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Final Draft

Understanding **globalization** as a cause of **anomie**

"In Modernism, reality used to validate media. In Postmodernism, the media validate reality. If you don't believe this, just think how many times you've described some real event as being 'just like a movie'."

Brad **Holland**

Forethought

The understanding of globalization as a cause of anomie is presented in my thenceforth following essay: "*identity crisis caused by the discomforts of globalization*".

Furthermore, as the terms "*globalization*" and "*anomie*" give rise to the essay they are, for introductory purposes, succinctly defined below.

Globalization as a concept was popularized by Theodore Levitt, a professor at Harvard University, however, he did not coin the term first as its roots can be traced back to 1944. The term has been widely adapted by economists since 1981, however, it took about another ten years before the concept it refers to saturated popular interest (Wikipedia.org). Globalization could simply be understood as: to make worldwide (Heritage, 2006); however, the extend of the concept reaches much further. It refers to a certain space, a space known to shape our global society. In addition, globalization is a term which belongs to - and is therefore inseparably intertwined with - postmodernism. Globalization as a concept and the understanding of its discomforts will be based on my interpretations of Verbrugge's article named: "Globalisering en het hedendaagse onbehagen". Respectively, the definition of another term, first coined by Durkheim back in 1893, is desirable. *Anomie,* which refers to social instability caused by erosion of standards and values (Heritage, 2006).

Identity crisis caused by the discomforts of globalization

The current society is a globalized and postmodern one, the latter term can be succinctly understood as a time wherein we have another point of view and interpretation of the world, one that has become apparent as a worldview that replaces all existing worldviews. The postmodern time is one where thinking infinitely is possible, reality is not present, and insanity is data. Globalization has taken our borders away, technology enabled us to explore beyond our own understanding, and our self-identity is no longer a given, it has become a hunted. However, does this mean that human boundaries disappeared as well?

Beyond our globalized and postmodern world there is something Verbrugge calls "local communities" (Verbrugge, 2007), which is a allusion to the fact that humans do have boundaries and restrictions, we cannot be at multiple places at once and we need a fixed set of rules (Verbrugge, 2007). However, sometimes it seems that these boundaries and restrictions no longer apply since technology enables us to communicate worldwide at any time with anyone whilst we remain at one place and time. Consequently, globalization is merely a result of technology which has been known to cause crises. That, in turn, would mean that globalization is something that no one can 'opt out' due to the transformations brought about by our postmodern society (Giddens, 1991). Durkheim's theory can be used to add another dimension to this; the fact that we attempt to 'opt out' is, therefore, a retreat from the social into the individual self as we retreat from everything that can give our lives meaning, anchorage, and a definite (Giddens, 1991) – this considered means that we live in a postmodern time where we continuously wonder: *how to live our live?*

> "All that remains is an artificial combination of illusory images, a phantasmagoria which the least reflection is sufficient to dissolve; nothing, therefore, which can serve as an end of our actions […] nothing our efforts can lay hold of, and we feel them lost in emptiness" (Durkheim, 1897).

"*Lost in emptiness*" is what brings me to Hall, who claimed that there are three very different conceptions of identity:

> "[The] three very different conceptions of identity that can be distinguished in modern social theory are those of: (a) Enlightenment subject, (b) sociological subject, and (c) post-modern subject. The Enlightenment subject was based on a conception of the human person as a fully centered, unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness and action, whose 'center' consisted of an inner core which first emerged when the subject was born, and unfolded with it,

whilst remaining essentially the same – continues or "identical" with itself – throughout the individual's existence. The essential center of the self was a person's identity" (Hall, 1992).

The sociological subject is mainly elaborated by symbolic interactionism which means that the subject is still real, however, formed and modified by the continuous dialogues and interactions with the cultural worlds and the identities they offer (Allen *et al.*, 1998).

Above, the subject remained real, however, in the postmodern subject - which Durkheim anticipated on – the subject is one with no fixed, essential, or permanent identity. Ergo, one could argue that identity is formed and transformed continuously by the changes in our most intimate aspects of our personal life and these are directly tied to the establishment of social connections of very wide scope (Giddens, 1991). Reworded, this is where we get "*lost in emptiness*".

In addition, Durkheim reasoned that: the individual is to be considered problematic for society and society is victorious over the individual; dominating the individual (Lehmann, 1993). Furthermore, Durkheim argued that society makes the individual in all senses of the word and he considers the society to exist outside of the individual, hence it is the "*collective conscious*" - in his later works "*collective representations*" – which do a society remain (Lehmann, 1993; Jones, 1986).

"*Collective representations*" can be explained as a set of shared ideas and believes which are derivative features of forms of social organization granted with increased autonomy and independent explanatory power (Jones, 1986).

It is this perspective that differs from Verbrugge's. Verbrugge argues that the global society is existent because of "*local communities*" and not because of a "*collective representation*" as Durkheim expostulated. However, our global society exists because of our believes and shared ideas, yes indeed causes all but certainty, hence, it causes the uncertainty about our self-identity. Nevertheless, globalization represents a believe I call "*internationalism*"; it epitomizes an international character, one that resembles the believe that we can be part of any culture, attach any style, communicate with anyone in the world, and still be lost. Hence, we continuously and desperately attempt to define ourselves by finding differences; the mean of these differences establish meaning, moreover, we try to escape from these "*local communities*" as they confine our search, the search for who we are.

This leads me to the *consumerism* - the concept that an ever-expanding consumption of goods is advantageous to the economy (Heritage, 2006). In our postmodern and globalized society consumption has become the center of live, even that of our virtual lives (Kellner, 1989). Respectively, the consumer is constantly faced with a barrage of visual images that claim to satisfy his or her needs, wants, and desires (Callow & Schiffman, 1999). The cognitive challenge – in the search for who we are - is to withstand this "universal language" of symbolic and iconic meanings, however, its effectiveness is, as argued by Branston and Stafford, comparable to the working of a drug; the audience is drugged, doped or duped by the media (2003). Baudrillard, therefore, argues that:

> "[T]he consumer cannot avoid the obligation to consume, because it is consumption that is the primary mode of social integration and the primary ethic and activity within the consumer society" (Baudrillard, 1970).

Respectively, the consumer society is a product of our individualization needs – at least that is the communicated message of the commercialized world.

Hence, we try on a day to day basis to address the 'new sense of self' which us as individuals, have to cultivate and is built as part of a process of pioneering innovative social forms (Giddens, 1991). Cool hunters ease this innovative and pioneering process for the suppliers, yet complicate the process of us – consumers focused at our individuality. It is this tendency to individualism which produces the tendency to reduce social facts to the "*individual mind*" (Lehmann, 1993). Respectively, Durkheim's perception of society as part of the natural world, as a natural kingdom subject to natural laws, and therefore, subject to a science would remain adequate as our desire to be an individual is nothing more than our desire to be part of a society (Lehmann, 1993). However, in our global and postmodern world there remains no such society; ergo, we need to find another way to cope with our identity problems in order to stabilize our society, otherwise, a large anomie crisis is the inevitable sequel.

Lastly yet importantly, much of our society changed over time as it became global and postmodern, yet the foundations of society remain, hence, Durkheim's theories remain invaluable; albeit that they were written in the "*modern times*".

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