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The Illusion of Natural Desire: the Induced Desire

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Abstract

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“Desiring machine” is an expression that reflects faithfully the human being, the contemporary society focusing on this aspect, in particular. In other words, because the desire was defined as “motor” that moves the man (the one that propels him towards the goals, ideals, respective its projects) and refers to the acquisition of favorable and avoidance of harmful, consumer society uses this advantage in its favor.

Regarding the term of desire, it can be specified that it is the subject of interdisciplinary fields, being present in philosophical discourse as well as in the psychological one, the medical one, respectively the theological one. The social field can be added to those distinct perspectives, this one being of interest in the present research.

It is important to make a distinction concerning the term of desire, being brought into discussion the natural desires on the one hand, and the artificial desires, the induced ones, on the other. The last ones are preferred by today's society, numerous techniques being used for manipulation and creation of human desires. Accordingly, it is about the induced desires, those being, in essence, fake, perverted, unnatural. The desire induced by today's social context it is carefully masked, in other words this is an illusion of a natural desire.

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Keywords: desire; consumerism; induced desires; natural desires.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the human being is often caught in the trap of the illusion of the innate desire, namely the induced desire, initiating the present research starting from the following questions: *Is it true that our desires are really an expression of needs or just an illusion? How can it be possible to wish for something, but, in essence, behind this wish to be only a pseudo-need?*

1.1 Theme

The present study aims to investigate, in philosophical, medical, scientific and social terms, the concept of desire by reference to the today's human being. To have a complete perspective, it is necessary to clarify the distinction between natural desire and the induced one. Through the analysis of the human behavior, of genetic luggage, of thoughts and emotions, of experiences, of physiology, neuroanatomy, as well as of other aspects, the specialists can observe if a desire is induced or not.

1.2 Purpose

Starting from the problem outlined above, this research aims at analyzing and deepen the matter of induced desire in the contemporary society, as a form of manipulating the people. In this sense, the difference between the natural and induced desires is useful.

1.3 Objectives

The main objectives of this analysis seek to highlight the features of the natural desires, using interdisciplinary sources. Also, it is necessary to investigate the induced desires, the fake ones, which influence the today's human being in a negative way. The most interesting is the process in which those unnatural desires can disguise in beneficial desires.

1.4 Source of documentation

The main sources of reference are relevant works of some relevant thinkers as Rene Descartes, Nikolaos Loudovikos, Daniel Wegner or Jacques Lacan. These writers have researched the concept of desire, they identified the characteristics of natural desires and they realized its importance. Some of them identified the hidden maneer of inducing the perverted desires to today's human being.

1.5 Methodology

The most of research methods used in this study belong to philosophical domain. First of all, through deductive method, the research is directed from the general to the particular, in this case, from the concept of desire to the natural and unnatural desires. Moreover, in this paper are used other specific methods for the philosophical and social-cultural area, such as criticism, synthesis, hermeneutics, observation and documentation. All of these methods have the role to improve the present study.

2. Interdisciplinary Analysis of Desire

To begin with, the debate on the concept of natural desire is wanted, appealing to an interdisciplinary analysis, choosing one representative from each field, hence: the medical field is represented by Rene Descartes, the psychoanalysis and the philosophy is represented by Jacques Lacan and the theological perspective is represented by Saint Maximus the Confessor.

2.1 The Medical Perspective

Examining the desire from the medical point of view, the most appropriate reference is constituted by Rene Descartes' theory who, within "*Passions of the soul*", deeply analyses our perceptions and free will acts. He names "passions of the soul" those feelings, emotions caused by impulses. The desire enjoys a special theory, being one of the six simple and primitive passions and the only one without an opponent.

When he describes the desire, Descartes names it an "agitation of the soul", a different aspect of it being its orientation towards future, so never towards present or past. Elaborating the process of desire composition, the philosopher states that "it has the particularity that the will of achieving a certain good or of avoiding something bad immediately sends the brain impulses to every part of the body that can serve to the correspondent actions, especially to the heart and the organs that provide it the majority of blood, so that, receiving a bigger amount than the usual, to transmit more impulses to brain, both to maintain and to reinforce the idea of this will and to pass from there into all the organs of the senses and in all muscles that can be used in order to obtain what is desired." (Descartes, 2011, p. 60).

