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RESEARCH PAPERS

In the Mind of Theseus
or Hobbes and the Paradox of the Second Ship

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Abstract

The philosopher Plutarch, recalling the life of the Greek hero Theseus, proposed an anecdote. What if during his voyage home, the ship in which Theseus sailed suffered progressive damage and wear, and the crew of the ship replaced each time the part that got damaged. And if the damage was so extensive that by the time it reached Athens, virtually all parts of the ship have been replaced. This begged the question Is that the same ship that left Crete?

A millennium later, in his work De Corpore, Thomas Hobbes expanded Plutarch's anecdote further. Assuming that someone followed the ship, collecting all of the original parts, and eventually reassembled the ship. Which of these two is now the original ship? Are they both the same ship with the new one an extension of the old? Or none of them, for there was never a real ship to begin with?

If we consider Hume's theory of identity, that all we are is a bundle of thoughts, beliefs and experiences that we acquire from, and give back to, the world, this modularity we can apply to the human mind. As modern technologies become more advanced, we find new ways to store parts of ourselves outside of us. Thoughts that we write down, memories that we capture in pictures, or even going so far as saving backups of our minds on hard drives. Where is then the limit of one's self, when we augment ourselves with technology? Can we consider devices like our cell phones as (natural) adaptations to our new environments' demands? And, if we live in our modern, permanently connected world, is there any place left for individuality? How far are we from becoming a gestalt conscience that combines the sum knowledge of all humans, living, and dead?

Keywords: *Mind, identity, self, paradox, technology.*

A recount of the paradox as debated by the ancients

For as long as fear could be felt, there was no step in the history of humankind that did not ebb this fear. Yet it relentlessly dogged us throughout the ages. For every new discovery that brought a faint, but warm, glow of light into the darkness that is

our understanding, there was a reaction from said darkness to swallow us whole again in the cold grasp of our ignorance. There was never an action without a reaction.

We sought to conquer nature inasmuch as we have sought to conquer ourselves. Moreover, for every battle we have won against those external forces of nature that would have seen us dead, another such battle had to be won against our inner selves. Technological progress most often comes with a psychological and sociological price. We fear change as we fear fear itself.

We recall the wisdom of the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus who said that change is the only constant in this life, and in this universe. Much sadness and awe did this bring onto old Parmenides' brow, for he proposed, as Plato later will, that there is a *being*, an existence of things, that never suffers change.[1] The universe for him was perfect, thus finite, and perfectly ordained by a superior reason, a *logos*, one that the Abrahamic religions will later attribute to their God. And in this perfection, change as we mortals see it was considered imperfection, and thus it had no reasonable place in this universe.[2] But Heraclitus also tells us that although everything is in motion, the universe is perfectly balanced by strife, as the back of a bow with its string attached, holds into place by the tension of two forces that otherwise would break it apart. This state of perfect equilibrium for him could not be achieved without a state of perfect chaos. What we now call in a thermodynamic system the state of maximum entropy.

This impermanence Plato later presents from the mouth of Cratylos who says that everything moves, and that nothing remains the same, and more famously, going beyond his master's doctrine, that one cannot bathe twice in the waters of the same river. Heraclitus called this principle *panta rhei*, that everything flows. Plato himself uses *choros*, the concept that everything changes place.[3]

But we know that Plato rejected this impermanence. He thought, *how can one thing be real, and true, if everything that that thing is, and everything that we know about it is, and will be, subjected to change?* There must be something in the being of a thing that most certainly is unchanging, an *essence* of sorts.

Plato's solution was simple, you split the world into two dimensions. A dimension of ideas and a separate dimension for material things. An idea was thus the immortal, perfect, unchanging essence of a thing, that acts like an imaginary prototype for said material counterpart.[4] Thus for a chair to take shape, a carpenter must first

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[1] Plato, "Parmenides," in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 9 trans. Harold N. Fowler (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1925), 138.

[2] Plato, "Republic," in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vols. 5 & 6, trans. Paul Shorey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 7.511-520.

[3] Plato, "Cratylus," in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 12 trans. Harold N. Fowler (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1921), 402-404.

[4] Plato, "Symposium," in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 9, 207-208.

have the idea of a chair in his mind. And where does the carpenter acquire this idea form? Well, from an already existing chair of course. And how does the carpenter acquire it? Through his senses. Then, using Aristotle's words, the process of building a new chair involves taking an already existing object, that has a material identity of its own, wood, and changing its formal and final causes. In fact, we are overwriting an object's identity with another's. Wood does not naturally become a chair, and chairs do not exist on their own, they require an intelligence to build them and a mind in which the ulterior derived idea of a chair to be stored.[5]

We see that Plato's reasoning here is flawed. He proposes that ideas live in a world of their own and that the human mind either accidentally stumbles upon them, thus making an unwanted, but fortunate discovery, or reaches them through will and contemplation, what today we might call systematic research. Yet Heraclitus responds to this by telling us that we are wrong in thinking that the chair is the final cause for wood. That ash might be its final form, if unfortunately said chair was to catch fire.

What we have here is in fact a very complicated and layered dilemma of identity, whose origin we see dates from Antiquity and which until now has failed to produce a definitive answer. As I have presented earlier both Heraclitus and Plato argue in an unescapable paradox. How can something change and still remain the same? If it ultimately changes, what happens to its identity? For modern philosophy, this is known as the paradox of Theseus' ship.

There are many versions of this story, but the core idea remains the same. It was first presented by Plutarch in his *Parallel Lives*, and has been debated for millennia by philosophers, one of whom, Thomas Hobbes, I shall invoke, but later.

The story goes on like this. That Theseus, the young Greek hero, the one who defeated the Minotaur in his Labyrinth in the Isle of Crete, had a ship. That ship Theseus used to voyage from his home in Athens to Crete, and back home again. Whether during the journey, or after returning home, Theseus' ship suffered extensive damage. Skilled carpenters progressively replaced the damaged parts with new ones, eventually replacing all the original ship's parts. Another version of this story tells us that the original wooden parts of the ship were completely replaced by more durable, metal ones, thus making the distinction between the two even starker.[6]

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[5] Aristotle, *The Organon*, trans. Harold P. Cooke and Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univiversity Press, 1955), 1.1-15; Aristotle, "Metaphysics," in *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, vols. 17 & 18, trans. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 5.1013.

[6] Plutarch, "Theseus," in *Plutarch's Lives*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), 1.1-2

Hobbes and the paradox of the Second Ship

In Early Modern times, the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes preoccupied himself with this problem and expanded the paradox even further in his work *De Corpore*. *What if,* he said, *the carpenters that repaired the boat kept all the original parts? And what if, someone, sometime later, decided to reassemble the original ship?* So now we have not one, but two actual ships. Hobbes' question is the same as the ancients', only that now we have both a problem of identity, between the initial ship and the repaired one but also a problem of originality, between the repaired ship and the reconstructed one. We have one ship that preserves the essence of Theseus' ship, but not its material, and one that preserves its material, but not its essence.[7]

To begin trying to solve this paradox we must analyze how the ship got to be, and what defined its identity in the first place. We should start by saying that it was designed by a certain Athenian shipbuilder, who most certainly was, given the importance of his task, an experienced one. And being an experienced shipbuilder, many other ships have been designed and built by his hand. So the Platonic idea behind Theseus' ship might have been shared between these ships because the mind that contained it most certainly made use of it.

Secondly, the materials the ship was built from must have been local, plentiful and readily available, for the ship was built very quickly. So other ships could've been sharing these materials with our ship as well, thus multiple ships having the same material cause. Wood from the same trunk, iron from the same ore, conversely. If we take into account the story where the wooden ship is replaced with a metal one, the ship doesn't share the same material identity even with itself. And what if, in repairing the ship, the builders used nails, or rope different from the original? What if, not recalling the shape of an original piece, or trying to improve it, they did not respect the original design?

Thirdly, the reason why the ship was built, so as to transport the young Athenians to King Minos' Labyrinth, was shared with at least more than one vessel. For Theseus' was the last of a series that had, at least one precedent, for we know, the sacrifice to the minotaur happened at least one more time.

And lastly the ship's crew. The only thing that made Theseus' ship truly unique was the composition of its crew. For nowhere else do we see it assembled in this format.

We see that we cannot derive a sufficient argumentation for defining the ship's identity neither by invoking Plato's idea, nor neither by comparing Aristotle's causes.

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[7] Thomas Hobbes, "De Corpore," in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*, vol. I, ed. Sir William Molesworth (London: John Bohn, 1840), 132-138.

Yet we only have a finite number of answers we can give. Either the first ship is Theseus's ship, the second one is, both of them are, or none of them is.

Hobbes tries to give an answer to this problem in *De Mundo Examined* where he says the following, that *if some part of the first material has been removed or another part has been added, that ship will be another being, or another body altogether. For, there cannot be the same body whose parts are not all the same, because all a body's parts, taken collectively, are the same as the whole*.[8]

We see that in his reasoning Hobbes applies a principle of transitivity. The ship of Theseus is equal to the sum of its parts, of its original parts. If we replace but one of these parts, the ship in question is no longer our original ship, but another, closely resembling it, but not identical. So by this account we should consider the second ship the original one, for it has all the pieces of the original ship, and thus it has a direct claim of identity between the two. But, as we know from Plutarch's story, the people of Athens still regarded the repaired ship as Theseus'. Albeit they did not have Hobbes' continuation.

Hobbes himself, just a paragraph later, gives us another, wholly different answer. He says that: if one asks whether a man is, when old and young, the same being, or matter, it is clear that, because of the continual casting of existing body-tissue and the acquisition of new one, it is not the same material that endures, and hence not the same body, yet, because of the unbroken nature of the flux by which matter decays and is replaced, he is always the same man.[9]

So by this second account, the first one is the original, and the only real ship. For the second one we know, was damaged, and thus it was no longer a functioning ship.

But we see here in Hobbes' account an idea of continuation. That our ship's identity has persistence through time because of the graduality of the repair process. If the builders were to bring a different, completely new ship, to replace the old one, then it would've been obvious for everyone that the second ship was a very different one. But because the process was a very long one, lasting for centuries, the line between the two was heavily blurred.

Sadly, in reality we face the unforgiving touch of decay. And this experiment can only be performed in thought. The reason why the pieces have been replaced in the first place was that they were expired, rotten, rendered unusable. Hobbes' continuation has sense only if the ship was upgraded, say from wood to iron or brass,

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[8] Thomas Hobbes, *De mundo examined*, trans. Harold Whitmore Jones (London: Bradford University Press, 1976), 140-142.

[9] Hobbes, „De Corpore," 132-138; Plato, "Symposium," in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 9, 207-208.

for then the wood could have still be of use, for it was not replaced because of its decay.

The metaphor of the ship as a loss of humanity

The logic behind this story has both amazed and intrigued scientists and philosophers alike, all the while inspiring fear in equal amounts. The fear of change, and more importantly, the fear of loss. The loss of identity, the loss of humanity. For Theseus' ship stands as a metaphor, one for permanence, and change. And we can use this metaphor on humans, or, as we will see, on what humans can become.

One modern such example of a story, fictional of course, albeit very plausible, I have seen being explored by Adam Savage, famous co-host of Mythbusters, designer, engineer and tech enthusiast. In 2011, the 11th episode of the 2nd season of *Curiosity*, a Discovery Channel documentary, was released. It was named *Can You Live Forever?*. In it, Adam proposed a simple, but very familiar hypothesis. What if we can extend our lives by gradually replacing the parts of us that cease to function properly?

The story of his transformation I shall relate as following. First he replaced his lungs, that were pierced during an accident, with lungs grown from his own tissues as to avoid rejection. Then he replaced his right arm, which became paralyzed, with a rudimentary mechanical one, and after that with a very advanced and very sophisticated prosthesis, virtually undistinguishable from his biological arm. When conventional medicine could not save him from a blood clot in his brain, he used nanotechnology to find and repair any internal damage, and kept the microscopic robots inside of him on a constant patrol to prevent any future problems of this kind. And so on and so forth.

But he soon realized that his natural body was reaching its biological limit. He could rejuvenate his skin, renew his blood, extend his memory into external hard drives, but he could not fully stop ageing, but merely delay it. Therefore, he thought, he should altogether abandon his body and built a new, improved one from scratch and simply transferred his mind into it. This is fantasy of course, but what if he was right? Instead of struggling with repairing the body attached to his mind, he would find a way to attach that mind to a new body. If he managed to extend parts of his memory outside of his actual biological brain, what could stop him from migrating the rest of his mind to this new synthetic storage?

This story is most obviously farfetched. A mere dream for us today. It implies not only that we fully understand our physiology and biology, but assumes that we have the ability to recreate it. This raises many questions that we should better start answering before his fantasy becomes our reality. Besides the technical questions of whether we could do it or not, there are rather many ethical questions of whether we should do it or not that we have to settle even before we start experimenting.

So let us consider Adam's body, or any other human body, as our own Theseus' ship. We know that by ageing, and Hobbes agrees, that we eventually replace every part of our ship, our body. Medical anecdotes tell us that we replace every single cell in our body every 7 years. So during an average human lifespan we replace the amount of more than 10 bodies. Yet our identity, our Self, remains unscattered, or does it?

But what if, as Adam did, we no longer wait for nature and begin to take control over our body. If we replace our organs with organs that are derived from our own tissues, we preserve our material identity wholly. There is no new or foreign material in our bodies. It is just as natural as regenerating a scar, only that on a larger scale. And our damaged parts, as was the wood from the ship, can no longer be used, so they cannot be transplanted into another. So that we will never have to face the possibility of a second ship emerging from our wasted parts.

This idea is flawed as well, for it assumes that, firstly our identity will not suffer changes. And secondly, that that organ will be considered a part of us, rather than an independent object or being. Our Self does suffer change, as our body does. It matures, and it degenerates as we age, and simply stopping physical ageing will not stop psychological ageing. And secondly, what if we grow a whole body and not just organs? What if, as has already been explored by Kazuo Ishiguro in his 2005 novel *Never Let Me Go*, we grow backup clones of ourselves? Clones that already have a mind of their own and are not just the sum of their biological parts. This path we see has its own ethical problems, which are as complex as, if not more complex than our original paradox.

