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## Title

**'Exceeding oneself', 'One's Own' and 'the Other' in the context of reflection on the Master thesis "Philosophy of smile: beyond the border"**

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## **‘Exceeding oneself’, ‘One’s Own’ and ‘the Other’ in the context of reflections on the Master thesis “Philosophy of smile: beyond the border”**

**Abstract:** This article is devoted to the reflexive analysis of the context of Master thesis “Philosophy of smile: beyond the border” (Sultanbaeva 2016). This reflection presents us the peculiarities of person’s being in the Border Zone, considered as a philosophy of smile. This being has introduced the collaboration between one’s own, ‘the Other’ and also the mediator. In this context, the mediator is a smile. Within this article I have tried to represent my reflection on such challenges: understanding of these dialogical collaboration, understanding of one’s own and ‘the Other’; understanding of the essence of the Border zone in the understanding of ‘the Other’; crossing the borders, exceeding oneself and revealing oneself as another.

**Keywords:** Border zone, border, philosophy of smile, exceeding oneself, the Other, One’s own, external observer, understanding, consciousness, context.

This article I would like to devote to reflection on my experience of studying and writing the master thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016) in the Master degree program in Borderology. For four years of studying at this Master degree program, I have dedicated my research to the philosophy of smile. In this article, I think, it is necessary to consider the results that I have got in the research during four years. It will be my reflexive analysis on myself and my conducted research in the thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016). This research has been written with the help of great people. They are my supervisor of the thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016) and the teachers of the joint Master degree in Borderology, who trained me, encourage me and challenged my thinking in the questions of reflection on the philosophy of smile.

Reading “The Border Zone as an Arena for Exceeding oneself” article, written by Jan S. Methi (2015b, p. 213-223), I have noted for myself that during four years of studying at Master degree programme in “Borderology” and writing of the research, I was in the process of exceeding myself. In my written thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016) it can be followed by studying a way of my research of philosophy of smile. This way represents a chain of crossing the twelve borders and also exceeding of these borders in the Border zone. Thus, my research of the

philosophy of smile can be considered as my being in the Border Zone, and crossing the borders into this zone.

These borders are the borders of “exceeding oneself” and meeting with ‘the Other’ (Methi 2015b, p. 213). But this ‘exceeding’ could not be carried out without ‘the Other’. ‘The Other’ can be as in myself and also beyond myself. On the one hand, ‘the other in myself’ is someone who can lead me to one’s own, but whom even I would not have known. This way to one’s own (the Inner) for me is like a revealing myself as another. On the other hand, ‘the Other’ can be understood as the outside world which surrounds the person. It can be people objects, etc. One of these different ‘the Others’ can lead to one’s own. Also, another of these various ‘the Others’ can result in misunderstanding of oneself and disability to exceed oneself on the contrary. It can be determined in a situation of dialogue between one’s own and ‘the Other’. In this case, I will carry on a conversation with another (people, outside world), turning to it as ‘the other in myself’. Hence, opening ‘the Other’ (the Inner) in oneself in the face of ‘the Other’ (alien) in the dialogue allows to exceed oneself.

Thus, I have found out that the Border zone is a remarkable zone not only the zone of “exceeding oneself” (Methi 2015b), but also the zone of understanding who ‘the Other’ is and whether we know this another in general. A question “Who is the Other?” (Rossvær 2015, p. 247) is the fundamental question that runs through the book "Philosophy in the Border Zone" (Rossvær 2015). This book is the product of academic and research cooperation between Nord University (UiN) and Murmansk Arctic State University (MASU), which “is founded on the work of the Joint Degree Master in Borderology” (Methi 2015a). According to the book (Rossvær 2015), the question “Who is the Other?” (Rossvær 2015, p. 247) is related to the “philosophy of culture generally, and is central to how we conduct our border study in practice” (Rossvær 2015, p. 247) and “how we, in different ways, can learn to think differently about others and about ourselves” (Methi 2015a). Thus, the philosophy in the Border Zone opens for us both the external ‘the Other’ and the internal ‘the Other’.