The difference that was referred previously, regarding the innate desires, beneficial and those artificial, harmful, can be observed also in the Cartesian discourse, within which it is suggested the idea that beneficial desires are too little, compared to those harmful. In this case, the remedy is "the release of the soul, as possible, from all the desires less useful and to try to know as clear as possible and to carefully search the goodness of the desired thing" (Descartes, 2011, p. 81), as Descartes states.

It is important to state the fact that the French philosopher connects the concept of desire to the conjunctive rapport existent between the concepts of thinking and existence. In other words, the desire is associated with the being that thinks, this entity representing even the cross point between thinking and existence. represented by Saint Maximus the Confessor.

2.2 The Philosophical Conception

Making reference to the same rapport, Jacques Lacan, the representative of philosophy and psychoanalysis, perceives it differently: the being that thinks doesn't exist at the conjunction between the thinking and the existence, as Descartes stated; they both miss. In other words, one can discuss, on the one hand, about the thinking as in-existence, the thinking as subconscious (represented through the phrase "*I don't exist, but I think*"), and on the other hand, "the existence as false, imaginary self and as non-thinking" (Loudovikos, 2015, p. 27), the presence of being and the absence of thinking, is in discussion.

For Lacan, there is another scheme of formatting the subject, this one following three phases. The first phase is the *alienation*: the price of be, of existence (The Other One “has catalyzer significance” (Loudovikos, 2015, p. 28), the *segregated subject* appears on discussion, that who “confronts his own existence”). It is spoken further about the *separation*: idea expressed through a reference to the mathematical equation, in which the numerator is the *object*, and the denominator is the *segregated subject*. The *object* represents, in Lacan’s philosophical conception, “the Other’s desire that comes to determine the subject”. (Loudovikos, 2015, p. 29). The last phase is theorized through the idea expressed according to which, taking on the Other’s desire, the man reaches the “pure desire without an object”, in other words, “a pure state of desire”. (Loudovikos, 2015, p. 38).

Lacan’s conception, according to which “the man’s desire is the Other’s desire”, sends even to the theological perspective and to two ideas: “The man’s desire is the same with Other’s desire. The man desires what Other desires.”. These two phrases are completed by the following: “The man’s desire is that of being desired by the Other. The man desires what Other desires for himself”. In other words, the process of constituting the subject is ontologically connected to the Other. (Loudovikos, 2015, p. 29).

Elaborating the process of “becoming into being”, so that we use the terminology of the Romanian philosophy, we need to outline a few ideas, for example the idea that the object is the one who stimulates the desire. In searching for the object, de man becomes “a being of desire”, an eager man (“desiring machine” in modern terminology). The being achieves individuality, which means it becomes subject, when it internalizes the Other’s desire, it takes it on and it creates its own desire. It appears, in this context, the idea of dependence: the dependence on the Other. In other words, I am through the Other (as subject), through the Other’s desire, through the taking on of this desire.

2.3 The Theological Outlook

The medical perspectives, psychoanalytical and philosophical, are completed by the theological one. In this respect, one can determine the fact that the adequate theological term for expressing this internalizing, this taking on, is *perihoresis* (defined in the theological field as overlap, closely connected to accomplishment; accomplishment through overlapping). Reaching this level, of internalizing and taking on, involves the partial overtaking of the alienation reminded previously (there are indicated here ideas like: the self-salvation idea, the idea of recovering and discovering the self, of the personal identity). In this context, it is important to outline that the man completes himself through the Other, he accomplishes, as, through the Other, the human being discovers love as “way of absolute existence”, which means that he becomes subject.

For Saint Maximus the Confessor, the natural desire is interpreted as desire to reach the *completeness*, in other words, it is an aspiration to a “complete individual reality”. (Loudovikos, 2015, p. 35). The human desire is infinite in its essence. The same Maximus the Confessor states: “The will is natural, namely will”. In contemporary terms, the sense of Saint Maximus’ statement can be expressed through “The human desire is innate, natural”. More concrete, the human being is “driven by the longing to discover his complete and own individuality”, “natural and complete individuality”. (Loudovikos, 2015, pp. 40-41).

The patristic ontology is peculiarly profound regarding this aspect: “the nature is in itself capable to want itself and all that compose it lean at the capacity level of wanting on its reason of being, in accordance with which exists and was created”. In the same time, “the existence is connected at the capacity level of wanting with its reason of being, it is connected to the desire”. (Loudovikos, 2015, p. 42).

