep them together.

The autobiographic self therefore may rightly be considered a social self (when self-narration is not compatible with the reference environment,

pathologies linked to social adaptation may arise) and at the same time a fundamental means to understand ourselves.

3. Reflexiveness and change

In modern times, the phenomenon of indetermination affects the life of the new generations and of social organizations in general, and it manifests itself in the way the entrance into adulthood is questioned from various points of view, under the pressure of change.

The social passages that used to lead to adult roles (the start of a professional life, marriage, leaving the family of origin) are delayed, and we witness mutual disorientation and desynchronization.

The lack of social predictability leads to the difficulty in making individual choices for at least three reasons: we are not sure of what the options are, the paths leading to the implementation of the options are not clear, and we feel that any behavioral strategy used so far will hardly determine the outcomes in the future. In this context, the mechanical socialization loses effectiveness, the time horizon where the identity-building processes are supposed to act is limited to the here and now, or to the infinite, where procrastination may turn into a dreamland.

This condition may be experienced in radically different ways: either passively endured, or used as an opportunity.

In the first case, it generates the inability to create a life project and therefore to activate the strategies to implement it; in this case, the identity is linked to the present times, to what we do, the friends we meet, and the experiences we have, and for this reason it is transient, scattered, and not projected towards the future. The social institutions going through this state are experienced as irrelevant and empty; they are used as a temporary source of existence, but are rapidly abandoned in search of something else, and fail to become the object of an emotional investment. This condition may be lived as a strategy, as an opportunity for researching and experimenting.

In radical modernization, the role of tradition as the basis "of the action as foundation of the authority decreases gradually" (Thompson, 1998).

The failing of traditional authority does not necessarily cause the disappearance of traditions; rather, it causes a change in their nature and role in everyday life. Regulatory and lawful aspects become increasingly

less important, although tradition keeps its significant role as a tool to interpret reality and to build a sense of belonging.

Unlike traditional conditions, the identity of contemporary subjectivity becomes an open condition: no longer bound by the regulations of tradition, the self is more open to experimenting and researching new opportunities and lifestyles, through the constant redefinition of the limits of the cognizable, and therefore also of its own existence, of social rules and how to explain phenomena. We need to reinterpret the sense of our actions and information: a univocal explanation of the social worlds no longer makes sense, as it may be understood in several different ways.

4. Renewing tradition

Enlightenment thinkers believed in reason's full ability to explain the world and to solve its social and political problems. They believed that the more human beings discerned the world, the more control they had over it. Control was the key to happiness: the more humans could actively create history, the more the latter could be directed to meet human targets. A deeper discernment of the social world would result in more certainties in the field of life conditions.

Other thinkers such as Max Weber imagined a more pessimistic link between knowledge and control. With his image of the steel cage, Weber underlines how the progressive process of rationalization and bureaucratization ends up with coercing social actions and becoming a prison of technological knowledge where we are the small cogs.

Neither perspective shows reliable representations of contemporaneity. The relation between the development of human knowledge and self-knowledge has proved much more complex than the Enlightenment considered it, despite not acquiring the penalizing feature that Weber pinpointed.

Nowadays, late modern societies must come to terms with the consequences of technological development that came with industrial society.

Ulrich Beck refers to our society by defining it a risk society, where everything is at full speed and hardly controllable, ever subject to the risk of future catastrophes and environmental disasters, and the uncertainties of a nuclear war; or more simply, a society where in most countries the

unemployment rate is ever increasing and unskilled jobs are more and more at risk.

These global risks, ascribable to society, involve all of us regardless, and overcome generational limits because their consequences are more dangerous for the future generations.

All through the history of human kind, the idea of the future has been scary: anxiety and uncertainty have always featured in human life and there have never been proofs that traditional cultures were more balanced than todays'. Nevertheless, Giddens states that "undoubtedly, the contents and the shape of this age's main anxieties are different". He adds that the circumstances of our current existence are not less predictable than before; rather, the sources of the unpredictability have changed. Many of the uncertainties we face were in fact originated by human knowledge. An increased amount of uncertainty is the outcome of the increase in the amount of choices and opportunities we are offered, compared to the past. In such a context, choice acquires an increasingly important, almost obligatory dimension: in a risk society, deciding not to choose is almost impossible. We are no longer facing a zero-sum game with a winner and a loser, and you cannot lose if you are not playing. Paradoxically, today if you do not take part in the game you end up losing even more than the actual players. Therefore, our biography becomes self-reflexive.

The evolution of the traditional forms through which we faced anxious and uncertain situations (family, marriage, and fixed male and female roles) has resulted in us now facing anxieties and doubts on a personal basis.

> Knowledge forces us to decide and offers new opportunities. People are free from structures and in the situation of consequent uncertainty they must define a new context in which to act, and a new identity. (Beck, Giddens and Lasch, 1999)

Therefore, uncertainty does not seem to be the outcome of the inexistence of stable social worlds to be known, but rather of the fact that it is the knowledge of this world that contributes to its unstable and chancing character. The reflexiveness in radical modernity does not necessarily entail renouncement, to escape this state of uncertainty; rather, acceptance of this ambivalence as awareness of our limits and of the need to find new references and life styles.