Within this mentioned cooperation I, as the student of the Joint Master Degree in Borderology, could use this arena of the border zone for myself, which has allowed me to reveal myself as another. The awareness of this another is reflected in the research “Philosophy of smile: beyond the border” (Sultanbaeva 2016). This thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016) is my description of how I could carry on (conduct) my borderology in practice.

In this article, I would try to present and describe how I was supported in the recognition and understanding of ‘the Other’ in myself by thesis “Philosophy of smile: beyond the border” (Sultanbaeva 2016). For this purpose and understanding, I need to carry out a reflection on the

work on behalf of another person. That means to exceed myself and to become as an external observer.

The external observer is closely connected with reflection. To solve any problematic issue or situation about one's own and 'the Other', the reflection is the necessary process to achieve an understanding of the problem or situation. Therefore, the reflection is the primary research method in writing this master thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016). The reflective act is the act that shows how a person within the borders of his life can identify his certain characteristics that are perceived as his own. In the borders of the reflexive space, a person begins to comprehend 'not his own' or 'the Other'. Then his understanding of this 'alien' is based on that is connected with him. This connection is based on consciousness. The space of reflection is a mental formation, within which the external observer appears. The external observer considers and solves any problematic issue by 'distanced consideration'. "We are forced to perform acts of reflection precisely by our intention to understand what is going on, to understand, among other things, ourselves and what is happening to us" (Sergeev 2016, p. 135).

In the thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016), the understanding which I am going to achieve is my own, personal understanding. But it is achieved when I take a position of the external observer. I consider that the person can understand an essence of the situation when he looks at it from a position of a stranger or 'the Other'. It can be compared with a spectator of the performance in the theatre. When a person is watching the performance as a spectator, he takes a position of the external observer, and he begins to understand the essence of action of the performance and to reflex on that he is watching. Hence, there is the appearance of understanding.

Talking about the research, "Philosophy of a smile: beyond the border", has carried out in several stages. Initially, this research has appeared from the problem which I faced in 2011. It was the issue of misunderstanding of features of cultural diversity. It was my first meeting with the representatives of other culture which was not similar to mine. There was the first appearance of a question "Who is the Other?" (Rossvær 2015, p. 247). These others were the Norwegian students who came to learn Russian and to get acquainted with features of the Russian culture. These students were participants of "Russian Arctic: language culture economy"- Winter school of Russian language for students from Norway, located in Murmansk, and I was a teacher. I have noted that two different cultures met. At that time it seemed to me that they were only different. But, according to the results of the reflexive analysis, they were not only different but also they had similarities. But at first, getting into the unfamiliar environment, a person sees distinctions, sees another. Hence, having got into the dialogical environment of the Norwegian students, I saw another. This other was a smile. It was

another smile, which is not similar to mine, that I have got used to always seeing on my face. It was the smile of another. I consider it was a reflection of my smile in the smile of another. This thought frightened me initially as it was not the same, as I have got used to seeing earlier. It was another. From this point, it is the beginning of my way of exceeding myself.

Then the dialogue between one's own and other begins, reflected in the thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016). The dialogue has a different character. It is both quiet and noisy, unclear and clear. It is the dialogue between one's own and other through the smile. The concept of smile has not appeared incidentally in this dialogue. It has only been on the general topic of dialogue. But without this thematic field of thought, there would not also be a dialogical conversation. The concept of smile has become a point of refraction of both views on this idea. These points of views are views of the Norwegian culture and views of the Russian culture. Hence, refracting in different directions, they have created a certain new aura of the concept of smile. This aura has also formed the basis of understanding of smile. It is noted there has been an origin of the philosophy of smile.

Thus, it is seen that within a dialogical context, the conversation between one's own and 'the Other' is built by the relationship of not only two substances, but also three elements: one's own, own object, and 'the Other'. The 'own object' is a real name of the subject matter for both substances of the dialogue. It can be considered and belong to both to one's own and to 'the Other' substances.