In the orthodox theological field, the desire without object, this natural, innate desire represents even the desire for God (it is a desire of completeness, of deification, of coming back to the natural state before falling into sin). The innate, natural desire is, in fact, God’s calling: full of love, addressed to human being, the calling to holiness, to redemption. “The desire as natural will has the sense of desire as dialogical reality of existence. It is a communal completeness perceived as purpose in its self” (Loudovikos, 2015, p. 42), states the Greek Professor Nikolaos Loudovikos.

2.4 The Sociological View

To these interdisciplinary fields, it is added, in the end, the sociological perspective, to this latter being attributed the theorization of the illusion of natural desire, the induced desire. I mention here the expression of “induced desire” with the sense of artificial, false desire, created by the consumerist society, through the using of numerous manipulation techniques. This type of desire is closely masked by the actual context, for which the “illusion of natural desire” comes into question.

In the majority of cases, the man has the feeling that personal wishes are consciously and naturally provoked, excluding the outer influences and, mainly, the violation of the free will. The human being attributes a major importance to the notion of natural desire, as the need is intensely perceived, and the idea of inducing the desire does not seem viable.

Nonetheless, one cannot deny the fact that some human desires are an illusion, in the sense that the triggering factor of those are not the natural needs, even though their perception seems convincing and real, but rather a series of mechanism and strategies of which our society uses. In other words, these desires do not appear voluntarily and consciously, but are induced to the individual by different outer factors.

Marin Minsky, surnamed “the father of artificial intelligence”, considers the fact that “no one likes the thought that what we do depend on processes that are unknown to us; we prefer to attribute the choices to *desire*, to *will* or to *self-control*. [...] Maybe it would be fairer to say: <<My desire was determined by inner forces that I don’t understand>>.” (Loudovikos, 2015, p. 46).

Daniel Wegner, a famous social psychologist, sustains the fact that “the mind is a system that produces *appearances* for its master. [...] The mind creates the continuous illusion; it doesn’t know what causes its actions. [...] The mind has a mechanism of auto-explanation that produces the almost continuous sensation that actions are causally determined by the what is in conscience – the phenomenal will – when, in fact, the mind can never know itself enough so that it might be able to determine the causes of its own actions.” (Wegner, 2013, p. 45).

Most of the times, people have the tendency to exclude the causal influence when we refer to induced desires, because the illusion of natural desire is so strong, that it generates the impression of

authentic, volunteer and conscious need. From this results the human intention to defend the illusion of natural desire, by accepting the induced desire as innate, natural desire.

3. Conclusions

Nowadays, the human being is often caught in the trap of the illusion of the innate desire, namely the induced desire, initiating the present research starting from the following questions: *Is it true that our desires are really an expression of needs or just infinite development from the technical, scientific and economical point of view, the spirit of this era being the consumption.* The consumption society has as purpose the creation of these “non-natural desires”, completely unreal, that separate the people from realities of the physical and spiritual experience. Thus, the consumerism replaces the natural needs of the human being, continuously induces new desires, the individual being convinced through ideology of the urgent satisfaction of these false needs.

In this context, one can speak about “the end of transcendence”, as people cannot discern anymore the natural desires from those induced, cannot perceive anymore another way of living, or more, they cannot find themselves anymore. The consumerism man isolates himself from his peers; he loses the connection with the transcendence, his only reference being to objects, sole generators of satisfaction. People come to be surrounded by people no more, but by objects, the interpersonal relationship being lost (the peer is seen also as an object to consumption). The human being does not refer himself to the other, as Jacques Lacan or Saint Maximus describe, but to the self. The only thing that matters is himself, and the peer is unimportant to him, as the peer cannot replace the commodity ensured by objects. The renunciation to another human being becomes simpler than the renunciation to the consumer items.

The losing of self-identity inevitably leads to the alienation of man, to his transformation into a “desiring machine”. The self-alienation problem has its origin exactly into the desires induction, the human being experimenting the transition from the quality of person to the distressing *homo consumens*¹.

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¹ The phrase “homo consumens” is used by sociologist and psychotherapist Erich Fromm to point out through this the collective pathology to consume, specific to the current era.