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Title Existential boundaries and their overcoming as self-identification

factors: the problem of existential understanding of identity (based on criticism

of the ideas of M. Heidegger)

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***Abstract:** The article deals with the problem of existential boundaries and their overcoming as a key factor of social and cultural identity. The author defines temporality, ecstaticity, connection of an individual being with the being of Others as existential identity grounds. Ecstaticity is interpreted as an attempt to overcome the boundaries of individual existence. Attention is drawn to such forms of overcoming of existential boundaries as the determination to be themselves on the one hand, and the pain and concern for the Other on the other hand. This article also analyzes the current challenges and risks associated with human ecstaticity. The present-day specificity is defined in the manner proposed by Martin Heidegger, according to which its essence is revealed in the domination of a particular way of human being – Ge-stell. The essence of the Ge-stell trap is revealed in the fact that the very possibility of constructivist (supplied) attitude to any self-identification seems to correspond the ecstatic essence of man. The article is methodologically associated with both the development and interpretation, and critical analysis of the ideas of Heidegger.*

***Keywords:** identity, self-identification, border, existential border, overcoming of borders, Others, Ge-stell, determination, pain and anxiety.*

1. Overcoming existential boundaries as the basis of a genuine identity

Most modern conceptions of identity are caused by a controversial field between constructivism (and instrumentalism as its extreme form) and essentialism (primordialism). The main discussion nerve is disclosed in the contrast of characteristics attributed to "identity" – whether it is "real" or "constructible". What is the methodological basis of such an understanding?

The latent base is fixing of the methodological optics on two parameters: the consciousness and factuality (the state of affairs which is present). Essentialist concepts emphasize the situations, while constructivist concepts pay attention to the possibility of ambivalent deliberate attitude to them. The emphasis here is made on the socio-cultural mechanisms of identity formation. But what makes contribute to it, in existential terms? A serious challenge to essentialist approach has been the modern era increase of factors, which are usually interpreted as a crisis, blurring or loss of identity. Another problematic aspect of the constructivist approach is fundamental ontological groundlessness of attempts to form a discourse of identity preservation and maintenance.

The possibility of the third alternative view of the problem is related to the existential interpretation of it. It is a question of understanding the phenomenon of identity in connection with the existential attributes of human existence. First of all, we have in mind these three aspects: 1. the specifics of time in human existence; 2. ecstatic nature of human being; 3. foundation of our life by being with Others.

The main feature of human existence is the very special nature of the connection to time. As it is known from the philosophical thought of XX century, the most complete explication of connection between human existence and temporality was presented in Heidegger's transcendental analytics of Dasein. Reflections on the problem of identity and identification in the line of Dasein analytics cause certain issues.

It is well known that Heidegger was of a quite critical opinion of the term "identity" then. Dasein, intended to 'grab' the holistic phenomenon of human existence, is directly opposed to the multiple identities of experiencing "I" (Heidegger 2006, p. 130). However, it should be noted that the contemporary understanding of the identity concept made in the works of E. Erikson, is in some way close in meaning to Heidegger's "own" and "genuine" existentials.

Here we should briefly explain our understanding of Heidegger's Dasein analytics project. According to Heidegger, the categorical logical structure, suitable for study of all things except human, does not allow to reveal the specifics of human existence. Therefore it was necessary to use a special phenomenological language – the language of existentials (Heidegger 2006, p. 44).

In this sense, existentials are not only Heidegger's own neologisms, but also some traditional terms reinterpreted by the "German master" in a new way. Dasein existential, also translated into Russian by V.V. Bibikhin as presence, literally means being-here or here-being.

At first, we are talking only about the constant involvement of human into being-in-the-world, which allows us to open (and therefore to bind) things that exist on the basis of the certain position of always "here". Dasein does not act as a kind of metaphysical instance of

pure "I", which is always "here", but reveals itself as the situation of the human being - always "here» (Da-). This situation (always here) can be captured by (self) consciousness as "I".

Thus, instead of the Cartesian ontology of thinking "Ego", which can conceive of itself as separated from the extended world (while the world becomes an object that can undergo the procedure of total doubt), the "German Master" is building the ontology of relation between "I" and "the world". However, as emphasized by the German philosopher, spatial relationships are constituted by a special mode of time, so the main thing is that the human being is revealed not as a present object in the stream of time, but as an **event**.