However, what if we just start to enhance ourselves with mechanical augments. This way we do not potentially harm any other living being. But this path has a very hard question to answer. Can a human, that is no longer 100% human, be considered human still? And where do we trace the border between human and nonhuman?

There is an intrinsic conflict of causes in the problem of defining what a human in this case might be. On one hand we have the formal cause that says that if it looks like a human, performs like a human, feels like a human, then he is human. Then we have the platonic version of this definition, that even if by all empirical means it is human, it no longer bears a relation of identity between the idea of a human and its biological reality. For we have clarified earlier that only that ship which has all the original parts can identify itself with Theseus's ship, and by any deviation from its ideal prototype a new and wholly different being is produced.

If the mechanical enhancements are light, and barely noticeable we call them simply enhanced humans. A hearing aid, a titanium joint, an electronic heart. These are subtle technologies that most often help those that have a defective organ live normal lives. A different category of humans, but very closely related to it. So close in

fact that it does not present any major ontological difference. And we already enhance ourselves with wearable gadgets and tools, like the very rudimentary glasses that allow us to see better, or the paper and pen that allows us to store thoughts, going as far as smart mobile phones that grant us an ability very closely resembling telepathy. Only that we see them as tools, and not part of our bodies. For we can detach them from us without effort, or without damaging our corporal structure or integrity. But they are enhancements still.

But as it was the case with Adam's story, people began to voluntarily amputate their organs to replace them with better functioning ones. Faster legs, stronger hands, better eyes. What do we call those? And what if they become more machine than human? Say they replace both their hands and their legs with augments? We have a special category for these people. We call them cybernetic organism, or more archaically, machine-men. This may sound like science fiction, but these people really exist in our present.

For example the Irish-born artist Neil Harbisson, who has a lamp-like extension on his head. He was born with an extreme colorblindness and he could only see in shades of black and grey. He is the first human to be legally recognized as a cyborg.

Another example is Jesse Sullivan. He is a double amputee who lost both his arms and who was fitted with so-called bionic prostheses. These pair of advanced robotic arms were attached to his shoulders and he can operate them with implants in his spinal cord. They are yet far from being as precise as biological arms, but cybernetics as a science is just only at its beginning.

Another great example is Professor Kevin Warwick. He is a professor of cybernetics at the University of Reading in the United Kingdom, and he has done multiple experiments on himself. He implanted microchips in his arms and in his head so that he could remote control robots and electronic devices with his mind.

As much as it amazes us, and myself personally, the idea of meeting such person is fear inspiring. Sigmund Freud described this phenomenon in a 1919 essay as *uncanniness*, or *unheimlich*. The un-familiar. The feeling of something being not unknown or foreign, but strangely familiar, yet not fully recognizable. We are capable of identifying the likeness, but we are unable to acknowledge that likeness as a person such as ourselves. We may accept someone that uses a peacemaker, because we cannot see it, but would we shake hands with someone that has USB fingers? We fear a robot that looks like a human, we fear more a human that looks like a machine.

Here we have an ontological separation that is most evident. We do not allow, for example, transsexual women to compete in feminine sports because of the unfair advantage that their biological bodies offer them. How would we, to continue the example, accept a football match between a team of baseline humans versus a team of

enhanced humans? As a curiosity, maybe. This separation between augmented and non-augmented humans has a huge potential for conflict in the future if it ever becomes a reality.

We have seen scenarios of humans persecuting cyborgs and androids in books like *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*? written by the brilliant American novelist Philip K. Dick. From the natural fear of the different, to the stigma of augmented humans being considered more machine than human, and thus more akin to objects than beings, to more elaborate phobias like the fear of an AI totalitarian regime that is wholly mathematical and rational without any regards form human life, or a superior augmented human master race driven by Darwinian ideals that will seek to eliminate the now inferior and obsolete, biological humans.

Fortunately, we do not have such hard criteria of separation. We still have a cohesive and unitarian human identity that we call humanity. But we have to ask, what if, again in the future, these augmented humans decide that they no longer adhere to their human identity? What is Theseus' ship no longer wants to be his ship? We already have transhuman and posthuman movements that advocate surpassing our so called human limitations. One excellent advocate of embracing technology as the next natural step in our evolution was Julian Huxley, the 1st Director-General of UNESCO and an accomplished biologist. Ironically, his own brother Aldous Huxley has written many novels criticizing Julian's views, especially those on eugenetics.

It is commonly said about these people that they have lost, or abandoned, their humanity. Whether judging from a quantitative or qualitative point of view. Whether they renounced the quality of being human, or by exceeding a limit in their physiology, the rest of human beings no longer consider them a part of us. Thus, in their eyes, meaning that they have lost their true identity. They [the trans and post humanists] in return consider other humans that reject technology as technophobes and luddites, superstitious and backwards. Usually transhumanist range into the atheist and materialist spectrum of thought, whereas those who reject technology usually do it on moral and spiritual grounds.

Solving the paradox

As we have seen an answer to Hobbes dilemma, and a possible resolve to Theseus's paradox is very hard. John Locke made an attempt. Although and evasive answer that was greatly expanded upon by Noam Chomsky. He proposes that the identity of Theseus's ship was not residing in the ship itself, as the ancients believed, but in the minds, the consciousness, of the people that looked at that ship and acknowledged it as being as such. Thus, he moved the problem of the ship's identity

from an ontological to a cognitive level.[10] But this answer can only apply to inanimate objects. The ship could not develop an identity all by itself. If the Athenians decided that the materials from the ship could better serve as building materials, the ship was helpless to stop them, as it was helpless to stop them from repairing it.

This is why we should actually ask what was in the mind of Theseus. Because there is, and never was a ship. The only thing that gave that ship its identity was Theseus's mind. Without Theseus, there would have been no ship.[11] And without the minds of his fellow Athenians that stored this ship's identity, Heraclitus would have been right all along, the final cause of this monument would have been rot or ash.

This is the final problem that Adam also faced in his quest for immortality. His family, who refused to live an unnatural lifespan, chose to die as unaugmented humans. The world in which he lived passed through literal Apocalypse. No one and nothing remained of his past life. Though he solved all his biological challenges, the psychological and sociological ones remained. He was facing depression, boredom. After he has done everything that a human being could do in 1000 years, he was struggling with grasping what was left of his Self.

David Hume comes with an even more undaunted theory, that our mind is nothing more than the sum of all its experiences bundled together. It is not a proper metaphysical object, but rather a collection of perceptions, thoughts and memories that have no intrinsic cohesion, nor sense, nor unity outside of our minds. This theory tells us that an object is only the sum of all its properties and relations, and nothing more. That there is no substance in which its properties are inherent, only acquired.[12]

So, based on what Hume has theorized, we can elaborate that there is no inherent nature to the Self. The Self *is* in no way something, it only *possesses* certain *qualia* at certain times. That which I possess becomes part of what I am. Thus, the Self is defined not by *being* something, but by *having* something.

If the Self acquires something, then this raises two sets of questions. First of all, from where does it acquire the things that it acquires? And if another Self happens to acquire a certain set of properties as another, would that establish a certain relation of identity between them, or at least between them and an original, let's say prototype? And the second set of questions follows that if a Self manages to acquire something from somewhere, would a latter Self be capable of acquiring the same thing as the former from it? And if true would this happen by means of inheritance or by

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[10] Noam Chomsky, *Of Minds and Language. A Dialogue with Noam Chomsky in the Basque Country*, eds. Massimo Piattelli-Palmarini, Juan Uriagereka and Pello Salaburu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 382.

[11] Chomsky, *Of Minds and Language.*

[12] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Sir Lewis Amherst Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 251-263.

means of imitation? Or in other words will the first Self be forced to renounce its quality and pass it on to the second Self, or will the second Self create its own quality based on the one the first one had?

Our identity is, for the moment being, in essence, linked to our physical body. We cannot leave, per se, the body that we are born with, nor can we exchange it with another's. And this fundamentally shapes our notion of individuality and identity. But what if we have spare bodies, like in Adam's case? Thus, we no longer identify with our body. We no longer *are* the body we inhabit, but we merely *commandeer* it as a vehicle. So what if someone else besides us manages to acquire one of these bodies? He who manages this has access to all of our memories, and to our body. So, does that person becomes us? This possibility of identity theft becomes a reality the moment we break our ontological link to our body, as we can see explored in the 2009 American movie *Surrogates*, or the Japanese series *Ghost in the Shell*. Or more gravely, what if we are forced in a body that is not our own as an intended punishment, as we see in South African director Neill Blomkamp's short movie series *ADAM: The Mirror*.

This critique of this radical mind-body dualism we see in Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind,* where he tries to argue against Descartes' reasoning that the mind and the body are separate entities, a duality he [Ryle] derogatory calls the "ghost in the machine". He argues that the Platonic, and later Cartesian distinction between a mental and a material world is an illusion, a colossal "categoric mistake", because it mistakenly assumes that a mental act could be, and is, distinct from a physical act. There is no entity called a *mind* inside a mechanical apparatus called *the body*, but they both are parts of the same entity and cannot exist one outside the other. For example that there can be no mind as a metaphysical object in the absence of a biological brain to host it. And that all experiences of the mind are, in fact, mediated by, and of, the body.[13]

This correlates with Locke when he says that we come unto this world as blank blackboards. He postulated that at birth the mind is empty, blank as a piece of paper on which nothing was written as of yet, a *tabula rasa.* He continues by saying that not only are we born with a blank mind, we are born without any innate ideas. The only property that this blank mind has is the capacity of acquiring and storing knowledge. Knowledge, which is shaped by the experience, it has with the perception of the senses that go into contact with the outside world and from the inner reflection of the mind on said impressions. We have thus no inherent identity and no inherent humanity until we go forth into, and interact with, the world.[14]

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[13] Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 11-24.
[14] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Ward, Lock And Co, 1689), 12-26.

We form our identity in a two-step process. By affirming what we are, and denying what we are not. By associating with that which we have something in common with, and dissociating from that which differs from us. And this process always requires both a psychological and sociological context. And, more importantly, that we have a choice in choosing said associations.

Thus, the problem of the ship's identity becomes a problem of consensus. The ship is what it is because other people chose to grant upon it its identity. As such, the same consensus decides what, if anything, is human.

The quest for a new identity

And here we ask your final set of questions. What if all of humanity becomes like Adam? What if virtually all humans in this universe become immortal, interconnected beings? What if all the consciousnesses pool together in a network that shares all the collective experiences and memories between all of its members? Do we not then become a collective consciousness? And where is the place of our Self in this prospect of an ontological ascendency?

We are closely connected by our means of modern communication even today. We have projects of building rudimentary collective vaults of information to be readily accessed by all. And we do this every time we use the internet. But we have access only to that which others cared to share with us willingly. Whether texts, pictures or videos, we have access to parts of others' memories and thoughts. The only thing that stops us from assimilating these memories as our own is the fact that we are conscious that these are but mere products of a labor. They are *artefacts*. We do not experience them neither exactly *when* they happen, neither exactly *how* they happened. Thus we recognize them as ulterior, and, us not being present at their formation, we clearly identify them as foreign, and not ours.

But let's say that by having unlimited, unrestricted, and immediate access to the whole of human knowledge. What if we no longer use tools to communicate with one another, but instead build artificial "organs" of the body to do so? What if through this magical-like technological telepathy, we, and our Selves, go so far as to no longer reside in our own bodies, but in a shared network of interlinked conduits, both synthetic and biological.

Here we can give but merely tree solutions. Either we become a collective consciousness, a *consensus*, thus being one with both Theseus and his ship. Second, we become silent voices, subordinated under the indentity of a superior will, either of an individual, or collective, that will emerge. Or, we embrace the second ship, and radically rethink from the fundaments our concepts of identity to build new borders to differentiate ourselves, our now wondering, nomadic *ghost*, inside our new machine.

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(Re)defining Culture and Identity across Borders
The Issue of Ethnic Identity for Writers in Romania

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Abstract

In the context of globalization, the analysis of literature as a phenomen has shifted from a historical point of view, that aims at organizing texts according to the genre and species, and time, to a more broadening vision that emcompasses establishing principles based on a common cultural territory that most of the time transgresses the administrative territory. Cultural identity is no longer confined to the physical borders. What is the relation between literature of the majority and literature of the minority? How do we define the term literature of the minority? This paper aims at analyzing the concept of culture and identity across borders.

Keywords: *Identity, Borders, Ethnicity, Journey, Contemplation.*

The context of globalization changes the perspective of addressing the literary phenomenon. Phrases such as the *world republic of letters*,[1] *minor literature*,[2] *microliterature*,[3] *marginal literature*, *postcolonial literature*[4] broaden the approach and change the perspective of the literary phenomenon. The historiographic criterion, the diachronic analysis, the inventory of literature according to currents and literary species are replaced by visions that pertain to the literary phenomenon from an integrating point of view, on one hand, aiming to identify common principles that determine the value of the writings, and on the other hand, proposing a point of view that distinguishes literature according to the cultural and spiritual territory, and not the administrative one, given that over the past 100 years administrative boundaries have not overlapped the cultural ones.

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[1] Pascale Casanova, *Republica Mondială a Literelor* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2007).

[2] Gilles Deleuze, *Kafka. Pentru o literatură minoră* (Bucharest: Art, 2007).

[3] Mircea A. Diaconu, "Language, Ethnicity, and Polyterritoriality of a Central-East European Literary System," in *Romanian Literature as World Literature*, eds. M. Martin, C. Moraru, A. Terian (Ed. Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

[4] Andrei Terian, *Critica de export. Teorii, contexte, ideologii* (Bucharest: Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2013).

