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Tomasz Leszniewski
Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences
Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń
ORCID: 0000-0002-0458-4934

The Sources of Social Acceptance of Otherness. An Analysis of the Inner Identity Structure Mechanisms Responsible for Individual and Collective Identifications

Problem społecznej akceptacji inności. Analiza mechanizmów funkcjonujących wewnątrz struktury tożsamościowej odpowiedzialnych za identyfikacje indywidualne i kolektywne

Streszczenie

Tekst prezentuje rozważania dotyczące problemu postaw akceptacji inności w świecie społecznym. Podstawę refleksji stanowią założenia modelu identyfikacji społecznej, które źródło wykluczenia czy dyskryminacji upatrują w procesie społecznej kategoryzacji. Ludzie z uwagi na osobistą korzyść w postaci pozytywnej samooceny faworyzują członków tej samej kategorii społecznej, z którą sami się identyfikują. Tym, co daje możliwość ograniczania zjawiska wykluczenia, jest zatem społeczna zdolność zaszczepiania, a następnie uruchamiania pokładów ogólnoludzkich kategorii, stających się tym samym podstawą identyfikacji i procesów grupowych. Zrozumienie zjawiska częściowej labilno-

ści społeczeństwa pod względem stosunku do innego/obcego, powodowanej wpływem czynników zewnętrznych, wymaga rekonstrukcji trzech zasadniczych wymiarów tego emergentnego procesu: indywidualnego, interakcyjnego oraz instytucjonalnego, będącego odzwierciedleniem strukturalnego porządku. Teza postawiona i rozwinięta w tekście wskazuje na szczególną rolę tożsamości osobistej jednostki, stanowiącej istotny czynnik generowania zmiany postawy wobec innego/obcego na bardziej otwartą i akceptującą.

Słowa kluczowe: społeczna kategoryzacja, tożsamość społeczna, tożsamość osobista, dyskryminacja, wykluczenie

Abstract

This paper focuses on attitudes of acceptance towards Otherness in the social world. The discussion is based on the assumptions of the social identity model, according to which exclusion and discrimination originate in the process of social categorisation.[1] Seeking personal gain in the form of self-worth, people tend to favour members of the social category they identify with. Consequently, in an attempt to reduce exclusion and discrimination it is necessary to refer to the social ability to instil and activate the resource of universal categorisations as the foundation for social identifications and group processes. To comprehend society's partial (and externally motivated) lability regarding the Other/Stranger, one must reconstruct the three principal dimensions of this emergent process – individual, interactive and institutional (as a reflection of the structural order). The article puts forward a thesis that highlights the unique role of the individual identity as an essential factor in generating a change of attitude towards the Other/Stranger and turning it into a much more open and accepting one.

Keywords: social categorisation, social identity, individual identity, discrimination, exclusion

[1] H. Tajfel et al., *Social Categorization and Intergroup Behaviour*, "European Journal of Social Psychology", 1971 vol. 1 no. 2; J.C. Turner, *Social Comparison and Social Identity: Some Prospects for Intergroup Behaviour*, "European Journal of Social Psychology", 1975 vol. 5 no. 1; J.C. Turner, R.J. Brown, H. Tajfel, *Social Comparison and Group Interest in Ingroup Favouritism*, "European Journal of Social Psychology", 1979 vol. 9 no. 2.

Introduction

The human species can form and exist in communities only because we were capable of developing the necessary rules. They define the adaptation forms for individuals whose personal vitality feeds the collective order, ensuring its continuity. In addition to the universal rules enabling the existence of both individuals and communities, there is also the cultural and historical context that defines the principles of human coexistence in greater detail. The ability to function in complex and internally diverse conditions, reflecting the specificity of complex social systems, emerges as a particularly interesting issue,[2] highlighting the importance of the human competence to inclusively categorise the world around us. It is as a form of tolerance and open-mindedness not only to various manifestations of Otherness posed by new situations but also to other people with their variety of characteristics, qualities and affiliations. George H. Mead describes this type of attitude as universal brotherhood ('brotherhood of men', 'universal relations of brotherhood'); it allows the individual to feel one with other people and objects around them.[3] Venturing beyond the current world of social categorisations, which provide the foundation for both collective identities and the effective operation of mechanisms responsible for social relations, seems to be possible in situations where 'the individual appeals, so to speak, from a narrow and restricted community to a larger one, that is, larger in the logical sense of having rights which are not so restricted'.[4]