Taking Heidegger's position here, we find ourselves in the opposition to the traditional understanding of the relationship of the human being to time. The traditional understanding of time, inherent to our ideas, was quite clearly formulated by Augustine. Taking the traditional paradigm, we need to talk about time with regard to consciousness. Consciousness allows us to remember the past, to keep the present and expect the future. Events of our existence in this case lose their rootedness and the meaning beyond own consciousness, because mainly they do not present in it (they are either already or yet not there).

This ontological ungroundness is not something typical of the traditional understanding of time as an essential feature, but is a consequence of the ideological shift of the second half of XIX - early XX centuries. This shift was typical for philosophical thought as well as for ordinary mentality. We are talking about the actual erosion of authority of the Eternity and the Eternal, which previously were thought as the indispensable antithesis to the flow of the current time (Aleksandravičius 2015, p. 60-61). God and, more broadly, the transcendental principle of the world were more and more "removed out of the brackets."

The idea of Dasein analysts is the pathos of thinking in a new ideological atmosphere and pathos of approving of new foundations of human existence in the context of the connection (being) with time. The traditional model of understanding of time, according to Heidegger, above all "stumbles" over the two life events: **birth** and **death**. The event of our birth is no longer ours, and the event of death is not yet ours – this statement has no sense, because these events are present in every moment of our lives. Event nature of human

existence does not depend on our unconditioned consciousness, but is constituted by previous ontological aiming and our capacity for questioning and understanding.

Agreeing with Heidegger, we should note that our eventfulness is possible in two modes: own (eigene) and not own (uneigene). These modes are always determined by the typical situation of co-presence, being-with ... (Mitdasein). The problem of finding the true nature of existence, according to Heidegger, can only be solved as a result of a complete joining of various "here" moments. The German philosopher made an emphasis to one's own death, which stands for each as its maximum own (genuine) possibility of existence.

Only our own death, in contrast to the death of another, can be seen not only in the business-like concerns about it, but also in the attitudes of fear (non-genuine possibility) and horror (genuine possibility). Joining of the time moments of existence into a holistic unity is feasible only in the adoption of one's own temporality and death. Finding your own being does not mean exceeding Others; here we are talking more about a special way of being-with-others, related to the determination existential.

The grounds here are to be found in horror. The determination in this case should be understood as an aspiration to act **ourselves,** to use our **own** understanding, to have **our own** opinion, to seek for **our own** ways and so on. In our opinion, the mindset of Heidegger in this case coincides with the song by A. Aronov and M. Tariverdiyev from the famous Soviet film «The Irony of Fate, or Enjoy Your Bath!»: "If you haven't got a house, you are not afraid of fire. Your wife will not leave you for another if you do not have a wife. If you do not have a dog, your neighbor will not poison it. You will never fight with your friends if you do not have any. And if you do not live, you will not have to die." (Aronov and Tariverdiyev, If You do not have aunts). The human among-others-being is regarded here as an inevitably risky practice (you can quarrel with your friend or part with your wife, etc.), and therefore determination is the right life strategy latently meant in the song.

Thus, Heidegger's methodological ideas of Dasein transcendental analytics project can be interpreted in line of the existential approach to the problem of identity. It is about understanding the determination as a means of overcoming the existential boundaries between genuine (own) identifications and not genuine (random) ones. In other words, the determination shows the border gap between the socio-cultural role and identity. However, if

we build a methodology for understanding the existential identification problems completely on the basis of Dasein analytics project, it is necessary to recognize the inviolability and impermeability of the time limits of individual existence.

However, here is the fundamental point of our disagreements with the Dasein analytics project. It is about understanding the meaning of the death of Another. Alternative understanding allows us to see other ways to overcome borders (besides the determination). The "German master" defined the attitude to death and death of the Other as a concern (e.g., of burial), but did not practically focus on the phenomena of pain and anxiety associated with death.

Our own experience of pain and anxiety in this case can not be understood simply as some psychological and emotional reactions, but in needs the same ontological interpretation as the experience of fear and horror in the face of death. Of course, this theme requires its own study, but it is necessary to state here some initial thoughts.