The dialogue is carried on in the Border zone. This Border zone includes twelve borders. Crossing these borders is the leading to the understanding of 'the Other' and then one's own through the symbol as a smile in the dialogue. This dialogue is understood as "border study in practice" (Rossvær 2015, p. 247). Border study is borderology. How do I understand "Borderology"? According to the thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016), I have considered it through the concept of smile and determined it as an opportunity of "exceeding oneself" (Methi 2015b, p. 213-223). It is mentioned that a smile is a challenge, which is a 'BORDER'. To meet the challenge of it, it is necessary to cross the border. This crossing is possible on the base of study (on 'LOGY'). Thus, I have called this process as "BORDER-O(n)-LOGY" as the whole (Sultanbaeva 2016, p. 5).

Thus, I have become to consider the crossing the borders as the opportunities for me, but not the obstacles. The realisation of these opportunities is possible within a dialogue between myself, one's own and 'the Other'. What is the reason for being of the dialogue as a basis for the understanding of a phenomenon of correlation between one's own and 'the Other' in the master thesis? (Sultanbaeva 2016). The importance and feature of the dialogue are that

we are living in the dialogue. We cannot live without dialogue. We always talk to other people. We speak to ourselves. It is a human peculiarity.

For instance, in the master thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016), the most of the work is devoted to dialogue. One of the main dialogues is a dialogue between the Norwegian students and me where the symbol as smile became a problem subject of the dialogue. Within the dialogue, it is noted my concern about a problem of misunderstanding of a concept of smile has been observed. In this dialogue I have begun to examine myself, to be more specific, to examine that has been unknown to me to myself before carrying on a dialogue with the Norwegian students. In this case, I, as a person, think that the importance of dialogue consists in the understanding of myself, in exceeding myself. In this case, my ignorance of feature of understanding of a concept of smile by the Norwegian students is more significant for me, than my own understanding of a concept of smile. Therefore this problem has begun to be interested in for me and even more it is turned into the object of my research. The appearance of the concept of smile in the dialogue can be explained by the fact that dialogue cannot have only objective character. It also has subjective character. This subjectivity is defined by the appearance of a smile in the dialogue, which describes the dialogue from the outside. In the dialogue between and the Norwegian students and me, my speech is based on my own understanding and my own facts of consciousness, which have not been the same as the understanding and the facts of consciousness of the Norwegian students.

If the dialogue has been described from inside, then its objective character has appeared when I have begun to reflex on the dialogue and to describe this dialogue (Sultanbaeva 2016). In this reflexive description all moments, which have not been discussed in the living dialogue, are conscious, and they have helped me to discover the logical connection between the facts of both my consciousness and the consciousness of the Norwegian students. After that, the Norwegian students and I have become the interlocutors of the dialogue. In this dialogue, we have exchanged the facts of our own consciousness. In such exchange, the Norwegian students have reported me about the facts of their own consciousness. In my turn, I have considered these facts on both sides, various points of view as well as the complete understanding. Thus, I have had an opportunity to examine a dialogue from inside. In this case, I could understand and comprehend a life of dialogue by making the different points of view as part of the whole.

One more important fact within a dialogue is the attitude towards the interlocutor and to what he is saying. In the dialogue, the attitude can be either open or distanced. At the open position to the interlocutor, a person takes any statement in the dialogue seriously and pays attention to an external form of the dialogue. When it is distanced attitude to the interlocutor,

he or she does not pay any attention to an external form, the person begins to observe and analyse his or her own attitude and to become conscious himself or herself better. (Sergeev 2016, p. 10-24).

In the conversation with the Norwegian students, I have carried on an open dialogue with them. In this dialogue, the smile has only been considered as an external form. The facts of consciousness of the Norwegian students about a concept of smile have not been reviewed from inside by me. In these facts, I have not seen any concept of smile. In the dialogue, I had had the distanced attitude when I began to reflect on the dialogue between the Norwegian students and me. In this case, I have managed to observe my own attitude to the Norwegian students. Then, I have come into the process of understanding. It has led me to one more border of exceeding myself, and that means the best understanding of one's own and 'the Other'. All mentioned above is the general review of my reflection on exceeding myself and understanding of 'the Other' at the first meeting with the Norwegian culture (Sultanbaeva 2016, p. 3-15).