The adaptability of individuals and collectives is presumed to be determined by their capacity to act in a manner that allows for the 'appropriation' of new content and elements in the environment, as indicated by William James.[5] Assuming that this type of action results from

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[2] N. Luhmann, *Systemy społeczne: zarys ogólnej teorii*, Kraków 2012; T. Parsons, *System społeczny*, Kraków 2009.

[3] G.H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society. The Definitive Edition*, Chicago–London 2015.

[4] Ibidem, p. 199.

[5] W. James, *Psychologia: kurs skrócony*, Warszawa 2002, p. 119–164.

the social categorisation and classification of the experienced reality, the human identity structure can be said to be responsible for defining social differences and social divides, which dictate the corresponding forms of interpersonal relations. Consequently, a hypothesis can be put forward that the inner structure, where personal identification prevails over the collective one, is a principal factor responsible for the individual's tolerant and open-minded attitude to Otherness. This discussion seeks to establish how this 'switching' from the collective to the personal identification (and vice versa) occurs within the human identity structure, and how this process can be stimulated or blocked.[6]

1. On social categorisation

When addressing the probl1em of social identification defining the character of social relationships and intergroup relations, it is first necessary to analyse the processes of the formation and stabilisation of social categories that structure reality. While they can be assumed to be generating social divides and determining the nature of interpersonal relations, their origins should be sought in the divisions that characterised the primal structures of collective life.

The pursuit of an explanation for the emergence and functioning of social categorisation must recognise cognitive necessity as the basis for the cooperative adaptation to the existing world. Defined by the functional rules of cooperation practices, the cognitive process is a critical element in the development of a permanent organisational structure of community life. In other words, if effective, actions related to solving problems and satisfying needs are translated into certain cognitive categories that ultimately are responsible for a specific type of community logic. As a result, the process of adaptation seems to be inextricably linked to the collective need to generate a grid of specific categories and rules connecting them so as to consolidate patterns that ensure control over both material and social reality.

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[6] J. Turner, *Ku poznawczej redefinicji pojęcia "grupy społecznej"*, in: *Małe struktury społeczne*, ed. J. Turowski, Lublin 1999.

What does this process of the social memory formation and consolidation look like? Perhaps a comprehensive answer to this question lies in the institutional perspective that highlights the close relationship between social institutions and categories and categorisation. Seeking to reconstruct the phenomenon of 'thinking institutions', Mary Douglas describes their social emergence.[7] She argues that a relationship between a person and their material or social environment reveals itself in the process of a search for and recognition of similarities and differences that define the boundaries and the order of the experienced reality. This suggests that, by employing specific categories, humans are able to determine the said similarities and differences in the world they experience. However, this approach favours the acquisition of control by group categories and their application rules over the perceptual process of the individual. If it is to constitute itself, cooperative order requires also a social factor – the valuation and the combination of specific cognitive categories. Douglas associates the effectiveness of the emerging social institutions with the need for the naturalisation ('grounding in nature') of the principles on which a given type of category-based social organisation is founded. Considering the institutional origins of human civilisation, she discusses the divisions based on masculinity and femininity, spatial directions (right–left) and relationships shaped by the rules of kinship. This would indicate that the social categories imposed on various spheres of human life are inevitably founded on these naturalised principles. However, the 'founding analogies have to be hidden and […] the hold of the thought style upon the thought world has to be secret. […] By using formal analogies that entrench an abstract structure of social conventions in an abstract structure imposed upon nature, institutions grow past the initial difficulties of collective action'.[8]