Pain is traditionally understood as what is shown on both the physical and the metaphysical (spiritual, mental, etc.) levels. On the physical level, this most inner feeling is not usually considered to be one of the main senses, which involve defining role in the interaction with the outside world and indirect role - with the internal. Pain draws attention inward. In the limiting case, physical pain fills all the human being, snatching it from the world.

It is noteworthy that on the body-sensory level, we can not even define (or, at least, clearly define) a sense opposite to the pain, as a holistic phenomenon. Here we can speak only of isolated phenomena (as muscular joy or sexual pleasure and so on). It is also not satisfactory to purely physiological define bodily pain as an unpleasant sensation. In response to a pain-aversion combination there should be noted that in a particular practice pain impulses may scatter or evaluated in the mode of acceptance rather than rejection (e.g. in sport or sexual practices).

The phenomenon of mental anguish, unlike physical pain, remaining our very own, is at the same time something that connects us with Others. In this context let us recall the story to which Heidegger referred – "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" by Leo Tolstoy (Tolstoy 1987). The

protagonist, caught in the situation of a fatal disease, is being gradually "cut off" from meaningful communication with the outside world and converted to himself. This conversion takes place both through the fear of dying and through physical pain.

People near Ivan Ilyich are mostly capable of nothing but efficiently-anxious attitude to the patient and then to the deceased. In this case, in the face of death, illness and physical pain the socio-cultural identities become torn or go to the background, giving way to a reflexive self-consciousness - that is, personal self-identity.

On the other hand, the prevailing thought of the others is a relief about the fact that "that is him who died, not me". But here we should think about how deep and genuine those identities were. Analyzing the life presented in the story, we can say that almost all attitudes of the main character did not have a deep personal "involvement" in them. The closure to personal identity in the event of disease and death was preceded by a life of consciousness, focused mainly on building a comfortable environment for itself. That environment assumed maximum avoidance and elimination of the risks that could be called mental anxiety or and the more pain.

Our principle position is the assertion that the "dying - Others" relationship may have fundamentally different modus. Fear of dying can be revealed not only as the fear of leaving for Nothing, but as the fear of abandonment, leaving the others. The situation of others' death and dying can be a source of ultimate mental pain associated with the event of loss. A very good example is represented in the song of Vladimir Vysotsky: "The German sniper killed me till the end by killing the one who did not shoot" (Vysotsky, The one that didn't shoot). This song is about a World War II participant who is subjected to false incrimination and sentenced to death. After the volleys he receives serious injuries, but remains alive, with one person from the firing squad who did not shoot. Being in the hospital, the man is looking forward to his return to the front and meeting with that person. However, returning to the front, he learns of his death by a German sniper bullet.

Ivan Ilyich as an officer or a card partner could be replaced easily, but that guy from the firing squad by his act became an irrevocable event for the "almost killed". Personal-meaningful dimension of socio-cultural identities that connects them with the personal identity of man, is revealed through the gap of the existential boundaries with Others. Specific

experience is constituted by people's present ontological set towards each other. In addition to concerns, death of Another can bear pain, and mortality can raise anxiety. Death of Another can also be linked with the possibility of keeping his presence and recognition of oneself in him (i.e. the recognition of the possibility of one's own death in the fact of Another's death).

To sum it up, it should be noted that communication of personal identity and socio-cultural identities is revealed through the phenomenon of temporality and mortality. Transcendental Dasein analytics highlights the death as the basis of personal identity. However, Heidegger's ideas, partly overcoming the Cartesian ontology, nevertheless appear in its captivity. The emphasis on the terror and fear existentials in the face of death, neglecting the pain and anxiety caused by the death of Another, is due to the modern European understanding of "I". The horror of the nonexistence, dissolving into Nothing that is free to come to us when there is no immediate danger to the life – it is a horror of a consciousness that cares of itself, i.e., of a pure fact of its presence. On the contrary, the pain and anxiety in relation to Others are marks of the existential connection for them. It should be noted that acceptance of one's own death joints various circumstances and facts of life in the true measurement of personal identity, while specific socio-cultural identities are filled with meaning by death and mortality of the Other. To be for a human means to be to death, as well as to be to the Others. It is the event of the Other and death (mortality) of the Other in this case, that determine sense horizon of existence.