Analysis of the concept of identity is an increasingly difficult task, taking into account the many changes in the past 100 years. At the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, things seemed to have been set in an identity routine determined by the concrete establishment of cultural spaces, which were considered to be equal to those of the administration, thus writers were identified almost exclusively depending on the country of origin (obviously, exceptions exist, such as James Joyce's or Samuel Beckett's cases), since in the second half of the twentieth century it is increasingly difficult for a writer to fit into the safe and infallible frame of a country. It is clearly a matter of building a new identity that has to take into account the last 100 years, not to completely erase it from memory. Another factor contributing to the difficulty of establishing the concept of identity is the increase of migration. Does overcoming administrative borders also mean overcoming cultural boundaries? What are the effects of migration on the identity of writers? Is it possible to fully integrate them into the new space they choose to live in? Or is it a transcultural identity? Beckett's example comes to mind. Irish, then French, he writes in English, then in French, then translates into English again. What is his identity? How relevant is framing Beckett into a national identity in the context of a world space of literature? Another example is that of Eugen Ionescu, claimed by Romanian literature, but, in essence, a French-language writer. Is language of expression an important criterion in defining identity? What does identity mean in the 21st century? And where do we put writers belonging to ethnicities, but who choose to express themselves in the language of the country in which they live?

Any approach that seeks to analyze the concept of ethnic identity must start from the definition of criteria that define identity in general. First of all, we must admit that identity meets both the need for unity and the need for difference, being a relationship of similarity, of identifying with members of a community, but at the same time being also defined as a differentiation between individual and others, being "a permanent oscillation between radical alterity and total similarity".[5] Identity is therefore a complex process that involves both generalization and differentiation. It should also be noted that identity, is often a fluid concept, depending on the historical, social, professional, and personal context. Thus, the same individual may have a certain national identity (Romanian), a social one (a people person), a professional (writer) and a personal one (hard to define), all of which do not excluded, but coexist.

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[5] Viorica-Cristina Cormoș, *Migrație și Identitate. Schimbări identitare, colective și individuale, ca urmare a migrației internaționale* (Suceava: Editura Universității "Ștefan cel Mare", 2011), 52.

We wish to analyze the construction of the national identity in conjunction with the personal identity, given that these two types are those that are the most interesting in the literary approach.

Starting from the Latin etymology of the term nation, in which *natio* means "people", "tribe", we must distinguish, from the very beginning, the relation between the nation and the state. The synonymous confusion of the two terms is generated by the involuntary association (but historically determined) between the territory / state and the nation. Thus, a state = a nation, a discourse that determines the association of the nation with an ideology that sustains the state, a concept associated with the revolutionary movements of the nineteenth century, accompanied by the formation of new states, which must create their nation. Thus, we find that *nation* is a modern concept, being the "formula of solidarity and identity belonging to the modern age",[6] and "ethnic consciousness, or national consciousness of a society, was the decisive engine for collective identity, independent of the fact that this collective identity is found or not in a politically constituted state."[7] So does *state* mean *nation*? Not at all. The boundary-identity equation separates between real, geo-political, and intellectual, ideological, symbolic boundaries. The contemporary viewpoint rejects this unifying vision of the nation-state, and even more, the question arises as to what extent national and ethnic semantics are relevant in the context of a globalized world.

What are the factors that generate the feeling of belonging to a nation? National identity is built on shared memory and history, as well as the existence of shared political projects, if we discuss it in a general way. Particularly, Mălina Ciocea asserts that nation is built around a value core, which includes traditions, aspirations, common visions, ethnic, linguistic and territorial character.[8] Is it national identity or, in fact, cultural identity? We tend to believe that the listed factors are those that contribute to the establishment of cultural identity that transcends the national factor.

The most delicate issue is to establish what does national and ethnic character mean. Most opinions state that national identity is defined by common language, territory and history. What is Ethnicity? Lucian Boia defines it as a family, economic, social structure, with common language and culture. To what extent are the two concepts synonymous? The same Lucian Boia notes that "there are a number of elements that ethnicities share, to a varying extent, with modern nations: founding

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[6] Lucian Boia, *Două secole de mitologie națională* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2017), 11.
[7] Georg Weber and Renate Weber, "Identitatea etnică. Exemplu: sașii transilvăneni. Observații și argumente sociologice," in *Identitatea românească în context European*, coord. Vasile Boari, Ștefan Borbely, Radu Murea (Cluj-Napoca: Risoprint, 2009), 169.
[8] Mălina Ciocea, *Securitatea culturală. Dilema identității în lumea globală* (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2009).

myths, historical memories, cultural values, a particular language, a territory or a name"[9]. What is the difference between nation and ethnicity? The human being belongs to a nation by birth or by choice, and ethnicity is a concept that precedes the nation. So, the concept of nation is a modern one, artificially built, responding to the need for integration, assimilation with a group. The concept of ethnicity is preceding the nation. Both have in common a series of features, already listed, being differentiated by the idea of territory and the majority-minority ratio.

Conceptually, territory must be differentiated into: administrative territory, the one subjected to the boundaries of the borders, whether state or regional, and the cultural territory, the one influenced by cultural conventions and preferences. The issue of territory, administrative and cultural, and its influence in the literary space, has been an intensely debated topic in recent years, especially from the perspective of minority-majority dichotomy. The relationship between the center and the periphery generates a series of interdependence relationships, which make their mark on the literary phenomenon. Is this report one that leads to a massive differentiation or, on the contrary, to a hybridization, a cultural mix, a puzzle called the *world republic of letters*, whose pieces represent the minor, minority, marginal, postcolonial literature that Andrei Terian speaks about in the *Export Critique. Theories, Contexts, Ideologies*, or *microliterature* that Mircea A. Diaconu speaks about in *Language, Ethnicity, and Polyterritoriality of a Central-East European Literary System,* in the recently published volume of *Romanian Literature as World Literature*? Where and what is the place of majority literature? Our approach is to study the literature of ethnic writers, their place in the literary space.

Identity, in the case of ethnicity, is a permanent fluctuation between languages, "an entire intimate, secret, tension, and crossing experience".[10] Beyond interesting cultural mixture, obtained as a result of bilingualism, which is the place of ethnic literature? Does it belong to the literature of the majority as a part that ensures the originality, the new wave of the writings, through permanent innovation? Does it create a minor literature, different from the canon of the literature of the majority? What happens if writers belonging to an ethnic group choose to express themselves in the language of the majority? Can we consider language as a fair and complete criterion of classification? Or the territory? Mircea A. Diaconu proposes the term *microliterature* to designate the literary approaches that emancipate, frees itself from most of the literary structures, distinguishing between intra-territorial and extraterritorial literature, defined either by reference to the majority context or to the

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[9] Boia, *Două secole de mitologie,* 17.
[10] Guy Scarpetta, *Elogiu cosmopolitismului* (Iași: Polirom, 1997), 19.

ethnic center, by adding bilingualism, as the choice of an ethnic writer to choose as a language of expression the language of the majority.

One of the main questions raised by ethnic literature is who do they write for? Hence, a second question arises: to what extent do ethnic writers look for integration into the literature of the majority? And, of course, a third question: what does literature of the majority mean in the age of globalization?

Each writer is defined by reference to the others, but also to himself, proving a profound need for confirmation, but also for affirmation of his unique character. This is the big dilemma: how to be like the others, integrated and, at the same time, unique, especially in the case of an unfavorable historical situation?

Identity, in the case of ethnicities, represents a permanent pendulum between languages, "a whole intimate, secret experience of tension and crossing".[11] Beyond the interesting cultural mix, obtained as a result of bilingualism, what is the place of ethnic literature? Does it belong to the *major literature*, being a part that ensures originality, freshness of writings, through permanent innovation? Does it create a *minor literature*, different from the major literature canon? What happens if writers belonging to an ethnic group speak and write in the majority language? Can we consider language a fair and complete criterion of separation? Or the territory? Mircea A. Diaconu proposes the term *microliterature* in order to designate the emancipated literary approaches that are released from the major literature structures, differentiating between *intra-territorial* and *extra-territorial* literature, defined by the relation either to the majority context or to the ethnic center, adding bilingualism, understood as an option of an ethnic writer to choose as the language of expression the language of the majority.

One of the main questions that ethnic literature poses is for whom do they write? From here, a second question arises: to what extent do ethnic writers pursue the integration in the literature of the majority? And, obviously, a third question: what does *the literature of the majority* mean in the age of globalization? Starting from the situation of the Jewish writers, it is difficult to define their place in relation to the literature of the majority, given that, before 1948, there was no official Jewish territory to refer to, which generated a certain identity, based on a space of spiritual voice, which reaches mythical quotas. Such is the case of Armenians – History has deprived them of the physical territory, thus they resorted to creating a topos, *mayr hayrenik*, to which all beliefs and hopes converge.

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[11] Scarpetta, *Elogiu cosmopolitismului*, 19.

Carmen Mușat's remark, referring to Mihail Sebastian: "before being Jewish or Romanian, the writer was a man aware of the absolute uniqueness of each being"[12] can be extrapolated to the case of each creator in the literary space. Each writer is defined by the reference to the Others, but also to Himself, proving a deep need for confirmation, but also for affirming his unique character. This is the big dilemma: how to be like the others, integrated, and at the same time unique, especially in the case of an unfavorable historical situation, such as that of the Jews at the beginning of the 20th century? Ovidiu Morar, in the Argument that opens the volume *Jewish Writers in Romania,* summarizes the situation of these writers: "Note that, out of the Romanian writers of Jewish origin, few have been truly approved by the critics and literary history, but none has become so far canonical, though names like Max Blecher, Tristan Tzara, Benjamin Fondane (B. Fundoianu), Ilarie Voronca, Gherasim Luca, Norman Manea are much better known outside the borders of the country than many others."[13] Is it to be the fate of ethnic writers, to write for others than their fellow citizens? The success of the avant-garde, especially abroad (Tristan Tzara's name is a reference), seems to confirm that the climate of the era in which the aforementioned writers publish is stronger than the criterion of value. Moreover, it should be noted that the literature of Max Blecher or that of Tristan Tzara are aligned / synchronized with the European climate, not necessarily with the Romanian climate, still subject to the canons of the past. Their modernism can be considered a form of revolt, asserting their independence from the majority literature.

The assumption of the Jewish identity does not exclude the integration in the Romanian cultural identity, in the case of Mihail Sebastian. The writer writes *like a Romanian*. His works are not impregnated by a marked sentiment that reflects the Jewish life, such as the novels of I. Peltz, Ury Benador or Ion Călugăru, of which Camelia Crăciun notes: "Coming from the monographic description of the traditional life from a small village in the north Moldova, Ion Călugăru's novel on the challenges of urban life in the legendary Jewish Cartier Văcărești-Dudești immortalized by I. Peltz, the variety of literary representations of the socio-cultural environment was also enriched, with the description of the Jewish neighborhood of Brăila, an important city in the east with a multiethnic structure, semi-urban on the outskirts of the poor and masterfully presented in Benador's work."[14] Mihail Sebastian's novels pay "greater attention to creation at the expense of analysis,

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[12] Carmen Mușat, "Mihail Sebastian și anxietatea identității," in *Identitate de frontieră în Europa lărgită*, coord. Romanița Constantinescu (Iași: Polirom, 2008), 237.

[13] Ovidiu Morar, *Scriitori evrei din România* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2014), 15.

[14] Camelia Crăciun, "Apariția unei «literaturi evreiești de limbă română». O abordare socio-culturală," in *Lumea evreiască în literatura română*, ed. Camelia Crăciun (Iași: Ed. Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2013), 69.

according to G. Ibrăileanu's terminology".[15] His writings become a weapon of defense against the hostility of time; the novel *For two thousand years*, beyond the intentional thesis, is also a form of knowledge and self-analysis, and next to the *Diary* "has a predominantly therapeutic and testmonial role, its value being mainly of an ethical nature."[16] After all, Sebastian's vision lies between the two worlds that define his ontological horizon: to be Romanian and to be Jewish. Sebastian is proving to be well ahead of his time, proposing a unifying and pacifist perspective, in which the nation represents *a cultural reality*, and not an ethnic and religious one, as defined by Nae Ionescu, his professor.[17]

Who do the Jewish writers in Romania write for? Both for the Jews, their writings being impregnated with a feeling of the necessity of preserving Jewish traditions and images, as well as for Romanians who, from their pages, find out the aspects of what it means to be Jewish, how prejudices and stereotypes can be dismantled, how can one be different and, at the same time, integrated into the life of the majority, given that the Jews in Romania went through an acculturation process, creating a particular life model adapted to the Romanian climate, but preserving elements of the Jewish identity. Thus, "the literature written in Romanian and inspired by the Jewish world was articulated on a common basis, able to facilitate both the access of non-Jewish readers and of already acculturated Jewish masses".[18]

For whom does Herta Müller write? German writer, of Romanian origin, she is currently assimilated to the German literature. Her *linguistic homeland* is Germany, but her life experience, transposed in her writings, links her more with Romania, by revolting against a totalitarian system. The well-known political force that transgresses her writings can be put in relation with the theory of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, according to which the minor literature must be a political act, a revolutionary force, with a deep social character. Herta Müller's literary discourse questions history. The individual destiny of the four young people in the novel *Animal of the Heart* represents, on a small scale, the fate of a society under the heavy boot of totalitarianism. The minority identity of the four characters does not remove them from the mass of the oppressed majority. Not only the Saxons, the Swabians suffered during the communist period. But the ethnical identity of the citizen belonging to the nationality of the majority is the one that distinguishes the destiny of the four from the destiny of the Romanians, being the element that describes a

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[15] Morar, *Scriitori evrei din România*, 20.

[16] Mușat, "Mihail Sebastian și anxietatea identității," 239.

[17] Marta Petreu, "Eliade, Sebastian, Ionescu, Cioran, «copiii din flori» ai României interbelice," in *Identitatea românească în context european*, coord. Vasile Boari, Stefan Borbely, Radu Murea (Cluj-Napoca: Risoprint, 2009), 339.

[18] Crăciun, Apariția unei "literaturi evreiești de limbă română," 76.

particularity of Herta Müller's writing. The integration of the writer in the German literature has its limits. What Herta Müller writes, feels, transmits is at the crossroads between the (linguistic) German and the Swabian identity, in which she mixes, involuntarily, the Romanian soul and feeling, through the particularity of the situations that the writer transfigures in her book. Mircea A. Diaconu writes: "The denial of ethnicity – the Swabian writer no longer wants to guard the community horizon, fatally a minority – and the destruction of any tutelage in most cases entails giving up writing. At the opposite end, Herta Müller takes the Nobel Prize,"[19] thus summarizing the essence of Herta Müller's writings.