According to Emil Durkheim, for a social category to emerge, it is first necessary for humans to experience the 'concept of totality', a concept that stands above any detailed classifications of social reality.[9] 'The concept of totality is only the abstract form of the concept of soci-

[7] M. Douglas, *Jak myślą instytucje*, Warszawa 2011.
[8] Ibidem, p. 53.
[9] E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, London 2012.

ety: it is the whole which includes all things, the supreme class which embraces all other classes. Such is the final principle upon which repose all these primitive classifications where beings from every realm are placed and classified in social forms, exactly like men'.[10] This indicates that the complex and organised structure of the social world – this emergent being endowed with specific properties – must reveal itself to and be experienced by the individual. At the same time, the classification of the surrounding reality emerges as a consequence of the 'social fact' that is society, rather than as a result of individual activity. If not mediated by the concept of the whole – society, an individual experience of the world is primarily accompanied by impressions. 'To recognise the fact that one thing resembles another which we have already experienced, it is in no way necessary that we arrange them all in groups and species: the way in which similar images call up each Other and unite is enough to give the feeling of resemblance. The impression that a certain thing has already been seen or experienced implies no classification'.[11]

It can therefore be assumed that the various forms of classification are both a reflection of the rules of social organisation and the foundation for their further reproduction ensuring the continuity and permanence of the collective existence. It would also indicate that the individual cannot generate a classification order on their own. The latter requires the experience of society to reveal the emergent quality of collective life for the individual. While endowing people with the ability to reflect (reflexivity), this very fact also allows them to express their individual attitude to social categories, also by developing an alternative social order through the intellectual and physical actions. This entails individualisation which does not question in its assumptions the social nature of the symbolic content used by the individualised subject. Following Durkheim, the liberation of the individual from the social rules of the classification and categorisation of the world could be indicative of the ongoing anomie and have a negative effect on the collective,

[10] Ibidem, p. 442.
[11] Ibidem, p. 423.

eventually leading to its disintegration.[12] However, Douglas's proposal to separate the universally accepted categorisation from the private one sems cognitively advisable.[13] In the former case, the atrophy of collective categories would result in anomie, while in the latter it leads to the alienation of the individual who has lost the ability to communicate with the surrounding world in its internal order. Each of these cases prompts the question whether it is possible to indicate a critical point beyond which the functional balance inscribed in the concepts of both Emil Durkheim and Mary Douglas (who develops his thought in her grid-group cultural theory) is disturbed. When are we dealing with individualisation and autonomy, and when with anomie and alienation?

Both Durkheim's concept of relationships between the individual and society and Douglas's grid-group cultural theory, employ a dichotomous system based on the opposition between the collective and the individual forms of the categorisation of the experienced world, making both categorisation methods mutually exclusive. While this approach may facilitate the analysis of social reality, the combining of the reality-categorising procedures with the individual's specific type of identification can make what John Turner describes as the 'switching' between the collective and individual identifications impossible.[14] Consequently, this processuality of the cognitive and identification procedures occurs, in a sense, beyond the cognitive reach of the otherwise fairly static functional perspective.

Given these arguments, Durkheim's concept of relationships between the individual and the social environment should be extended to include the aspect of solidarity derived from his theory of the division of labour. The latter focuses on the process of changes in social relations due to the division of labour and its consequences. What emerges from it is a new form of social solidarity based on functional dependence (organic solidarity). In contrast to the historically preced-

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[12] E. Durkheim, *Samobójstwo*, Warszawa 2011; E. Durkheim, M. Mauss, *Primitive Classification*, University of Chicago Press 1963.

[13] M. Douglas, *Symbole naturalne: rozważania o kosmologii: z nowym wprowadzeniem*, Kraków 2004.