2. Contemporary age and human identity: the possibility of breaking boundaries as a Ge-stell trap

The ecstatic, i.e. overcoming borders, nature of human being defines not only the possibility of revealing the true identities in being with others, but also the possibility of blindness and errors, obsession and inauthenticity. This aspect is particularly risky in modern technocratic era, which existential character is interpreted in detail in the philosophy of the late Heidegger.

It should be noted that attempting to reflect on the issue of identity and identification in the framework of M. Heidegger's philosophy poses certain questions. It is known that the project of transcendental *Dasein* analytics mean a certain degree of criticism to the very notion of identity. *Dasein* meant to embrace the holistic phenomenon of human existence is

opposed by Heidegger to the multiplicity of identities of the "I" experience (Heidegger .2006, p. 130). The German thinker turned to this term later but in a fairly complex and specific context. We mean the notion of *Er-eignis* (Event) unfolding as a meeting between a human and being. In this case, Heidegger viewed the issue of identity (*identität*) from the logical and ontological standpoint (See Heidegger 1991, pp. 69-79). We speak about viewing the issue of the sameness of thinking and being that he solve in the context of his interpretation of the Eleatics philosophy. The identity as the sameness of a thing existent to its being for itself remains hidden. A human as a thinking entity can be understood as a special recording instance unfolding the being. Humans are therefore capable of both unfolding their own essence and (in mutual belonging) the being. The concept of identification can be used to characterise the act (process) of recording.

Certain prerequisites of this *Er-eignis* are present in essential features of the present-day age. A crucial trait of the current age can be revealed through the M' Heidegger's concept of *Ge-stell*. It should be noted that a translation into Russian suggested by V. Bibikhin (*Po-stav*) is quite appropriate (though not indisputable). In this case, an appropriate basis of the root morphemes is observed: *stellen* (Ger.) – *stavit'* (Rus.). The specified root values when the call is of fundamental value for the author. Because we believe in this case, we can practice Heidegger's style thinking with the root values of the Russian language. This is what Vladimir Bibihina to differ as the Russian supporter of Heidegger. Exactly mastering style of thought, rather than a literal results of mindset can do to deal with Heidegger (deep and essential thinking) to our deal.

Ge-stell is the essential basis of the present-day technocratic civilisation that starts from the modern history. The word describing the essence of a technocratic civilisation is not only the most known result of the way of thinking that is described in *What is called thinking?* And *Der Satz vom Grunt*, thinking here means a special way of seeing and hearing (primarily, seeing and hearing the language). The term is related to the way that Being, according to Heidegger, starts avoiding humans in the modern era. The avoidance happens primarily by perceiving everything as objects and subjects. The being is therefore interpreted as objectness of objects (subjectness of subjects). The framework (i.e. en-framing) of things existent by humans is the main feature of the modern-era worldview. The whole world becomes an object of calculating manipulations.

Anything which is "naturally" understood by us in its material separateness as a separate artefact of the present-day culture cannot be really viewed as an independent thing. The most suitable concept here is resources or standing reserve (*der Bestand*), the existence thereof being only as a result of its placing event (*bestellen*). It is not only about the features of the typical and the serial often referenced for translation of the Heidegger's thought into own thinking. Obviously, the typical, serial, mass-purpose, and depersonalised features of most of things around is an obvious evidence for *Ge-stell* domination, however, a different thing is crucial. In the present-day age, almost every moral artefact appears as a result of a complicated chain of resource extraction, production, storage, distribution, advertising, sale, and consumption. Functioning of those chains is, in its turn, connected with other similar chains jointly forming the complex system of global production and consumption which can be viewed as an ontic dimension of *Ge-stell*. Consequently, any produced thing is more or less a product of the whole System, with the modern human viewing almost every natural phenomenon as a potential or actual resource to be included in the system.

It should be noted that it is possible to identify two crossing lines of view on *Ge-stell* by Heidegger: an "optimistic critique" and a "pessimistic critique." One should bear in mind that the distinction, even though detectable textually and chronologically, is still tentative, since Heidegger does not aim to create a systematic teaching. If, following him, we understand his experience of thinking as a "path", we need to assume the presence of various turns and stops. Nevertheless, since we are dealing not with the path of thinking itself but with its results, specifying the said lines (or tones of thought) seems reasonable.