The destiny of the Armenian writers in Romania seems to be linked, historically and conceptually, to that of the Jews. Their fate was similar; the harsh historical conditions have imprinted a path in which their life has been determined between cruelty and adaptation. What unites the two people is the development of diaspora, whose voice is heard in the pages of the writings of ethnic Jews and Armenians. Their literary discourse is influenced by their eternal wandering condition, in search of a home. Monica Spiridon writes: "The Armenian is the one who paid the policy of history and diligently seeks his identity and purpose in a narrow space where certainties are driven by desire and imagination."[20] Always subjected to hostile alterity, the Armenian creates a mechanism of defense and survival. What are the marks of the Armenian identity, in the circumstances in which language (the assumption factor of an identity) of chosen expression is that of the majority? Is it enough to address some themes and motifs to place a writer in a particular ethnicity?

The option to write in Romanian is an assumed mission: the desire, doubled by the need to testify about what happened, in order to never happen again, to disseminate a collective memory, in which individual history represents, on a small scale, the history of a community, why not, of humanity. The novel of Varujan Vosganian, *The Book of Whispers*, is a lyrical testimony of a past that still lives in the souls of present-day Armenians. The cruelty of destiny is sublimated in the power of survival, this being the core of Vosganian's book. In the writings of Bedros Horasangian, mainly the short stories from *The Encyclopedia of Armenians* there is a double function of writing: on one hand, the events by which the characters pass, with the role of activating the Memory, on the other hand, the transfer of narrativity in a symbolic plan, by emphasizing the meaning, in which Memory becomes History. The problem of historical accountability is the leitmotif that transgresses the pages of the two mentioned writers.

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[19] Diaconu, "Language, Ethnicity, and Polyterritoriality."

[20] Monica Spiridon, *Cum poți să fii român? Variațiuni pe teme identitare* (Craiova: Scrisul Românesc, Fundația-Editura, 2006), 71.

Ștefan Agopian's writings do not seem to reflect, at first glance, the Armenian identity. A writer from the end of the twentieth century, Ștefan Agopian is the typical representative of the '80s in Romanian literature. Included by Radu G. Țeposu in the category of writers who cultivate allegorical fantasy,[21] Ștefan Agopian, along with writers such as Ioan Groşan, Daniel Vighi, Mihai Măniuţiu, creates a narrative speech that emphasizes the rhetoric of the story, the interest being focused on the details, the image, the visual. The technique used is parody, but in a strong note that portrays cultural allusions; allegory and parabola are two fundamental coordinates of the construction of this type of speech. Exploring fundamental themes leads to intertextuality, a concept that is increasingly brought to the forefront of literary space. The predominantly used methods are remembrance, alternation of narrative plans, inner monologue, investigation, tree phrase, which result in a strong story core that underlines the intuition of the eternal soul search. What is it that shows Agopian's belonging to the Armenian community? There are small details, *pour les connaisseurs*: one of the characters in *Manualul întâmplărilor* is called the Armenian Zadig. Simple coincidence? Or is there a hidden symbol in an Armenian term? The character of Agopianțs writing is a symbol of salvation, and the motif of the journey, which unites the six stories of the volume, may be the clue that points to the image of the ever-wandering Armenian in the world. Is the journey the ultimate escape from the rigorous network of History? And if so, what is the end point of the journey? The answer is also offered by Agopian characters: "We should go somewhere" says the Armenian, and John, his co-wanderer replies, "We have no place to go".[22] Would this be another way of underlining the question of historical responsibility? Published in 1984, at Cartea Românească Publishing House, *Manualul întâmplărilor* (The Book of Happenings), by Ștefan Agopian is a postmodern fairy tale that attempts to establish the rules that would underpin the good functioning of the universe. Slipping between real and fantastic, reality and dream, allegorical history and utopia, grotesque and sublime, sacred and devilish, Stephen Agopian's book explores, in a parodic key striking the absurd, the eternal death-life dichotomy, through a journey that breaks down the initiatory valence into a world that is evading time, recalling the verses of Salman Rushdie.

The territory of Ștefan Agopian's writing is no longer circumscribed to a concrete space, not even a quantifiable time in the established units of measure. The space of Ștefan Agopian's prose is the one belonging to imagination, eluding the real boundaries of reality.

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[21] Radu G. Țeposu, *Istoria tragică şi grotescă a întunecatului deceniu literar nouă* (Bucharest: Eminescu, 1993).

[22] Ștefan Agopian*, Manualul întâmplărilor* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1984), 65.

Ștefan Agopian's prose is in a state of permanent movement, continuous training and unpredictable transformation, constituting a new tempting and fascinating space to explore. The writer must have a certain comprehension of life, a much more open receptivity to the future, an understanding of reality involving the continuation of and the continuous restoration of society; contemporary literature introduces new dimensions of the human being in the immediate reality.

Literary space must be conceived as a global reality, in which each writer represents a microuniverse. The identity of writers builds the identity of the world literature. The destiny of writers circumscribes the impossibility of NOT to write. The case of writers belonging to ethnicities raises the issue of updating the vision of literature. Major-minor ratio is no longer strong enough to clarify, to customize the place of ethnic writers in the world republic of letters, and, in the context of globalization, the assumed ethnic identity becomes a form of rebuilding the map of the world literature. Paraphrasing the ideas presented in *Thousands of Plateaus* by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, the identity of ethnic writers is like a rhizome, characterized by "lines of articulation and segmentation, layers, territoriality; but also escape lines, deterritorialization and destratification movements".[23]

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[23] Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, *Mii de platouri* (Bucharest: Art, 2013), 8.

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MMR Vaccine Representation in New Media, in Romania[•]

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Abstract

In the last decade, Romania was confronted with three measles epidemics, the last of which started in 2016. In the context of vaccination dropout and MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella) vaccine being the most rejected vaccine by parents among all, this paper carries out a primary analysis of the way the MMR vaccine is presented in the online media. The materials were selected according to the Google algorithm relevance criteria and resulted a corpus of 51 articles, presented on the first five pages of Google, in January 2019. The materials were analyzed from the point of view of the type of publication,the author, the date of publication and the approach of the subject, focusing on the articles presented on the first page.

The conclusion was that readers seek complete information and read articles that offer detailed information and prospects. The articles talking about side effects cover an important percentage too. Most articles have a second layer of comments, where the subject is debated between the readers. These interactions offer another scale of the debate and one can identify the most frequent messages and the tone of voice of both parties, pro and anti-vaccination.

The corpus of articles and conclusions will constitute the premises of a broader analysis that will include the Social Media interactions revealed by the comments on some articles, forums and Facebook posts.

Keywords: *MMR vaccine, measles, epidemics, Romania, New Media.*

Introduction

Romania faces the third epidemic of measles in the last decade which is also the most severe among all, with a total number of 15,671 cases registered from its debut

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[•] Republished with minor proofreading corrections on May 2021.

in March 2016 until the moment of this research, January 2019.[1] The total number of deaths has reached 59, mostly children under one year old, not eligible for vaccination yet.

The Romania's situation is not unique in Europe. Last year's World Health Organization data have indicated countries like Ukraine, Serbia, Russia or France having higher cases of measles. Worldwide, the anti-vax campaigns are placed among the first ten world health threats for 2019, in a statement released by the same organization at the beginning of the year.[2]

The main cause for the measles epidemics is the dropout of MMR vaccination.[3] In order to obtain "the herd immunity"[4] that can offer a good protection for all categories of population: pregnant women, newborns, ill people, the 95% percentage of vaccinated people must be maintained. But in the last years, this percentage has decreased due to different factors and even countries where measles, mumps and rubella were eradicated, signals new cases nowadays.[5]

Studies try to establish a correlation between different aspects and reasons for the decrease of the vaccination percentage in different countries, even those with high level of education and income. Among the general conclusions of these studies is that the vaccination dropout can be caused by: the mistrust in officials, the healthcare system and politicians, the lack of vaccine stocks, the fear of side effects, the influence of the media who focus on the side effects of the vaccines, the right of free will and individual choice.[6]

A different kind of situation is met where 95% of the vaccination coverage was reached and measles epidemics outbreaks still appear. In these cases, studies have shown that the high percentage of vaccination is not enough - its homogeneity is also

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[1] Centrul National de Supraveghere si Control al Bolilor Transmisibile, *Situația rujeolei în România la data de* 18.01.2019, https://cnscbt.ro/index.php/informari-saptamanale/rujeola-1/1058-situatia-rujeolei-in-romania-la-data-de-18-01-2019/file.

[2] Aschley Welch, "Anti-vax movement among top 10 global health threats for 2019, World Health Organization says," *The CBS News*, January 17, 2019, www.cbsnews.com.

[3] Edward Mills et al., "Systematic review of qualitative studies exploring parental beliefs and attitudes toward childhood vaccination identifies common barriers to vaccination," *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology* 58(11) (2005), 1081-8.

[4] Zoë C. Skea et al., "«Avoiding harm to others» considerations in relation to parental MMR vaccination discussions - an analysis of an online chat forum," *Social Science and Medicine* 67(9) (2008), 1382-90.

[5] David E. Sugerman et al., "Measles Outbreak in a Highly Vaccinated Population, San Diego, 2008: Role of the Intentionally Undervaccinated," *Pediatrics* 125 (2010), 747-755.

[6] Maggie Evans et al., "Parents' perspectives on the MMR immunization: a focus group study," *British Journal of General Practice* 51 (2001), 904-10.

important. Also, in these conditions, the 95% is revaluated and considered maybe too low.[7]

In Romania there are some journalistic investigations trying to establish a connection between the decreasing number of vaccinated people and different factors. An analysis of the impact of the media on the decision of vaccination has not been done yet.

This paper is an overview of the materials one can find in the New Media, upon a mere Google search, taking into consideration the criteria of the search engine relevance. The analysis reveals the type of content parents are most interested in and the online portals that are accessed the most, in their need for information. Also, the recurring theme of side effects, mostly autism, shows that this is the biggest scare the MMR vaccine is associated with, since the publication of Andrew Wakefield's study in 1998, in The Lancet. Although, the scientific conformity of the study was denied, the question and the doubt remain and influence people's decision to vaccinate.

Background

Last year, in August 2018, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) reports, the countries with registered measles epidemics were Ukraine (more than half of the total number registered in Europe, in the first half of 2018), France, Georgia, Greece, Italy and Serbia.[8]

2018														
Region	Member State	ISO country code	Total suspected measles cases	Number of measles cases by confirmation method				12 months rolling measles incidence per 1'000'000 total population	Number of rubella cases by confirmation method				12 months rolling rubella incidence per 1'000'000 total population	12 months rolling discarded measles/ rubella cases per 100'000 total population
				Total confirmed measles cases	Lab confirmed	EPI link	Clinically confirmed		Total confirmed rubella cases	Lab confirmed	EPI link	Clinically confirmed		
EURO	Albania	ALB	2595	1385	1290	0	95	477.05	0	0	0	0	0	
EURO	Georgia	GEO	1875	1397	1091	74	232	374.74	0	0	0	0	0.25	13.04
EURO	Russian Federation	RUS	4185	1822	1753	57	12	16.16	3	3	0	0	0.03	1.77
EURO	Greece	GRC	2257	2190	1231	492	467	271.11	0	0	0	0	0	
EURO	Italy	ITA	2499	2293	1773	136	384	43.73	19	6	3	10	0.42	0.38
EURO	France	FRA	2682	2682	1292	545	845	42.81	0	0	0	0	0	
EURO	Ukraine	UKR	31513	31312	5400	0	25912	770.01	201	12	0	189	4.52	
EURO	Serbia	SRB	5034	5034	2618	0	2416	649.09	0	0	0	0	0	
EURO	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northe	GBR	888	886	886	0	0	15.49	2	2	0	0	0.06	0
EURO	Romania	ROU	895	889	721	149	19	92.07	6	4	0	2	0.35	0

Table 1. The number of confirmed cases of measles, in 2018, according to WHO (World Health Organization)

Even though, Romania was overpassed by other countries in reported measles cases, it is held responsible for spreading the epidemics in 2017.

In a special report issued by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in 2017 and called "Ongoing Outbreak of Measles in Romania, Risk of

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[7] Marcel Salathé and Sebastian Bonhoeffer, "The effect of opinion clustering on disease outbreaks," *J R Soc Interface* 5 (2008), 1505-1508.

[8] World Health Organization, *Measles and Rubella Surveillance Data,* https://www.who.int/immunization/monitoring_surveillance/burden/vpd/surveillance_type/active/measles_monthlydata/en/.

Spread and Epidemiological Situation in EU/EEA Countries", Romania was indicated as one of the main sources for the measles epidemics outburst in several countries in Europe and the people visiting our country are warned to have their vaccines done before coming here.[9]

The infographic below shows the measles cases distribution in Europe correlated with the vaccination level where Romania is presented as a center of spreading the epidemics, when the report was issued, at the beginning of March 2017.