In the second meeting with the Norwegian students, which took place in 2014 within the project "Russian Arctic–language, culture, economy" (School of learning Russian as a foreign language for the Norwegian students) (Sultanbaeva 2016, p. 50), the dialogue between one's own and 'the Other' has made the understanding more deeply.

In the thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016), on behalf of an external observer, the dialogue between one's own and 'the Other' could be described as follows. A person efforts to have a dialogue with another person. He or she tells something that is not understandable for himself or herself, about the problem. It is important to note that this person cannot recognise for himself or herself between 'clear' and 'unclear'. In this case, the dialogue is necessary, because the person is strongly integrated into the problem, and another person has a distanced consideration to the content of a problem situation. In this case 'the Other' sees the problem situation of one person in the 'behind perspective'. Besides, in the dialogue, one person would like to understand not only the content of the problem situation but also to understand himself or herself. But he or she cannot make it by himself or herself because of being in his or her own problem situation. For this person, the dialogue looks like a 'rescue' for himself or herself, as it is a hope that 'the Other' leads him or her to himself or herself (Sergeev 2016, p. 10-24).

Speaking about the example, presented in the thesis, my second dialogue with the Norwegian students is that dialogue of 'hope', which has helped me to understand not only concept of smile as a problem, but also to understand myself (Sultanbaeva 2016).

It was necessary for me to carry on dialogue, because after having the first dialogue, many remained challenges of a problem situation has not been clear for me yet. In this case, I

have organised a dialogue situation by the specially arranged classroom dialogue method, that led to open dialogue between the Norwegian students and I. Roles of the students are active participants in the dialogue. My role is a role of the monitor of the dialogue, and also a role of the participant, in the case when I need to share with them the problem of misunderstanding of the concept of smile and to take part in the dialogue. And also within the dialogue with the Norwegian students I had a role of the external observer when I was observing my own attitude to the Norwegian students' talk about a concept of smile and their understanding of the concept of smile. Thus, observing the facts of consciousness and the facts of life of the Norwegian students in their description of the concept of smile, I could see that 'behind perspective' of the concept of smile, which they have shown me. Therefore, I have had an opportunity to be involved in the process of understanding of the concept of smile, through a prism of understanding of the Norwegian culture and exceeding myself. Exceeding my borders, I have seen that the Norwegian students and I have not only one's own but also 'the Other' in myself as well as in themselves. 'The Other' has allowed me to pay attention to myself as the person whom I would not have known before. My subjective point of view about a concept of smile has been changed the way towards 'the Other' and has begun to be under objectivization. Thus, the fact that I have known about myself is that myself started to be forced out by 'the Other'.

It is also noticed that the change of my subjective opinion through an objectivization has happened due to the use of the text about the concept of smile in dialogue. That means that I have spoken with the Norwegian students about my problem of understanding of the concept of smile through the article (text) about the smile, titled "Why do not the Russians smile?" (2013). In this case, all participants of the dialogue have been forced to see not the external side of a smile, but also to see that is behind a smile, the concept. In this case, the smile is a mediator, which has mediated between one's own and 'the Other'. This symbol has been a significant in itself in the dialogue. Then it has already been the understanding of the content of the article in the dialogue, which has helped me to realise that is myself. This understanding has happened due to the fact of exceeding my own borders of my identity with my knowledge about the concept of smile. Thus, It is distinguished another understanding about myself, and also another understanding about the concept of smile. Hence, from my point of view, this understanding has begun to be understood and called as a philosophy of smile.

Summing up the results of the presented situations of dialogue, we have come to a conclusion. On the one hand, the dialogue is one of the best approaches of understanding of one's own and 'the Other'. On the other hand, is one of the best approaches of crossing oneself borders and revealing oneself as another. In the Border zone, it is understood that these



considered dialogical situations about the understanding of the concept of the smile by two different cultures have been as the reflections on the idea. This idea is that many conflicting traditional views of any concepts or the phenomena of culture could be considered as “conflicting traditions as also carrying a potential for peace” (Rossvær 2015, p. 248). When the separate and private understanding can already be understood as the whole, and the actual understanding in the dialogue, i.e. the dialogue “is provided with communication with the world as with whole” (Sergeev 2016, p. 34), it leads us to ourselves and allows to cross all borders.