The "positive" ("optimistic") sense of *Ge-stell* as a specific era of being may be understood differently. For instance, we can mean a possibility to find limits of the calculable and controllable by means of an increasing scope of control and calculation which will eventually coincide with the limits of what is calculable and controllable in principle. On the other hand, we can mean a synthesis of technocratic civilization capacities and a creative (poetic) way of being a human. The very distinctness of danger (*die Gefahr*) may be a reason for a turn to the salutary. On the other hand, Heideggerian thought was not devoid of certain scepticism about possible overcoming of *Ge-stell*. Here, it is sufficient to recall the famous phrase in an interview to *Der Spiegel*: "…only God can still save us" (Interview with Heidegger 1966). The objective of thinking is therefore just a preparation to the appearance of God. In our view, apart from the essential possibilities of salvation and danger, realisation of

getting into a possible **trap** is also required. A clarification of this possibility means a certain priorities shift in realisation of *Gestell* in the context of human identification. Self-identification can be understood here as recording one's position in relation to the Other and One's Own.

According to Heidegger, the technocratic might of the present-day civilization (*Gestell*) is primarily based upon a possibility of enframing natural energies. Using an expression by Vladimir Bibikhin, we can note that "the humankind is still warming itself by a fire in the forest", since we are already using an ancient forest (oil) as firewood (Bibikhin 2011, pp. 14-15). Bibikhin understands the concept of a wood(s) in a broad sense as a synonym for living matter. Yet using natural energies not only enables ubiquitous supply of goods, services, technologies, raw materials, and labor, but also requires this supply itself. Meeting this need is, in its turn, impossible without "enframing" of knowledge and information and, therefore, "setting" values priorities, i.e. certain formatting of human personality. Setting certain self-sameness (identities) becomes necessary. In our view, identifications enframing is a primary ontic basis of *Gestell*. No doubt that this text could not be created without a power-consuming computer that is in itself a materialised energy used for its writing. At the same time, it could not be created without a transformation of the writer into a user-consumer either. What is necessary here is a certain "enframing" or "setting" of a user-consumer identity connected with certain social practices, such as computerization of various activities, video games, online communication, etc. The human essence becomes materialized to the point of perceiving itself and others as a human resource and a standing reserve. It should be noted that the most flexible and successful, both politically and economically, ontic structures of **Ge-stell** have nothing to do with suppliers of natural energies (Ge-stell bases). Success in parameters of the global economic and political System that is an ontic structure of Ge-*stell* is more likely to be connected with the ability to make more and more areas of things existent a subject of en-framing. A good illustration of this provision can be seen in the famous song of the German rock band «Rammstein» – Amerika. According to the story song, world hegemony of America manifests itself in the fact that in Paris you can successfully put in Mickey Mouse, while in Africa – Santa Claus ("Nach Afrika kommt Santa Claus Und vor Paris steht Mickey Maus") (Rammstein, America).

In this connection, we should think of the multitude of possibilities for self-realization already provided for us, including relinquishing one set of assumptions in favor of another

one. Besides, we have a lot of possibilities to transform existence parameters in accordance with self-realization parameters. As a result, we have a framework of our own place in being-amongst-others. We mean both discrediting the traditional forms of identity justification and technical possibilities to change the configuration of particular ontic conditions of existences. In the second case, it is not limited to relatively easily available relocations, activity changes, adopting a different nationality, etc. In the parameters of the technocratic civilization, even seemingly stable constants as sex and one's own corporality become transformable. The aforesaid state of affairs may be comprehended in the context of ex-istence as a fundamental feature of *Dasein* rather than through the prism of the Heideggerian thought images of "losing the roots" and "oblivion of the being". Heidegger understood the ecstatic nature of the existence depending on its protrusion into Nothing that (protrusion) makes it possible to pose questions about things existent, including the main question of metaphysics "why do things and not Nothing exist?"

In our view, this ecstatic nature requires a broader existential-anthropological understanding. It is about overcoming the "I - Others" existential boundaries, which allows the existential relationship to one's own identities.