[14] J. Turner, *Ku poznawczej redefinicji pojęcia "grupy społecznej"*, op. cit.

ing mechanical solidarity, which '[…] can only be strong to the extent that the ideas and tendencies common to all members of the society exceed in number and intensity those that appertain personally to each one of those members'[15] and '[…] can therefore only increase in inverse relationship to the personality',[16] organic solidarity, '[…] is only possible if each one of us has a sphere of action that is peculiarly our own, and consequently a personality. Thus the collective consciousness leaves uncovered a part of the individual consciousness, so that there may be established in it those special functions that it cannot regulate. The more extensive this free area is, the stronger the cohesion that arises from this solidarity'.[17]

This transformation of the bond between the individual and the collective, induced by the division of labour as described by Durkheim, highlights the social cohesion emerging from the increasingly diverse elements that form this comprehensive structure. It seems to be correlated with changes in the identity and the dynamics of identity's internal structure based on the relationship between the collective and the individual identifications. In addition, it emphasises the increasing role of the individual identification in the generation and preservation of cohesion within the expanding social structure.

2. The multidimensional dependence of a person's individual and collective identifications

At this point, our discussion leads us to the fundamental question: Should Turner's concept of 'switching' between the collective and the individual identifications be analysed only with regards to social identity? What factors influence the relationship between these elements of the identity structure? The process of categorisation and identification conducted by individuals within the form of the experienced world engages the entire identity structure of the person and is a consequence

[15] E. Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, New York 1997, p. 84.
[16] Ibidem.
[17] Ibidem, p. 85.

of many factors whose scope and effect translate into human activity. It is a reflection of the complex emergent structure of social reality, starting from the individual to the interaction and the system. Each of these dimensions employs its own array of rules of the world's categorisation and organisation. Consequently, there are three types of order: (1) the individual order that results from the rules and principles originating in the experience of the individual (socialisation); (2) the interactive order that emerges from relations between individuals and is situational by nature; and (3) the institutional order whose vitality is founded on permanent, extra-situational symbolic and organisational forms.[18]

Each of these dimensions of human existence determines the manner of action in relations with other people and, for the purposes of this discussion, is important in social relations that are not based on intergroup exclusion. This means that the process of categorisation of social reality, which is devoid of or seeks to reduce the discriminatory nature of the (currently developed) order of the experienced world, results from complex and dynamic relationships among these three dimensions: corporeal, interactive and systemic. The power of exclusion through categorising actions is an effect of the mutual coupling and coherence of normative orientations inscribed in the individual dimensions of human social existence. In addition, this multi-level emergent system of the social world is superimposed on the inner complexity of the individual's identity structure. Consequently, the explanation of the discriminatory nature of intergroup relations should be based on an analysis of both internal and external factors in relation to the individuals engaged in action.

Starting from the individual dimension, our search for the foundations of inclusion in social relations steers us towards the impact of community socialisation activities and the consequences of personal development. The relationship between the personal and the collective dimensions of the individual's identity leads to the assumption that the mechanism of exclusion related to the categorisation of the experienced reality is based not only on the internalised rules of the so-

[18] Cf. R. Jenkins, *Categorisation: Identity, Social Process and Epistemology*, "Current Sociology", 2000 vol. 48, no. 3, p. 10.

cial world but also the knowledge embodied through life experience, with the non-linguistic information playing a significant role. According to Margaret Archer,[19] the latter is a source of the human self and as such provides us with the ability to recognise the boundaries between the 'self' and 'non-self' (Others/Otherness) or social and non-social, acquire the performative skills in the external world, consolidate these experiences in memory and apply the 'principle of non-contradiction' in the incorporated learning process of the surrounding world.[20] Archer argues that such individual resources are necessary for the process of human socialisation to occur. Human encounters with the natural world and the material products of culture result in knowledge accumulated from everyday experience as embodied knowledge (in relation to the natural world) and practical knowledge (related to the practical order of reality composed of the material products of culture).[21]

The conclusion that comes to mind is that the mechanism of exclusion related to the categorisation of the experienced world should, by its very nature, be absent from the space of the embodied and practical knowledge. At the same time, the natural (and essentially practical) order is inevitably associated with the social order. This means that all those forms of exclusion and discrimination that developed in intergroup relations largely colonise the other two dimensions of human experience (natural and practical) through cultural patterns and social institutions. Consequently, the sources of exclusion and discrimination are much deeper than the individual or the community might think. However, what plays the decisive role in the formation of a specific exclusive behaviour and the sense of injustice (abuse) in the members of the category that experience it is the element of the discursive knowledge that provides the ideological interpretation of this state of affairs. In other words, to be aware of social injustice in interpersonal relations it is first necessary to have the idea of justice that defines the accessibility of the socially valued resources while indicating possible deficits in this area (e.g. social harm). The exclusionary and discriminatory