Reflecting on the dialogues, which formed the basis of all research, I have noticed that the “exceeding oneself” (Methi 2015b, p. 213) is possible within cooperation of one’s own, ‘the Other’ and someone or something else. In the thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016), this someone or something is considered a smile, which is act as a mediator. In this ‘trinity’ of cooperation, it is emphasised one’s own as well as ‘the Other’. It means that both one’s own and ‘the Other’ are important, i.e. it is not possible to understand ‘one’s own’ without ‘the Other’ and vice versa. ‘The Other’ has appeared in my own border zone, and then I can cross the borders and discover myself in ‘the Other’. For performing this act, I have to do the strong-willed act. This act is that I have opened to myself from the part of that is unfamiliar for myself. This part is more than I am. I have opened myself to ‘the Other’. I have opened myself to ‘the Other’. In the thesis, it is reflected in the moment of my reflection on the challenge of the existence of an ‘internal smile’ (Sultanbaeva 2016, p. 11-12 ). This discovery of an ‘internal smile’ has forced me to open myself as another. After that action, I have stopped to think about the problem of search of the reasons for appearance or absence of a smile. It is explained that this problem has become less than my new understanding, which is connected with the ‘internal smile’. In this case, such act has allowed me to consider this problem not only from the position of *causality* but also from the position of “*lacking a cause*” (Sergeev 2016, p. 80). This act is characterised as my challenge to *causality*. I notice it has been reasonable. When I have admitted the appearance of ‘the Other’ in my consciousness and have understood that ‘the Other’ also exists as I am, I could act *against* the *causality* and *circumstances*. My act has begun to have a form of “*lacking a cause*” (Sergeev 2016, p. 80). That has allowed me to leave my border that is “ a form of a consecutive explanation by control and calculation” (Sergeev 2016, p. 80) and to open myself a new act of understanding with the use of intuition. Thus, in this “*lacking a cause*” (Sergeev 2016, p. 80) the act all my understanding and the reflexive description of a concept of smile and formation of philosophy of smile has got the form of another character. It has allowed me to exceed the border of causality of appearance and absence of smile and to come to the border

of exceeding my borders and revealing myself as another (Sultanbaeva 2016; Sergeev 2016, 2015,2011; Sergeev and Sokolov 2015).

In this article, I have tried to present the reflection on the act of exceeding myself and my experience of meeting with 'the Other' by my master thesis "Philosophy of smile: beyond the border" (Sultanbaeva 2016). As a result, I have come to the conclusion that this master thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016) is the whole act of the description of how I could reach the exceeding my own borders and the revealing myself as another. This work has been characterised as this act for me correctly. Why do I think that way? I consider that within the context of this thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016) I could present the world of my attitude to the outside world. Reflecting on the context of research, I would like to note that, at the initial stage of the writing of the thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016) I have had one attitude to a smile, to the Norwegian students, to myself, to 'the Other'. Now it is said that my attitude has been changed. I have become an adult, crossing the borders one after another in working on this research. As I grow up to adulthood through the text, I have learned to look at myself as an external observer. I have had a conscious attitude to the moments of life and more understanding of them.

Thus, the context of thesis "Philosophy of smile: beyond the border" (Sultanbaeva 2016) has become the environment, which has given me the opportunity to become the external observer in the attitude to myself, and to observe the moments of my life from the position of another. Going through this text, it is noticed that the conscious attitude to my life. It has been defined in the reflection on the dialogical situations, crossing the borders. My reflection has proceeded in such a way that I have come across one border (environment), then to another border, etc. It is such chain of borders, which characterised by the absolute moments of my understanding. This understanding has connected all moments of this chain one after another in one uniform sense. It has led me to the world to one big Border zone, which is *a unified plan of consciousness* (Sultanbaeva 2016, p. 59-63).