Source: Coverage figures (%) are official national figures reported via the annual WHO/UNICEF Joint Reporting Form [15]. Case data are extracted from ECDC/TESSy
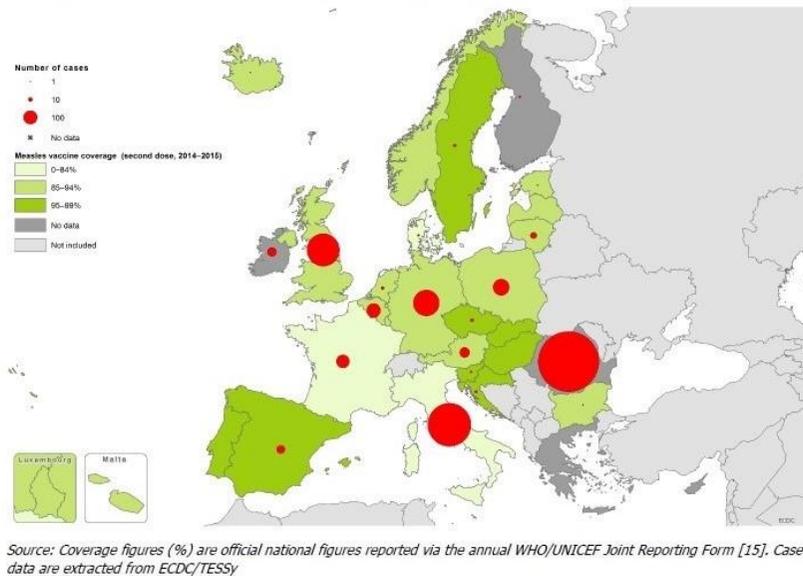
Figure 1. Number of measles cases between 1 February 2016 and 31 January 2017, and vaccination coverage with the second dose of MMR (2014-2015, WHO), EU/EEA countries[10]

The MMR immunization was introduced in Romania in 1979. Until that moment, the measles occurrence in our country was very high (approximately 120‰), according to the data registered by the National Centre of Spreadable Diseases Surveillance and Control.[11]

The mass vaccination campaigns and the introduction of the MMR vaccine in the National Vaccination Program have led to a significant decrease in the number of people infected with measles, mumps, and rubella, as can be seen in these CNSCBT statistics:

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[9] European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, *Ongoing outbreak of measles in Romania, risk of spread and epidemiological situation in EU/EEA countries* (Stockholm. ECDC, 3 March 2017).

[10] *Ibidem*.

[11] Institutul Național de Sănătate Publică România, https://cnscbt.ro/.
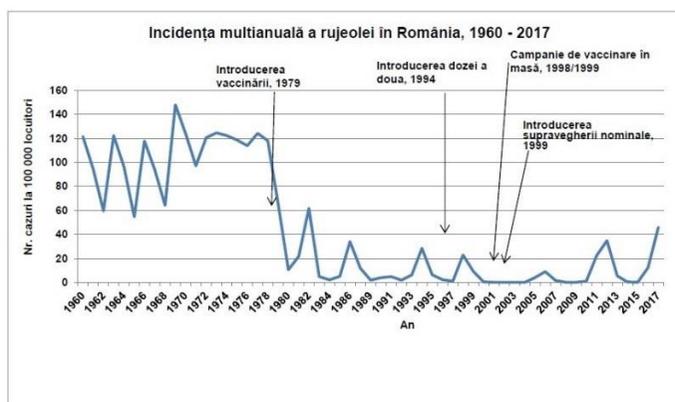
Figure 2. The multiannual incidence of measles in Romania (1960 – 2017)[12]

According to this graphic, we can see an increase in the number of measles cases between 2011-2013, and the most recent epidemic of measles started at the end of 2016.

The European Surveillance System reports the exact numbers, but it also warns about a possible discrepancy between the actual numbers and the ones communicated by the National Institute of Public Health in Romania.[13]

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Number of cases	5 647	3 196	352	14	8	188	4 165	6 166	1 159	59	7	1 890

Source: The European Surveillance System - ECDC. The discrepancy in the number of measles cases reported to ECDC in 2016 and published by the National Institute of Public Health in Romania may be explained by the delay in case-based reporting to ECDC, compared to the aggregated data regularly published by the National Institute of Public Health.

Table 2. Number of measles cases by year, Romania, 2005-2016

The peak of the most recent epidemic was reached in 2017 when the national incidence of measles was of 46.2‰000 inhabitants, 3,8 times higher than in 2016 (12.2‰000). The month with the most cases was March, with a total of 1338 reported cases of measles.

According to a report issued by the National Centre of Communicable Diseases Surveillance and Control, in 2017, the most affected by measles were the children under one-year-old (848.9‰000) and the children that were not eligible for vaccination yet.[14]

Since the MMR vaccine introduction in Romania's national calendar in 2005, the percentage of 95% targeted coverage WHO had set was maintained for a while.

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[12] Institutul Național de Sănătate Publică România, www.cnscbt.ro.

[13] European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, *Ongoing outbreak of measles in Romania*.

[14] Institutul Național de Sănătate Publică România, Centrul Național de Supraveghere și Control al Bolilor Transmisibile, *Analiza evoluției bolilor transmisibile aflate în supraveghere Raport pentru anul 2017* (Bucharest, 2018), https://cnscbt.ro/index.php/rapoarte-anuale/1003-analiza-evolutiei-bolilor-transmisibile-aflate-in-supraveghere-raport-pentru-anul-2017.

Starting with 2010, this percentage decreased year by year and in 2017 reached 87% (for the first dose) and 74.7% (for the second dose).
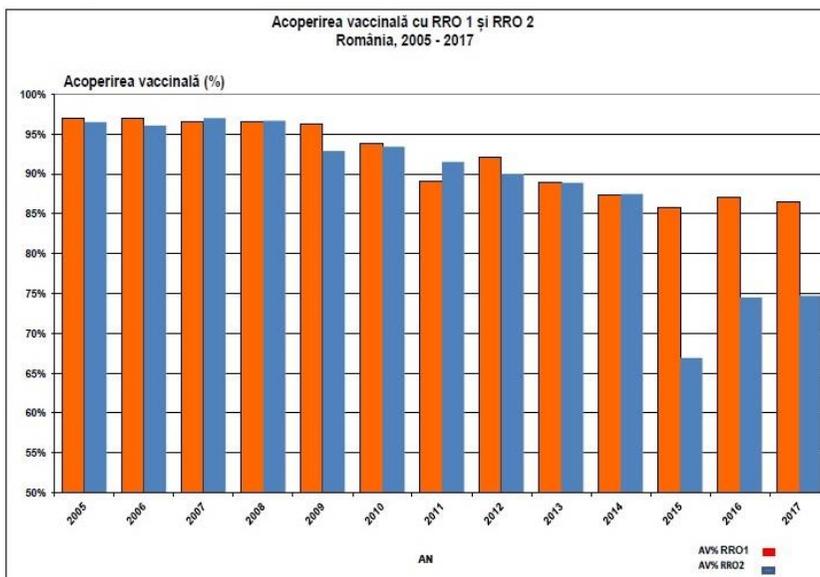

Table 3. Vaccine coverage for I dose and II dose of MMR vaccine, in Romania, between 2005 – 2017

For this decrease, the report blames the increasing lack of confidence in vaccination benefits and parents' refusal to vaccinate their children, but it does not mention these conclusions' source.

According to the report, the measles occurrence is higher in the following age categories: 1-4 years old (419.6‰), 5-9 years old (168.2‰), 10-14 years old (75.5‰), and 15-19 years old (47.6‰).

The highest mortality, 53.8‰, was registered in children with ages below one year old. According to the same report, death occurred among unvaccinated people in the other age categories as well.

The report concludes by warning that the vaccination level remains below the optimal level and the risk of an epidemic outbreak is imminent.

MMR Vaccine Controversy

Since the introduction of vaccination at the end of the 19th Century, numerous studies have been dedicated to various vaccines' benefits and side effects.[15]

Various papers also analyze how immunization is perceived in diverse communities or why people are still refusing it. The 95% immunization coverage was not yet reached all over the World for several reasons related to local socio-political aspects.

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[15] Robert M. Wolfe and Lisa K. Sharp, "Anti-Vaccinationists: Past and Present," *British Medical Journal* 325 (2002), 430-3.

An important turning point for the MMR vaccine perception was a study published by Dr. Andrew Wakefield and colleagues in a renowned medical publication, The Lancet, in 1998. The study claimed a direct connection between the triple vaccine for measles, mumps and rubella and autism.[16]

Although the study was proved false and was withdrawn from publication, and although Andrew Wakefield lost his right to practice, his work has massively impacted the public opinion and continues to do so, being frequently cited even only to be refuted.

Wakefield's study was considered responsible for the substantial decline of vaccinated people in the early 2000s. This vaccination dropout's consequences were visible between 2012-2013, when a measles epidemic outburst in Swansea, Wales. During the epidemic, 1200 young people have been diagnosed with measles, and one person died.[17]

Several media and sociological studies have investigated the impact of Wakefield's article on the population to correlate it with the MMR vaccination dropout. The results show that the significant effect that Wakefield's study should also be associated with a favorable social context.[18] In Great Britain, where it had the most prominent influence, before the study's publication, there were disputes and debates on the necessity of the MMR vaccine and its side effects that overcome its benefits.

The single-shot MMR vaccine was introduced in Great Britain in 1989 and has reached the maximum intake level in 1995 when 92% of the children aged below two years old have been vaccinated. However, until 1997, a year before Wakefield's study was released, the vaccination rate had already decreased to 79%.[19]

Several content media analyses show the way media had presented the MMR vaccination when Wakefield's study was published. Guillaume L. and Bath P. A.[20] have done a general analysis of the frames media used for presenting the MMR vaccine, while Stöckl A. and Smajdor A.,[21] have focused on the role the politicians

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[16] A. J. Wakefield et al., "Ileal-lymphoid-nodular hyperplasia, nonspecific colitis, and pervasive developmental disorder in children," *The Lancet* 351 (1998), 637-41.

[17] Andrea Stöckl and Anna Smajdor, "The MMR debate in the United Kingdom: vaccine scares, statesmanship and the media," *The Politics of Vaccination* (Manchester University Press, 2017), 240-259.

[18] Andrea Stöckl and Anna Smajdor, "The MMR debate in the United Kingdom: vaccine scares, statesmanship and the media," in *The Politics of Vaccination*, eds. Christine Holmberg, Stuart Blume, and Paul Greenough (Manchester University Press, 2017), 240-259.

[19] Anna Pearce et al., "Factors Associated with Uptake Of Measles, Mumps, and Rubella Vaccine (MMR) and Use of Single Antigen Vaccines in a Contemporary UK Cohort: Prospective Cohort Study," *British Medical Journal* 336 (2008), 754.

[20] Louise Guillaume and Peter A. Bath, "The impact of «health scares» on parents' information needs and preferred information sources: a case study of the MMR vaccine scare," *Health Informatics Journal* 10 (1) (2004): 5-22.

[21] Stöckl and Smajdor, "The MMR debate in the United Kingdom."

have in generating an action model in a "modern risk society."[22] They also have placed in a socio-cultural context the decreasing vaccination rate. This is a new kind of approach that adds up to the previous ones where the emphasis is placed on the role of science in society or media's role in the population's decision-making. In Great Britain, parents who had reserves about vaccinating their children used to use as argument Wakefield's study, but in broader context analysis, it has been demonstrated that the seeds of concern have dropped in favorable terrain.

At the time Andrew Wakefield's article was published, Great Britain's public agenda was focusing on the role of political intervention in matters of science, in the context of the recent scandal related to "Bovine spongiform encephalopathy" (BSE), commonly known as "mad cow disease." The fact that the prime minister, Tony Blair, and his wife, Cherie, refused to reveal the vaccination status of their newborn son, Leo, contributed even more to the public rejection of political intervention in parents' decision to vaccinate their children.

Studies showed that Wakefield's article seeded concern about a possible connection between autism and MMR vaccine in other parts of the World too, like USA, and New Zeeland and Australia[23] and several European countries like Holland,[24] Denmark,[25] Sweden[26] or France.[27]

Lenisa V. Chang in "Information, Education, and Health Behaviors: Evidence from the MMR Vaccine Autism Controversy"[28] shows the results of a survey about the impact of Andrew Wakefield's study in America. The conclusions show that a direct correlation can be set between the ample media coverage of the subject and the immunization fluctuation rates in the USA, but the only category of the public where a direct impact can be noticed is the one of the parents with a high education level. They feel they must inform themselves before making any medical decision, and after analyzing the risks and the benefits of vaccination, they opt for partial vaccination or none. Also, the MMR controversy produces negative spillovers onto other vaccines.

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[22] Ulrich Beck, *The Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity* (Londra: Sage Publications, 1992).

[23] D. Brieger et al., "Knowledge, attitudes and opinions towards measles and the MMR vaccine across two NSW cohorts," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 41, 6 (2017), 641-646.

[24] Stuart Blume and Janneke Tump, "Evidence and Policymaking: The Introduction of MMR Vaccine in the Netherlands", *Social Science & Medicine* 71 (2010), 1049-55; Eelko Hak et al., "Negative attitude of highly educated parents and health care workers towards future vaccinations in the Dutch childhood vaccination program," *Vaccine* 23 (2005), 3103-3107.

[25] Kreesten Meldgaard Madsen et al., "A Population-based Study of Measles, Mumps, and Rubella Vaccination and Autism," *The New England Journal of Medicine* 347 (2002).

[26] E. Byströma et al., "Parental attitudes and decision-making regarding MMR vaccination in an anthroposophic community in Sweden – A qualitative study," *Vaccine* 32 (2014), 6752-6757.

[27] Pierre Verger et al., "Vaccine Hesitancy Among General Practitioners and Its Determinants During Controversies: A National Cross-sectional Survey in France," *EBioMedicine* 2 (2015): 891-897.

[28] V. Lenisa Chang, "Information, education, and health behaviors: Evidence from the MMR vaccine autism controversy," *Health Economics* 27 (2018), 1043-1062.

Sobo J.E. (2015) concentrates on the Waldorf community and the influence of anthroposophy, a worldview foundation to Waldorf education, in forming a cluster of unvaccinated communities.[29] Focused on the Waldorf parents' community, to which the researcher also belongs, the study analyses the parents' attitude towards vaccination using interviews and focus groups. The results indicate a clear rejection of vaccination on the grounds mentioned earlier , the risks being perceived higher than the benefits. In this community, it is also identified an attitude of rejection of allopath medicine, seen as reduced and reductive and an inclination towards a philosophy specific to Waldorf schools - anthropomorphism, that integrates the disease in a paradigm of necessity and normality. The study also underlines the degree of conformity to the group's norm. The community members who do not share the same beliefs and have vaccinated their children are afraid to be exposed. This category of parents prefers not to disclose this information.

Sugerman D. E. et al.[30] and Byströma E. et al.[31] also focus on the role of the anthroposophic communities in creating clusters of unvaccinated children that lead to an epidemic outbreak, even in countries like Switzerland and Sweden where 95% of vaccination rate was reached.

In Italy[32] or Greece[33] the focus was set more on political and socioeconomic factors and less on media influence and fear of side effects.