[19] M.S. Archer, *Człowieczeństwo: problem sprawstwa*, Kraków 2013.
[20] Ibidem, pp. 126–128.
[21] Ibidem, pp. 162–173.

character of social categories, which essentially form the symbolic culture of society, is also reflected in the practical order that organises the space of material cultural products with which the individual interacts.

What emerges from this discussion is an image of a multidimensional reality experienced differently by different people. In addition to embodied knowledge, there are the rules of interactive order, or the broadly defined institutional rules, which constitute a permanent element organising the human experience. It becomes evident and particularly significant in the face of fundamental differences between the embodied knowledge of the individual and the interactive or institutional order. The resulting tension results in various forms of the individual's adaptation to Otherness and differences in the world, especially in interpersonal and group relations.

In this search for the origins of intolerance and social exclusion, social value and norm orientations represented by people seem to be an obvious choice. The socialised nature of humans is perceived as a permanent and essentially unaltered, or difficult to alter, foundation on which all kinds of stereotypes and prejudice are built. However, as a product of relational experience between one's abilities and limitations or support from reality, the embodied and practical knowledge emerges as the matter most resilient to change on the individual level. The critical time when this tension between the individual resources and social expectations becomes particularly apparent is the process of upbringing where the group norms and values do not necessarily have to correspond to the individual's abilities and objectives. It is a discrepancy that can arise not only between the individual and the external environment but also within the individual, that is in the personal structure itself. Turner's identification switching, which allows us to overcome the discriminatory limitations in the categorisation of the world and definition of the identity of the self and Others, occurs in specific contexts determined by a combination of rules of the individual, interactive and institutional orders. They provide the basis for the analysis of relationships facilitating or blocking the formation of stereotypes and the resulting social exclusion.

3. The architecture of sympathy as the foundation for mutual respect

Richard Sennett also looks for answers to similar questions as the one asked by Turner: To what extent is it possible for a person to progressively transfer from identifying with individuals they know personally to identifying with Strangers?[22] R. Sennet approaches it through the context of social inequality and mutual respect whose expression is becoming increasingly problematic in contemporary society. These are the interactive mechanisms that make us establish relationships with the tendency to expand our interactive circles.[23] They provide us with the opportunity to maintain relations with the Other–Stranger based on mutual respect and a guarantee of the autonomy of each of the entities. R. Sennett's answer to the said question assumes that for this to happen it is necessary to engage in specific exchanges, go beyond the unrealised assumptions and reject the shared visions of the world.[24]

In this context, R. Sennett recognises the particular function of exchange in social rituals that integrate the community life participants who represent different social categories. Interactive practices that allow people of different social status and group affiliation to join together and build relationships based on reciprocity, constitute an institutional space that can guarantee the need for the individual to identify with the Other. This approach is not about supererogation, i.e. a voluntary behaviour in which the individual does more than moral duty requires, going beyond the social expectation,[25] but about the community rules of everyday functioning that ensure the organisational order. By introducing the principle of transaction into social relations, R. Sennett argues, the 'ethos of capitalism' emerges as a factor that destabilises the interactive order.[26] The practice of 'giving', the principal foundation of

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[22] R. Sennett, *Szacunek w świecie nierówności*, Warszawa 2012, p. 206.

[23] G.H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society. The Definitive Edition*, op. cit.

[24] R. Sennett, *Szacunek w świecie nierówności*, op. cit., p. 252.

[25] A. Kaniowski, *Supererogacja. Zagubiony wymiar etyki. Czyny chwalebne w etykach uniwersalistycznych*, Warszawa 1999.