Therefore, as the result, all borders of understanding of a concept of smile as uniform sense represented the philosophy of smile. To have a clear understanding of this chain and to take experience from something, crossings all borders, I need to have a mediator. This mediator has been a smile, but to be more exactly, the mediator is the context about the smile in the thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016). This context could change the angle of my habitual perception of my own life through the reflection on this context. Also, it has allowed me to become an external observer of myself, and then already to interpret this context through the reflection. Thus, this context has become the reflexive environment for me. With the help of this context I have been conscious my own experience and have changed my attitude to the world and the situations,

described in “Philosophy of smile: beyond the border” (Sultanbaeva 2016). This context reflects my experience of carrying on a dialogue with the world of ‘the Other. It seems a ‘truth’ that I would like to reach for four years. It is necessary to do. As a result to come to a conscious understanding of my own life within the concept of a smile.

The world of the text “Philosophy of smile: beyond the border” (Sultanbaeva 2016), which I have created, represents a certain world. This world is not the unique world. But the feature of this world is that it represents a chain of the conscious attitude to myself as well as to ‘the Other’. Such conscious attitude to two worlds allows me to see and reveal for myself those features of the world, which has been unclear before. It has led to new understanding of the world. This understanding of the world has to develop in the Border zone because the Border zone is considered as “an arena of exceeding oneself” (Methi 2015b, p. 213). The world of my text has proved this exceeding. But this “exceeding oneself” (Methi 2015b, p. 213) does not come to an end for the person, then there is "revealing himself as another" (Sergeev 2016, p. 86).

Revealing myself as another has been reflected in my understanding of reality, presented in the thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016). In the context of the thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016) my desire to understand phenomena is the primary challenge for the writing of this reflexive work. I have inspired to understand the concept of a smile, the value-sense content of the Norwegian culture, the Norwegian students, and eventually philosophy of smile. According to the written conclusion of the thesis (Sultanbaeva 2016), I could tell that I have come to an understanding. This understanding has been created by both my subjective and my objective studying of the declared challenges. But the understanding should not “be connected neither with any subject nor with any object” (Sergeev 2016, p. 200). It means that the understanding has to be complete. This integrity of my understanding has been reached when I began to study a smile as one language, to study a value-sense content of the Norwegian culture as a life and presented the philosophy of smile as consciousness (the appropriate description of thinking concerning a concept of a smile) (Sultanbaeva 2016). Thus, besides knowledge of a concept of a smile as one language through its representation in the dialogical situational environments, I still could come to the understanding of a concept of a smile through the whole conscious perception of a smile, without subjective and objective understanding, which is called the philosophy of smile.

The environment of context “Philosophy of a smile: beyond the border” (Sultanbaeva 2016) has opened for me the new world of the Border zone of my consciousness. The world in which I could see how I am exceeding myself and have become open to my own.

In conclusion, I would like to say that my research which I have conducted for four years of my studying in the joint Master degree in Borderology is significant work. This work is based on the understanding of myself, to be more precisely, my own existence in the Border zone, in the context of the philosophy of smile. The Border zone contains in itself different environments which are the main borders of understanding of one's own. There is the meeting with 'the Other' in these borders. According to these meetings I have managed to conscious myself. These meetings are the dialogue environments. In these dialogical environments, my conversation with 'the Other' has created a basis for understanding one's own as well as 'the Other'. The dialogue with 'the Other' is necessary. Hence, in this dialogue, crossing all barriers of misunderstanding, we could answer ourselves the question "Who is the Other?" (Rossvær 2015, p. 247). For this purpose, the existence of the mediator, which allows us to exceed ourselves, is necessary for us. Hence, we have become the external observers. Such mediator has been the context about a smile. With the help of this mediator, a dialogue with 'the Other' has become for me as the whole the world, which has allowed me to conscious my attitude to 'the Other', to the concept of a smile. This attitude has reflected my attitude to the world in general. The border world, the world of study border has created a certain environment of understanding of the philosophy of smile. In this environment of understanding subjective and objective knowledge of a concept of a smile has vanished and turned into such complete understanding that led to clear conscious understanding. Thus, the presented context of work is not just subjective or objective knowledge and is a particular understanding of the distanced observer. The external observer has described the correlation between one's own, 'the Other' and the mediator. The external observer has formed the context of the philosophy of smile. Speaking about the philosophy of smile, it has been created as the description of understanding of exceeding oneself borders and revealing oneself as another in the dialogical world of the concept of smile within the Border Zone.

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