Although international studies have been made so the decreasing vaccination rate could be correlated with certain factors, in Romania there are only a few journalistic analyses of the situation, one of the best-documented being the article published in DOR magazine: "An Epidemic of Negligence", signed by Octavian Coman.[34]

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[29] J. Elisa Sobo "Social Cultivation of Vaccine Refusal and Delay among Waldorf (Steiner) School Parents," *Medical Anthropology Quartely* 29, 3 (2015), 381-399.

[30] David E. Sugerman, Albert E. Barskey, Maryann G. Delea, Ismael R. Ortega-Sanchez, Daoling Bi, Kimberly J. Ralston, Paul A. Rota, Karen Waters-Montijo, and Charles W. LeBaron, "Measles Outbreak in a Highly Vaccinated Population, San Diego, 2008: Role of the Intentionally Undervaccinated," *Pediatrics* 125 (2010): 747-755.

[31] E. Byströma, A. Lindstrand, N. Likhite, R. Butler, M. Emmelin, "Parental attitudes and decision-making regarding MMR vaccination in an anthroposophic community in Sweden – A qualitative study," *Vaccine* 32 (2014): 6752-6757.

[32] M. L. Ciofi degli Atti et al., "Do changes in policy affect vaccine coverage levels? Results of a national study to evaluate childhood vaccination coverage and reasons for missed vaccination in Italy," *Vaccine* 22 (2004), 4351-4357.

[33] Kostas Danis et al., "Socioeconomic factors play a more important role in childhood vaccination coverage than parental perceptions: a cross-sectional study in Greece," *Vaccine* 28 (2010), 1861-1869.

[34] Octavian Coman, "O epidemie a neglijenței," *Decât o Revistă* 30, December 6, 2017, https://www.dor.ro/o-epidemie-a-neglijentei-dor30/.

The article documents the evolution of measles epidemics, from the outbreak, in a Roma community situated next to Reteag village, Bistra-Năsăud County, until 2017. The article's conclusions are summarized in the opening paragraph:

The epidemic of measles with the highest number of deaths in the last decade constitutes a miscellany composed of a numb medical system, improvisation and discrimination.[35]

This analysis follows the possible social and political factors that could have influenced the outburst of the epidemics. One of the most important is the deficient number of people vaccinated in Roma communities, approximatively 54%, a result of lack of education, and the ill-treatment this category of the population receives in hospitals and from the medical employees in general, which makes them avoid as much as possible the interference with the medical system.

Among other causes for the low percentage of the vaccinated population, the leading cause of epidemics is the lack of available vaccines caused by some politically inconsistent decisions.

Neither of these conclusions is based on a thorough sociological study. The article is a journalistic investigation and a good starting point for further sociological studies on Romania's recurrent measles epidemics.

There are few studies on Romania's situation regarding the low number of vaccinated people, and the blame is attributed most of the time to the usual suspects: poverty, lack of education, and lack of vaccine stocks.

Studies of how the parents perceive the MMR vaccine and the reasons they refuse it are missing. Any further sociological research could use some key findings of how the MMR vaccine is presented by the media, the messages, and the main channels where the parents get their information. For this, but also for a communication analysis, the studies conducted abroad could help set the grounds.

The New Media Role in the Vaccine Controversy

Studies indicate Mass Media as a significant factor of influence when it comes to parents' decision in connection with the MMR vaccine.[36] The information that had the most significant impact was the one emphasizing the side effects.[37]

The apparition and development of Social Media platforms massively accelerated the exchange of information and the clustering phenomenon, allowing people with the same ideas to find each other and live with the impression that *others*

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[35] Personal translation of the following original paragraph: "Epidemia de rujeolă cu cel mai mare număr de decese din ultimul deceniu este un amestec de amorțire a sistemului medical, improvizație și discriminare."

[36] Guillaume and Bath, "The impact of «health scares» on parents' information."

[37] Roger Dobson, "Media misled the public over the MMR vaccine, study says," *BMJ*., May 24, 326(7399) (2003), 1107.

validate their opinions. This phenomenon is the result of Facebook's algorithm, which selects the information a user receives based on his previous interactions and preferences:

> *Recent technological development has further heightened our need to acknowledge the role of social networks, as the emergence of new social connection software and social media environments have turned the Internet into a place of considerable peer-to-peer information sharing.*[38]

B. G. Southwell underlines this significant influence of Social Media characteristics on health communication:

> *[...] the social networks literature is a potential resource for health communication research. Humans, as a social species, rely on interpersonal contact for information, for ritualistic affirmation of beliefs and for aesthetic pleasure. Were we to frame the potential impact of mass media health campaigns solely and direct persuasive effects of broadcast messages on individuals, we would miss the extent to which interpersonal conversation can act as a vital mediator of moderator. Conversation likely amplifies broadcast messages at times and nullifies persuasion attempts at others. We likely need to understand how people exist in active social networks if we are to understand the dynamics of information flow as it relates to health behavior. Studying mass media content alone is probably not enough.*[39]

Social Media has a massive role in spreading information and clustering people based on their interests and affinities.[40] This has many implications, and important social movements have started with Social Media's help, freed from the traditional hegemony of Mass Media. However, the clustering phenomenon is responsible for an outburst of the measles epidemic in countries where the 95% level of vaccination was reached. Therefore, it is essential to follow how the news about vaccination is spreading via Social Media and how powerful its impact can be on specific social categories like pregnant women and newborn infants.[41]

There are several definitions of Social Media. According to these we can call Social Media activities that people reunited online are performing: sharing information and using "conversational media" which facilitate the production and the

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[38] Caroline Haythornthwaite, "Strong, weak, and latent ties and the impact of new media," *The Information Society* 18(5) (2002), 385-401.

[39] Brian G. Southwell, "Health Communication as Interdisciplinary Intersection Rather than Separate Field," *Journal of Health and Mass Communication* I, 1/2 (2009), 8-11.

[40] Pui-Yee Chiu et al., "Online Social Networks: Why Do «We» Use Facebook?" in *The Open Knowlege Society. A Computer Science and Information Systems Manifesto. WSKS 2008. Communications in Computer and Information Science* vol. 19, eds. Lytras M. D. et al. (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer, 2008).

[41] Marcel Salathé and Shashank Khandelwal, "Assessing Vaccination Sentiments with Online Social Media: Implications for Infectious Disease Dynamics and Control," *PLoS Comput Biol* 7(10) (2011), e1002199.

transmission of media content in the form of words, photography, audio and video materials.[42]

Studies reveal that people mostly trust family and friends' recommendations. Social Media meets these two important coordinates: accessibility to information and endorsement from the ones we trust the most, the people we allow on our friends list.[43]

Safko and Brake afirm that online social media can act as an "echo chamber" where others predominately reaffirm personal opinions that affect individual medical decisions.[44]

In Romania, according to Reuters Digital News Report 2017, most of the population gets informed online (87%) or from Social Media (69%). This high percentage of people opting for New Media is explained by the lack of trust in Mass Media that is being perceived as corrupt and serving different political and economic interests.

Trust in Romanian media is low in international comparison, with evidence of political and economic interference in the news agenda, not least scores of transcripts from prosecutors' files on politicians and media owners. Newsrooms compete online for readers' attention and for advertising money with Google and Facebook, with bloggers and influencers (who often do not make clear their financial interests), and with fake news and conspiracy theorists.[45]

Statistics about Social Media consumption are realized monthly by ZeListMonitor,[46] the biggest monitoring agency for brands activities in online media from our country. ZeListMonitor places 95,000 blogs in the category of Social Media and follows. These on-line journals represent 99% of the Romanian blogs, the social networks Facebook and Twitter, 3,600 online publications, and 800,000 YouTube accounts.

According to ZeList Monitor, in June 2018, the online information usage was concentrated mainly on Facebook, the Social Media network that has reached 9,900,000 members in Romania.

Another aspect to be considered in an analysis of media content shared in New Media is the age of the people most likely to interfere with this kind of information, the one of young parents. They can be placed in the Y generation category, called Millennials, a generation born in the '80s spanning up to the beginning of year 2000.

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[42] Lon Safko and David K. Brake, *The Social Media Bible* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, 2009).

[43] Rachel Casiday et al., "A survey of UK parental attitudes to the MMR vaccine and trust in medical authority," *Vaccine 24* (2006), 177-184.

[44] Safko and Brake, *The Social Media Bible*.

[45] Reuters Digital News Report 2017.

[46] ZeListMonitor, https://www.zelist.ro/monitor/.

Millennials are people aged between 19 – 37, a period that coincides almost perfectly with the age interval when people tend to have children and are confronted with the decision to vaccinate their children or not.

The "Generation Y" classification is achieved by taking into consideration only the birth period. The previous ones were called: "Silent Generation" (1925 - 1945), "Baby Boomers" (1946 - 1960), "Generation X" (1961 - 1981) and "Generation Y" (born after 1981).[47]

According to Prensky's Classification, generation Y can be split into the "Digital Immigrants" and the "Digital Natives".[48] The "Digital Natives", also called the "Net Generation", are the people who were born and raised surrounded by advanced technology of information. The "Digital Immigrants" are the ones that adapted to this significant change in the evolution of humankind, a moment so crucial, that Prensky evaluates as being a technological singularity, a moment of a switch from which life and the World as we know it can no longer exist. According to Marc Prensky, the brains of the "Digital Natives" are very different from "Digital Immigrants," and we cannot expect them to react the same because they see the information differently.

Digital Natives are used to receiving information really fast. They like to parallel process and multi-task. They prefer their graphics before their text rather than the opposite. They prefer random access (like hypertext). They function best when networked. They thrive on instant gratification and frequent rewards. They prefer games to "serious" work.[49]

"Generation Y" is also called the "Peter Pan" generation because people belonging to it tend to delay some standard maturity stages, such as not living with the parents anymore from a certain age, marriage, and starting a family. The explanation given for this bypassing attitude is the desire to avoid their parents' mistakes and make the best decisions related to family and career.[50] By extrapolation, one of these decisions questioned by "Generation Y" members can be the one of vaccination.

People belonging to "Generation Y" from the Western countries have spent their entire lives surrounded by digital media, which significantly influences how they live and work. They consume online content, which they also share and create, and they play and work in this medium. They use technology for entertainment, for human interaction, and even for emotional balancing.

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[47] Ruth N. Bolton et al., "Understanding Generation Y and their use of social media: a review and research agenda," *Journal of Service Management* 24 (3) (2013), 245-267.

[48] Mark Prensky, "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants," *On the Horizon* 9, 5 (2001).

[49] *Idem,* 42.

[50] Jason S. Carroll et al., "Ready or not: Criteria for Marriage Readiness Among Emerging Adults," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 24, 3 (2009), 349-375.

There are differences in this category, depending on the economic status, the advancement of technology, the cultural, social, and political environment. Bolton, R.N. et al[51] underline these differences and mark a variety of singular uses of social networks if we talk about South Korea, China, or the USA while also pointing to the similarities between these remote geographic areas, already brought closer into one big global village by technology.

The economic, cultural, and social discrepancies can be observed in a single country like Romania, and therefore, a Social Media usage study cannot be made by referring to a specific territory but the level of income and education. Technology has erased the geographical borders and led to the segmentation of different criteria that should be considered when researching New Media's impact.

This means that we cannot reduce the media content to a country's production anymore. If we want to study highly educated people's behavior, we must consider the international media content, produced worldwide and written in English, a language accessible to this category.

We find ourselves in a time where online information is available anywhere there is a good connection to the Internet.[52]

Research objectives and questions

This research is centered on how the MMR vaccination is illustrated in the New Media in Romania and the reactions observed in Social Media. The analysis is limited to websites, blogs, online versions of printed newspapers and publications, forums, YouTube, Wikipedia, and a Social Media platform – *Facebook*.

For a primary image of how the MMR vaccine is presented in the New Media, a corpus of articles selected by their ranking on the Google pages was built. A search using the terms 'MMR vaccine' ("vaccinul ROR") was initiated and the articles presented in the first five Google pages were collected. A more detailed analysis was applied to the articles presented on the first page, taking into consideration statistics showing that the first page's results get almost 95% of web traffic, while the rest only 6%.[53]

The articles were classified in the database according to the following criteria: page ranking, type of website, title, author, tone of voice, and journalistic approach -

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[51] Ruth N. Bolton et. al., "Understanding Generation Y and their use of social media: a review and research agenda," *Journal of Service Management* 24 (3) (2013): 245-267.

[52] James Kite et al., "Please Like Me: Facebook and Public Health Communication," *PlosOne*, September 15 (2016).

[53] Madeline Jacobson, "How Far Down the Search Engine Results Page Will Most People Go?," *Leverage Marketing*, https://www.theleverageway.com/blog/how-far-down-the-search-engine-results-page-will-most-people-go/.

medical, political, informative, anti, or pro-vaccination. Three of these articles are posted on the Moldavian online publications, but appeared in the search due to the Romanian search term. Two of these articles appear on the second page and the other one on the third, showing that the location from where it was published has little importance and that the most important criteria are language and readership.

The classification of websites was done following the BRAT (Romanian Joint Industry Committee for Print and Internet) criteria. BRAT is "a non for profit, independent, tripartite organization for the media and advertising industry, whose members are publishers (media owners), media agencies and advertisers."[54] The study used the statistics offered by SATI (Internet Audience and Traffic Measurement), a division of BRAT, dedicated to online publications. Some of the websites are not audited by BRAT, and for them, the ranking generated by an independent institution Trafic.ro was used.[55]

The classifications *News and analyses / Family and children / General news / Economic and financial / Health and personal* care belong to SATI. The rest, *Corporate /Local media / Medical publications / Governmental / Pro-vaccinations platforms / Religious* belong to a personal coding system. Links to forums, Facebook pages, and a Wikipedia page in the Social Media category were included. All the Moldavian articles are placed in the same category with no differentiation. From the two links to Facebook, one of them refers to a UNICEF Romania page post, and the other being a link to a Facebook event organized in the Republic of Moldova by a local publication, E-Sanatate.