[26] R. Sennett, *Szacunek w świecie nierówności*, op. cit., p. 222–229.

many social relations that express our concern for one another, has been turned into an exchange where a 'gift' can be received only if it has been 'deserved'.[27] As a result, the category of merit, or in other words of being an asset to society, limits the capacity for integration in a structured collective diversified in terms of access to key resources and positions. This fact can block or, in the very least, reduce the interactive potential to expand the identification boundaries of individuals, hindering their ability to identify with Strangers.

Mutual sympathy in social relations can also be analysed in terms of Florian Znaniecki's concept of 'moral position', a part of a role model pursued in interpersonal interactions. It provides us with '[…] the right to demand that in their conduct towards the individual the participants of a circle actively manifest positive social aspirations'.[28] It is a culturally conditioned social guarantee for the creation of an interactive space that is conducive to reciprocity and cooperation within a community. Mutual references provide the foundations for a social organisation based on 'sympathetic understanding'. 'When something very painful or very pleasant occurs to an individual participant, he (or she) has the right to expect a manifestation of sympathy from his circle – be it a large family or a circle of neighbours and acquaintances'.[29]

An interpretation of his ideas suggests that F. Znaniecki could refer to the interactive patterns forming the institutional social order that provides for the integration of various elements of the social system. The tacitly accepted and positive nature of the mutual attitudes adopted by interaction partners in their social roles enables social relations and lasting relationships between the members of the given community. It also increases the effectiveness of collective actions because the interaction partners are morally obliged to the 'sympathetic understanding', which relieves them from the need to negotiate the attitude each time upon the commencement of the interaction.

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[27] Ibidem, p. 227.

[28] F. Znaniecki, *Ludzie teraźniejsi a cywilizacja przyszłości*, Warszawa 2001, p. 107.

[29] F. Znaniecki, *Relacje społeczne i role społeczne: niedokończona socjologia systematyczna*, Warszawa 2011, p. 354–357.

4. Personal identity and internal dialogue in the process of expanding the boundaries of the experienced world

In the process of expanding the boundaries of social identification and participation of individuals in groups and social circles, primarily related to the collective dimension of identity, the role of personal identity is particularly striking. Analysing its function in the process of social inclusion, one can refer, on the one hand, to the system of values and moral norms that guide the individual, resulting in a positive attitude towards the other person regardless of the circumstances, and, on the other hand, to the function of personal identity as a manifestation of the individual's ability to act autonomously and in opposition to group stereotypes.

The latter case seems here more interesting because it highlights the processual nature of the emerging attitude (relationship) of the individual towards Otherness encountered in own social environment. Referring once again to the concept proposed by M.S. Archer,[30] attitude is a result of an emergent process occurring in the individual – an internal dialogue between the 'I', 'You' and the historical 'Me'.[31] This dialogue ensues due to the emotional stimulation driven by the individual's need to develop an attitude towards what is being experienced and oneself in this context. Dictated by the increasingly evident discrepancy between the respective phases of the human ego ('I' and 'You'), the internal dialogue is undertaken for the purpose of 'emotional morphogenesis' enabling the reflexivity over the individual behaviours and the transformation of emotions experienced in the process. What makes this inner conversation possible is the multitude and diversity of the forms of individual engagement with the social reality. As M.S. Archer

[30] M.S. Archer, *Człowieczeństwo*, op. cit.

[31] Archer defines the 'Me' as 'all the former 'I's' who have moved down the time-line of future, present to past, it functions as the known to both 'I' and 'You' as knowers' (ibidem, p. 229). This definition approach is intended to diverge from Mead's proposal of the definition of 'Me', which, Archer argues, is 'too overburdened with social normativity' (ibidem, p. 229; cf. G.H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society. The Definitive Edition*, op. cit.).

says, 'the self has attained a strict personal identity through its unique pattern of commitments'.[32] The resulting identity becomes a source of new meanings attributed to the experienced events and related emotions, thus allowing for further re-evaluations based on the ultimate concerns that guide the individual.