Due to their ability to step over (overcoming) the existing state of affairs, humans can be defined as a specific type of a thing existent (thinking is an essential, albeit not the only one, feature of this overcoming). It is due to this ability that a human gets trapped into Ge-stell. In the direct danger mechanism is connected with the subsequent rescue (at least, due to its obvious nature), the trap mechanism is essentially different. The danger and demise follow a false possibility (bait). The Ge-stell framework gives colossal possibilities to a modern human – possibilities not to understand oneself, the possibilities being provided, i.e. actually remain at one's disposal before a request (or inquiry). The problem is not just about pre-forming of our consciousness (H. Marcuse), i.e. forming of certain assumptions of consciousness one can shed away one way or another. We mean that the multitude of possibilities of self-con-sciousness is already provided to use, including discarding one set of assumptions in favor of another. It should be noted that not only the mass culture but also counter- and sub-cultural (in a broad sense) practices are already given to us as ready-made products one way or another. As a result, traditional human-specific identities become understood as constructs and, most importantly, technical capacities for handling them as constructs become available, the technical handling to be understood quite broadly, from

ideological manipulation of the public conscience to an essentially radical bio-medical intervention in human corporality. Illustrative in this regard is the example of the practices of tattooing and piercing, which in the modern era is increasingly becoming the en-framed (supplied) character. Earrings and tattoos lose their property pointing-out characters (references), turning into mere embellishment. In this case, reified energy embodied in a piece of metal or colored pigments, set to a specific individual by means of manipulative techniques of fashion and marketing. A good illustration here can serve a possibility to technicalization of the human body, which can be regarded: 1. in the aspect of technical devices embedded in the human body; 2. in the aspect of human integration into technical systems; 3. in the aspect of the human body turning into a sort of genetic engineering product.

Provided possibilities manifest themselves in a procedure of expecting the future in different forms, be it anticipation, planning, or development. Expectation as an identification procedure is connected as such with the procedure of control. Control is a sign of calculating thinking typical of the *Ge-stell* era. Expectation legitimises an aspiration to change the situation, once unsuitable. The identities transformation therefore becomes a sort of surrogate ecstatic ex-istence. Therein goes off the *Ge-stell* trap mechanism.

To a certain extent, at a certain period of his life (rector in Freiburg), Heidegger also fell prey to the National-Socialist temptation of the technocratic civilization. At the same time, his life circumstances also show us a possibility to avoid the trap. From this standpoint, the M. Heidegger's life can itself be viewed as a journey and return home. The "home" (homeland's creative landscape) can be understood here though the prism of the "place in being" concept. The "place in being" concept is one of the core and central ones for the *nova prima philosophia* concept by young M. Bakhtin. The "place in being" incorporates the parameters of individual temporality, space, corporality, acting uniqueness, responsibility, as well as a unique "place-amongst-others". It is therefore possible to speak about "taking roots" as correspondence to identities. It is the presence of roots that makes it possible to "blossom and yield fruit in the aether", i.e. ex-ist.

3. Summary

In summary, a number of key positions can be pointed. Analyze of existential boundaries and the ways of their overcoming allows us to start the development of the

existential approach to the problem of identity. Existential perspective on those problems can be a real alternative to both constructivist and essentialist methodology.

Overcoming of the "I - Others" existential boundary provides an opportunity to transform the socio-cultural role into identity. The main ways of such overcoming may be indicated: 1. determination in finding one's own place in the being-with-others, 2. pain and anxiety disposition in connection with the death and mortality of the Other. The ecstatic nature of human being is an anthropological base of existential boundaries' overcoming.

However, the ecstatic nature of the human being is also the basis for the phenomena, opposite to the attainment of genuine identity. We are talking about situations of obsession, loss and erosion of identity. In the modern era those problematic phenomena are marked on a personal, socio-cultural and anthropological level. Those trends are associated with the very way of human being at the moment, which way can be defined, in accordance to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, as Ge-stell. Ge-stell in this case should be interpreted more widely than just a way of man's relationship with technology.

It is about revealing the existential danger of Ge-stell through the mental image of trap. The essence of the trap is providing (en-framing) human beings with ready available sets of self-identification of self-transformation possibilities.

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