From the total number of articles, most of them belong to the following categories: *News and analyses* (19%) followed by *Family and Children* (15%), *Social Media* (12%), and *General news* 10%. The following smaller percentages belong to some categories of heterogonous materials, reunited under the tags: *Corporate*, publication that belongs to a private company or organization, like the website of Regina Maria, a private medical clinic, UNICEF and ADEM, The Romanian Association of Euro- Pharmaceutical Wholesalers. These cover 8% of the articles.

Local news refer to publications from different districts of Romania, Cluj, Crișana, and Olt. These represent 6%, the same as the *Moldavian* and *Medical* publications. Equal shares of 4% represent the categories: *economic and financial news*, *health and personal care*, *governmental and pro-vaccination platforms*. A religious website represents 2% with only one article, but this one is being placed on the first page of Google search.

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[54] BRAT (Romanian Joint Industry Committee for Print and Internet), https://www.brat.ro/ce-este-brat?lang=en.
[55] Trafic, "Top siteuri General," http://www.trafic.ro.
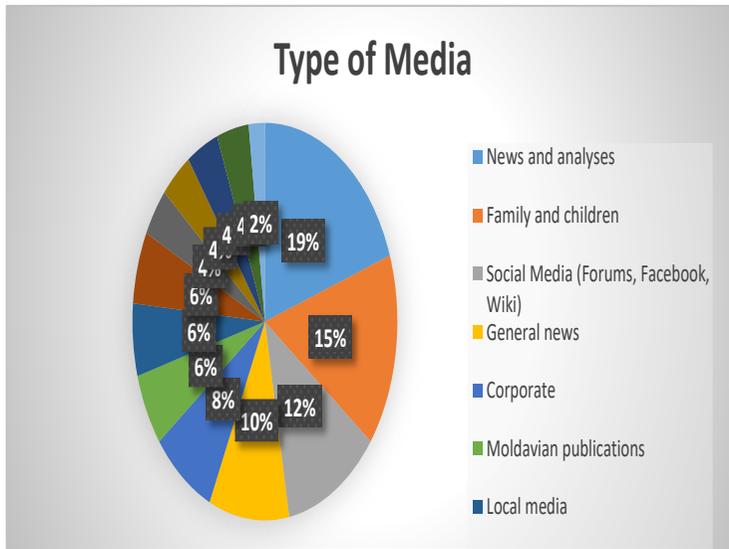
Figure 3. Type of media distribution (n=51)

The distribution on the first page shows some essential differences: *Family and children* ranks first with 28% of materials, *Health and personal care* and *News and analyses* with equal percentage, 18%, on the second place and *General news*, *Corporate*, *Governmental, Pro-vaccination,* and *Religious* share an equal place with 9%.
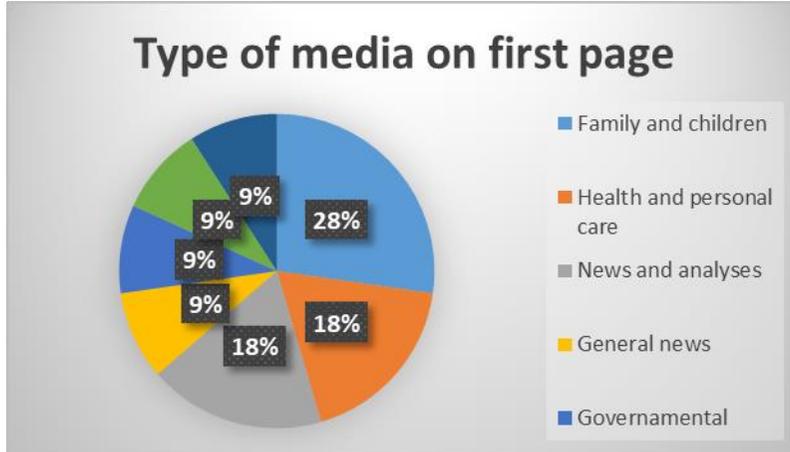
Figure 4. Type of media distribution present on the first page of Google (*n=11*)

After a primary analysis of the materials, the first observation is that we cannot use the same analysis rules we use for the traditional media.

Most of the articles are not signed, and we cannot attribute them to a particular editor. For the specific websites, like the ones in the category *Family and children* or *Health and personal care*, things are clear because all the websites refer to a specific category of information. However, when we are talking about "General news" or

"News and analyses," we want to see if the political and the medical articles are written by the same person or not.

As shown in the chart below, after eliminating the medical leaflets and the article belonging to foreign publications, an almost equal number of 22 signed materials versus 19 unsigned ones have resulted.
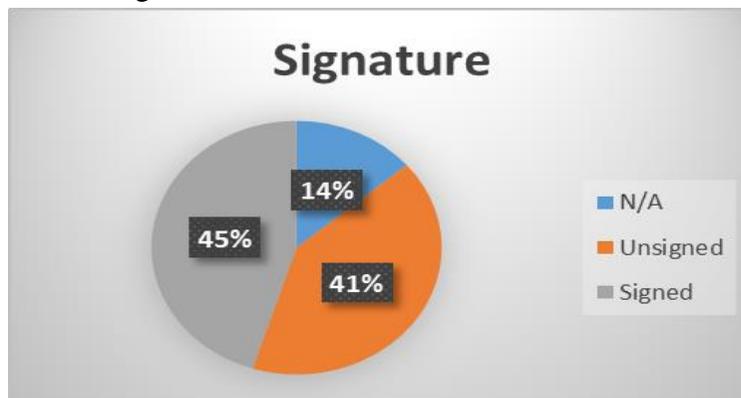

Figure 5. Distribution of articles by signature (*n=51*)

Another essential criterion in content analysis is the time of publication. From the total corpus of 52 articles selected, 22 do not have a date. This aspect makes it very difficult for a retroactive investigation to find out, for example, which articles were popular on the Internet in 2015, before the outburst of the epidemics in 2016.
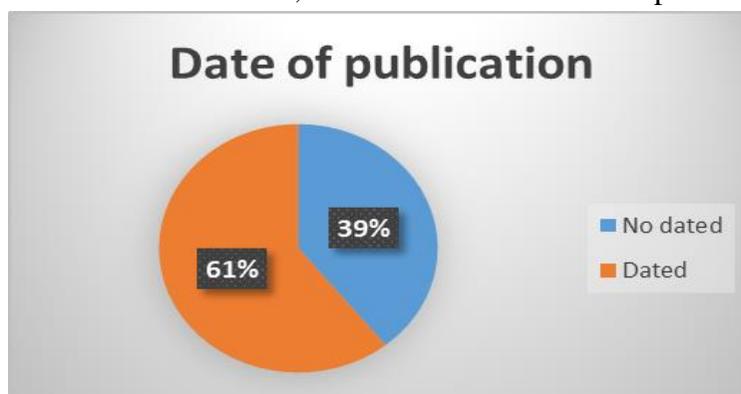
Figure 6. Distribution of articles by date of publication (*n=51*)

The websites' ranking in their category and the total number of visitors are also not relevant if we consider the fact the first article in every search was published by a website not monitored by SATI, the official organism of control.

Websites with a lower number of visitors in their category, like Realitatea.net (ranked 6 in the category *News and analyses*) with an article published on 15.05.2018, and Hotnews.ro (ranked 4, in *News and analyses*), with an article published on 27.02.2018, are shown on the first page. These pages are outclassing websites with a higher number of visitors, like Digi24.ro (ranked 1, in *News and analyses*), even though the date of publication is more recent, such as an article published on

28.07.2018 appears on the second page, and an article published on 5.09.2018 appears on the third page. Another example is EVZ.ro, ranked 3rd in the "News and analyses" category, considering the number of visitors criterion, which appears on the second page with an article published on 27.07.2018.

From the total number of 51 articles, 20 (39%) have a neutral, informative approach, 5 are medical leaflets (10%), eight approaches the side-effects topic (15%), 6 (12%) refer to a specific situation, the spreading of leaflets claiming that vaccines are made from aborted fetuses, 5 (10%) mention the role of the Ministry of Health in the delay of vaccination process, 4 (8%) are lobbying for vaccination and three against it (6%).
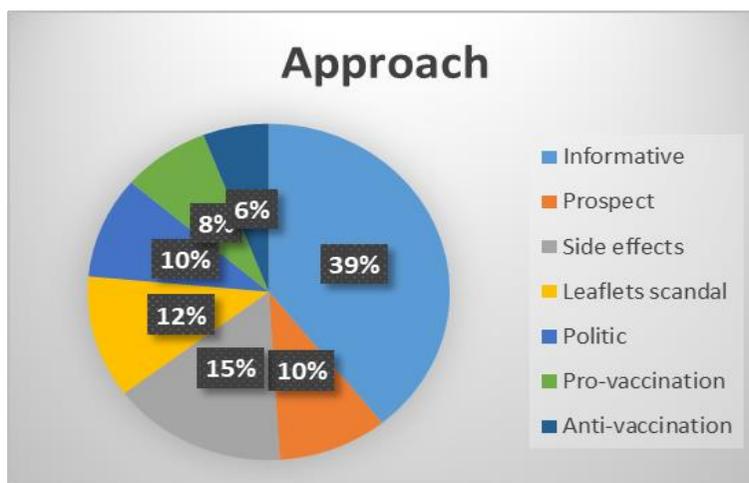
Figure 7. Distribution of articles by approach (*n=51*)

The merely informative materials and medical leaflets sum up almost half of the materials, showing a clear interest in information from the readers' side.

This category is followed by one of the articles describing side effects, in line with the need to cover all the aspects and being fully informed before making any decision. The articles describing side effects hold 46% of the ones published on Google's first page; the rest (27%) are informative and PRIORIX vaccine medical leaflets (27%).
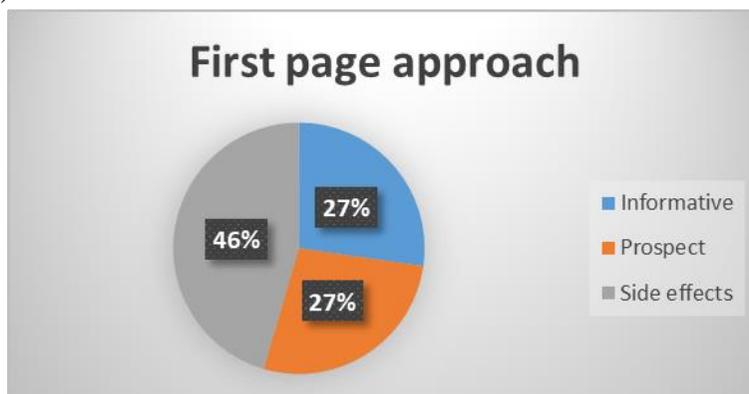
Figure 8. Distribution of articles on the first page of Google by approach (*n=11*)

The next high percentage of articles, from the total number of 51, is the one dedicated to a specific situation: leaflets copying a pro-vaccination campaign started by UNICEF on the graphic level (same colors, layout, picture, and the logos of UNICEF, WHO, and Ministry of Health), but with a text describing the composition of MMR vaccine as containing aborted fetuses cells, among others.

All the articles on this topic have been published on September 5, 2018, so they are more recent than those on the first page, but they appear in the search only on the second, third, and fifth pages. The article that appears on the second page is published by Adevarul.ro, a publication that ranks 2nd in the General News category, the articles on the third page are published by Ziare.com, a news aggregator, ranked fifth in *News and Analyses category*, and on Digi24.ro, the website with the higher traffic in *News and Analyses category*, but which appears two positions bellow Ziare.com on the search engine.

The articles with references to political implications represent 10% of the total, but except for one published on July 27, 2018, the rest are two years old or more.

The materials in favor and against vaccination are almost equal, representing 8% and, respectively, 6% from the entire data corpus.

Taking into consideration the statistics saying that the first page's engine results are read in a proportion of almost 95%, while starting with the second page, the readership decreases to 6%, further on are selected for a more detailed analysis only the articles delivered by the Google search engine on the first page.

The first article on the first page is published by the online publication *Mamica.ro*[56] ("mămica" meaning "mommy") with the headline "MMR Vaccine (Measles – Mumps – Rubella)".[57] The website *Mamica.ro* is not monitored by SATI but appears on Trafic.ro as holding the 7th place in the category *Family/Children*, 99th place in the category *General* and sixth in *Communities*. For the unity of coding, the SATI classification *Family and children* was used in the database.

The article is not signed nor dated. It offers detailed information about each disease and the MMR vaccine. It also mentions the controversy started by dr. Andrew Wakefield's study that relates autism to the MMR vaccine.

The article objectively presents all the information and, in the end, launches two questions for the readers: Did they vaccinate their children? Moreover, If they vaccinated their children, did they notice any side effects? The questions generated seven answers, facilitated by a Facebook plug-in; the readers comment using their Facebook profile.

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[56] Mamica, "Vaccinul ROR (rujeola-oreion-rubeola)," https://www.mamica.ro/vaccinul-ror/.
[57] Original "Vaccinul ROR (rujeola – oreion - rubeola)".

Some of the answers only relate to some mild side effects, but others create a controversy between pro and anti-vaccination partisans.

After two weeks, the search was repeated to observe if the articles change their order. The search was also conducted in an incognito Google window to see if the results were influenced by the profiling, based on previous interests, online orders, articles, and websites usually visited. The Google algorithm is based on our personal preferences, and different people receive different results when they initiate a Google search.[58]

In each of the two searches, this article resulted first on the first page. There was a slight modification in the order of some articles: one of them coming on the first page from the second, one oscillating from the second page to the third, and on the second again, a new entry on the first page and the second page and four on the fourth page while an article moved from the second page to the third. The date's omission is a technique used by online publications to circulate their content already available on their pages, in order not to seem outdated. Because of this, we cannot evaluate if their date influences their ranking somehow.[59] This aspect makes online research during a specific past period almost impossible and confuses the reader who sees alarmist headlines which refers to a situation from two years ago.

The second article on the first page is six months old and was published by *Hotnews.ro*[60] (www.hotnews.ro) on the 27th of July 2018. The website belongs to SATI's category *News and Analyses*. The title cites an INSP (Institutul Național de Sănătate Publică – The National Institute of Public Health) statement saying that the MMR vaccine registers the highest rate of refusals, although the measles epidemic has made 59 victims, consisting mainly of newborn babies.