Functioning in three orders of reality – natural, practical and social – a person assimilates three corresponding types of human concerns: physical well-being, performative achievement and self-worth.[33] For a satisfying functioning of the individual, it is essential to define own priorities and relationships between the actually experienced concerns. Analysing their response to and emotional commentary on a given event, a person can change their emotional reaction by referring in the internal dialogue to the ultimate concerns related to the practical or the social order of reality. The multitude of diverse commitments and experience from the individual's participation in a variety of social groups provide the basis for the development of a complex structure of personal identity, while contributing to a potentially more frequent internal dialogue within the self. The reflexivity that emerges in these conditions provides the individual with a greater self-control over emotions and behaviour, allowing for a conscious experience of interactions with the other person and their Otherness, not with regards to concerns of the natural (balancing between the environmental threat or benefit) or practical order (undertaking an easy or difficult task) but primarily the concerns of the social order.[34] This highlights the need for self-worth which allows the individual to act in accordance with their own beliefs despite the disapproval of a part of society or social group. The self-worth built upon the history of the ego makes people refer to it even in the face of the lack of approval from the group to which they belong. In addition, since any form of Otherness ever experienced in social relations will in the future fill the voice of the 'You' in the internal dialogue, it compels us to form an attitude towards it, expressed both through emotion and action.

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[32] M.S. Archer, *Człowieczeństwo*, op. cit., p. 242.
[33] Ibidem, p. 228.
[34] Ibidem, p. 214–219.

This discussion on M.S. Archer's concept of personal identity and internal dialogue within the complex structure of the self[35] allows us to recognise this dimension of human identity as an extremely important factor in the individual's formation of a positive attitude, acceptance and tolerance towards the other person and Otherness.

Conclusion

While to many still abstract, questions about the relationship with the Other and Otherness become particularly significant in situations requiring the social sensitivity that goes beyond the cultural field of own community. The increasing challenges related to migrations and refugeeism for various reasons (political, economic, climate, etc.) not only prompt a reflection on the situation and attitude of states and citizens towards newcomers but, perhaps more importantly, call for action. The discussion presented in this article was an attempt to reconstruct the mechanisms responsible for a person's attitude towards the Other and Otherness.

Given the political and institutional engagement in further fuelling the resentment towards the Other, i.e. people who are not members of our national, cultural and political community, it is essential to look for the spaces of social life that can provide and stimulate the indispensable resource of sensitivity, both to limit the impact of social exclusion and support the emancipatory actions and development of individuals striving at what Mead referred to as universal brotherhood.[36] The latter allows the individual to consciously and intentionally switch[37] in their identification between the collective and the individual categorisations of the experienced world.

When highlighting the role of reflexivity and critical thinking, it is also necessary to recognise the special function of cognitive processes in the establishing of relationships with individuals that are different. The key thing is not so much to look for mutual similarities to activate

[35] Ibidem.
[36] G.H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society. The Definitive Edition*, op. cit.
[37] J. Turner, *Ku poznawczej redefinicji pojęcia "grupy społecznej"*, op. cit.

the group processes (e.g. favouring one's own), but to be part of the same category, which triggers the normative dimension of interaction. The resulting situational community will be motivated by stereotypes and self-stereotypes of the members of the given category. A similar course of action is also necessary when processing information. The use of the inclusive social categories, constituting a resource of the individual's personal identity, allows for the processing and synthesis of the received information and transforming it into knowledge that triggers a specific type of behaviour. On can refer here to Archer's concept of the types of knowledge used by humans (embodied, practical and discursive),[38] which indicates that to be able to function the individual requires not only the synthesis of information within the respective types of knowledge but also the mutual communication between them. Given that, at the same time, practice, or action, plays a fundamental role in human development and social relations, '[…] it is in and through practice that many of our human *potentia* are realised, potentials whose realisation are themselves indispensable to the subsequent emergence of those "higher" strata, the individual with strict personal identity, who is also a social Agent and Actor'.[39]

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[38] M.S. Archer, *Człowieczeństwo*, op. cit., p. 154–190.
[39] Ibidem, p. 190.

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