The article states that a higher number of refusals is registered in the urban area as opposed to the rural parts of the country and presents statistics regarding vaccinated children for every type of vaccine, not only MMR and the reasons for which the rest of the population is not yet vaccinated.

The article allows comments, and here again, polemics between people who are in favour or against vaccination start. The comments are placed in the website's comments section , and the people who are expressing their thoughts cannot be

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[58] Google, "Cum funcționează algoritmul de căutare," https://www.google.com/search/howsearchworks/algorithms/.

[59] Rob Nightingale, "Find the Date of a Published Post with These Insanely Simple Tips," *Makeuseof*, November 6, 2015, https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/find-date-published-post-insanely-simple-tips/.

[60] Alina Neagu, "Date oficiale INSP: Vaccinul ROR are cea mai mare rată de refuz dintre vaccinurile din România, chiar dacă epidemia de rujeolă a făcut 59 de morți, majoritatea bebeluși nevaccinați," *HotNews.ro*, July 27, 2018, https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-sanatate-22589375-date-oficiale-insp-vaccinul-ror-are-cea-mai-mare-rat-refuz-dintre-vaccinurile-din-romnia-chiar-dac-epidemia-rujeol-cut-59-mor-majoritatea-bebelu-nevaccina.htm#self.

identified since they are generally using a nickname of just the first name; they do not have a picture attached either. For example, in the first case, the comments are made using the Facebook profiles, allowing to conduct further research on how these people are communicating on their pages, or groups, about vaccination.

The article ranked third on the first page of Google is published by Realitatea.net, a website from the *News and Analyses* category, also. Although Realitatea.net is classified as a *News and Analyses* type of website, the material published is almost identical to the one published on Mamica.ro. Almost the entire article copies the first one (or vice versa, we cannot tell), and it is not signed either. Differently from the first one, this one does not end with questions for the readers because the platform does not allow commentaries.

CSID.ro publishes the fourth and the fifth articles on the first page (*Ce se întâmplă, doctore?*, meaning "What's happening, Doctor?"), an online publication monitored by SATI and classified in the category *Health and personal care*.

The first article, with the title "Six Risk Factors for Autism: the MMR Vaccine Has Nothing to Do with It,"[61] is a material about autism, not the MMR vaccination. The article presents various studies demonstrating that the MMR vaccine cannot be a cause for autistic disorder and mentions six other possible explanations. Paula Rotaru signs the article. The platform does not allow comments.

The second material from *CSID.ro*, and the fifth on the Google's first page, is the prospect of PRIORIX, a vaccine for measles and rubella. GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals S.A., the pharmaceutical company that distributes the vaccine, is indicated as an article source.

The sixth article is published by *Click.ro*, a website classified by SATI in the category *General News*, under the title "Adela Popescu Has Vaccinated Her Little Boy and Had Received a Lot of Critiques. Here Is How She Answered". Adela Popescu is a Romanian celebrity, actress, and T.V. host. The material presents part of an article written on her blog and posted on Facebook, the comments she received, and how she answered. A direct link to the actress's blog post is included in the material. Although it offers the readers this possibility via the earlier mentioned Facebook plugin, the article has no comments.

The seventh material was not on the first page from the beginning - it appeared after a week. It is a material published by *Desprevaccin.ro* ("despre vaccin" means "about vaccine"), the official website dedicated to vaccination, endorsed by the Ministry of Health. The link sends the reader to a page where two medical leaflets about the vaccine are presented. No comments are allowed on this platform.

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[61] Paula Rotaru, "6 factori de risc pentru autism: vaccinul ROR nu are nicio legătură cu apariția autismului!," *Ce se întâmplă, doctore?* 3 May, 2017, https://www.csid.ro/health/sanatate/6-factori-de-risc-pentru-autism-vaccinul-ror-nu-are-nicio-legatura-cu-aparitia-autismului-16247738.

Next on Google's first page there is a link to a medical leaflet of PRIORIX published by ANM (The National Agency of Medicines and Medical Devices).

The last three articles present the side effects of vaccination from different angles or degrees of paroxysm. *Smartandhappychild.ro*,[62] a website that is not monitored by SATI, or by Trafic.ro, has published the first article. The article links to another one where the side effects of the diseases prevented by the MMR vaccine are presented. This article does not come up in the first five pages of Google after searching the term "MMR vaccine," but it focuses on the correlation between the MMR vaccine and autism. The articles on this site are not dated nor signed. The Facebook plug-in facilitates the comments.

The following article is published by *Totuldespremame.ro* with the title "The Side Effects of the Vaccines. What Kind of Vaccines Have the Most Side Effects? How Do You Control Them?"[63] SATI classifies the website in the "Family and children" category. The purpose of the material is to guide the parents concerned with the vaccines' side effects and demolish some myths of overrated side effects. The material is based on the NHS – National Health Service recommendations and those of several Romanian doctors.

The article is not dated, but it finishes with two links to the 2017 vaccination scheme, an information from two years ago. The last article on the first page of the Google search engine belongs to *Ortodoxinfo.ro* a religious portal, not monitored by SATI or by Trafic.ro, either. The title is "Andrei Was VACCINATED with MMR Vaccine Two Weeks Ago. Now He Is STRUGGLING Between Life and Death. The Doctors Have Asked for the Parents' Approval to UNPLUG the Machines and to HARVEST His ORGANS."[64] The article begins with an update saying that the editors have been deceived in the first articles they wrote. This initial article, which can be read below the announcement, signals the case of a woman from Satu Mare, who had posted on Facebook the case of her little boy who suffered from convulsions and meningitis after the MMR vaccine was administrated to him. She went to the doctors who did not treat him, his condition deteriorated, and now they insist on unplugging him from the machines and harvesting his organs. The editors found out that the case was fake and now are blaming the ones they are calling pro-vaxxers for misleading

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[62] Bogdan Ivănescu, "Duce vaccinarea ROR la autism?," *smart happy child*, https://smartandhappychild.ro/duce-vaccinarea-ror-la-autism.

[63] In original: "Efectele adverse ale vaccinurilor. Ce imunizări au avut cele mai multe reacții nedorite? Cum le controlați."

[64] In original: "Andrei a fost VACCINAT cu ROR acum 2 săptămâni. Acum se ZBATE între viață și moarte. Medicii au cerut acceptul părinților pentru DECONECTAREA de la aparate și pentru PRELEVAREA de ORGANE."

them, showing a severe lack of understanding of who a pro and anti-vaxxer is and falsely informing the public without taking any responsibility.

Conclusions

The way the articles, rendered by the Google search engine as most relevant, approach the MMR vaccine subject shows a clear interest and concern about the side effects of this. The three medical leaflets present on the first page show the need for information of those who have accessed these links so often that the Google search engine has placed them to the first page. The interest in medical leaflets shows a clear interest for information, not for a specialist's opinion. The parents want to decide for themselves and need to be informed, rather than inquire about the editors' opinion.

The fear of side effects is shown in the high percentage of the articles presenting these aspects.

Almost all the informative articles have a dedicated section to side effects, showing a common ground with the side effects category that already covers almost half of the materials offering a general impression of danger associated with the MMR vaccination.

Stöckl A. and Smajdor A.[65] state in their report of the MMR debate in the U.K. media that the simple mention of a correlation between autism or other side effects with MMR vaccine can harm, even though the mentioning is meant to decline the correlation. Although the articles try to demonstrate that the vaccines' side effects are mild, or a connection between the vaccination and the autism cannot be demonstrated, the public could remain with the impression that the vaccines have side effects and there could be a connection between autism and MMR vaccination, although it has not been proved yet.

Moreover, the headlines, trying to attract more clicks, present an exaggerated danger, good examples, in this case, being the headlines of *Ortodoxinfo.ro* or *Totuldespremame.ro*.

Even though *Ortodoxinfo.ro* signals a fake piece of news in the first paragraph, it keeps the alarmist headline from the beginning, and *Totuldespremame.ro,* which presents a balanced opinion in the article, has an alarmist headline that leaves a general impression of danger at a first glance.

This paper has not covered the comments that some articles include, comments facilitated by Facebook widgets or the forums rendered by the search, where the tone of voice and approach of each side, pro and anti-vaccination is visible, this being the subject of a future research project.

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[65] Stöckl and Smajdor, "The MMR debate in the United Kingdom."

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Hybrid Conscience – Between Evolution and Threat

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Abstract

The possibility of a confrontation between A.I. and humanity is widely discussed by scientists and not only. Even it still seems sci-fi, the threat is here and becomes real in our day to day lives. The main factor is the hybrid conscience that the new generations are actually living in, mixing a real life with a virtual one. The second one is like a drug, it develops addiction, but the biggest problem is that it comes with its own ethical values. Virtual games are just an example, with their violence, rhythm and color, with different rules than the real world. Young people are more than affected, and these new generations seem to give up on very important parts of their wholeness as human beings: their memory, general knowledge, their ability to communicate, etc. We can't just sit and watch. What the adults have to do, from the ethical point of view?

Keywords: *Hybrid Conscience, Technology, Existential Risks, Public policies, Education.*

Status quo

A.I. has brought a new era of humanity. The discovery of computer and internet started a race with some multiple transformations of our society, of our selves. We all feel the benefits of this world of virtual information, as we want to communicate easy, like the real distances are no longer exist, as we want to pay our bills without getting out, to buy our stuff, to see our movies, to find almost everything in a matter of seconds. And the list could go on and on. The development of this domain is getting closer to the robotic era, the stage of a new creation: an ambassador of the A.I., as a partner for humans to communicate with. It is becoming clearer than ever that we have two worlds collide and reject in every single second on Earth: the real life and the virtual one. The creation of an algorithm that can answer to a human and be self-learning gave form to this virtuality that can detach from his creator and become a partner. This new kind of reality makes its own rules, comes with its own values, some good, but some bad. Not so bad for the humans that created it, but bad enough for the ones that become addicted to it. Growing and living between those two worlds is transforming us, humans, into something new. Our conscience is modifying, our

human conscience becomes impregnated with the values and marks of the virtual world, of this conglomerate that we could call "artificial conscience". The new structure that is rising from this mix could be named "hybrid conscience" and new rules must be established for it, until it's not too late. The responsibility of humanity is to see the threats, the illness and to search and find a treatment.

Conscience

The concept of "conscience" can be explained as

always knowledge of ourselves, or awareness of moral principles we have committed to, or assessment of ourselves, or motivation to act that comes from within us.[1]

It means that we have to assess its philosophical and psychological aspects altogether. Psychologically thinking, "conscience" means knowledge and a good functioning of brain and senses. It means memory, thinking, language and imagination, reason, intuition and all that "the epistemic function of conscience"[2] implies. Are these human capabilities of knowledge affected by the omnipresent technology?

Philosophically thinking, "conscience" means moral principles, values that must crystallize in every child in order to function like an inner-court that makes possible the "self-assessment" and the "motivation act that comes from within". Is it possible that the moral structure of a young man to be affected by ethical aspects of the virtual worlds?

MEMORY AND KNOWLEDGE

A smart-phone brings to a child a whole new universe: games, messages, information, funny pictures, funny movies, sex, music, almost anything you can imagine, but no real life. Violence, rhythm, color, and new rules. Young people are more than affected, and, day by day, they seem to give up on very important parts of their wholeness like human beings. Their memory, basic knowledge, their ability to communicate, etc.

The inflow of information from internet, at one touch distance, means that our children are not trying to memorize notions anymore, as they were, "because it's here". And that's how, a very important part of their brain, the memory, is not trained in a period when this training is crucial for their further development not only memory, but knowledge, thinking and mind. Psychology teaches us that it is impossible to isolate all the different processes that contribute to human thinking and action.

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[1] Alberto Giubilini, "Conscience," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/conscience/, accesed: 10.12.2019.
[2] Giubilini, "Conscience."

Attention to aspects of the perceived world are interpreted on the basis of past memories; thinking and language help to keep track of future plans and in turn direct attention to new events. Despite the apparent chaos of beliefs, prejudices, routine actions and conscious attempts to solve problems, humans are continually learning from experience.[3]

In the cerebral constellation memory beholds a main role, as all the superior cognitive processes are symbiotic. An insufficient development of this important brain capacity would affect more than the storage of information. It will affect the ability of thinking, creating, reacting, solving and communicating. The general knowledge is no longer accumulating over time, because the information is not passing in long-term memory/semantic – memory. This mechanism is important because general knowledge is a major component of crystallized intelligence.[4]

There are studies that explain the strong relation between working-memory capacity and reasoning ability.[5] In the same time, the addiction to external memory might damage the process:

our reliance on such forms of external memory, particularly when they are internet-connected, may have important cognitive consequences (Smart 2012).[6] Some have worried that these are purely negative, with external memory diminishing internal memory in one way or another (e.g., Carr 2010)[7]. […] There is some research suggesting that, when we know that information will be available online, we tend to remember how to find that information, rather than remembering the information itself.[8]

The virtual worlds of the games are colorful, the events come fast and the satisfaction is reachable in a few moves, steps, levels. Because the virtual world is about speed, too. The real life seems boring, compared to all these. The teacher is boring, the school, even the colleagues. The compulsive players have no patience for results in real life, where you have to work sometimes hard and for a long time to achieve something. They want the quick reward and the possibility to go on very fast. The goal is not very clear but the satisfaction of "going on" seems to be enough.

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[3] Judith Greene, *Memory, thinking and language: topics in cognitive psychology*. — (New essential psychology). 1. Cognition I. Title II. Greene, Judith. Thinking and language III. Series 155.4` 13 BF311.

[4] Raymond Cattell, *Abilities: Their structure, growth, and action* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1971).

[5] Patrick C. Kyllonen and Raymond E. Christal, "Reasoning ability is (little more than) working-memory capacity?!" *Intelligence* 14 (4) (1990), 389-433, doi:10.1016/S0160-2896(05)80012.

[6] Paul R. Smart, "The Web-Extended Mind," *Metaphilosophy* 43(4) (2012), 446-463, doi:10.1111/j.1467-9973.2012.01756.x

[7] Nicholas G. Carr, *The Shallows: How the Internet Is Changing the Way We Think*, *Read and Remember* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010).

[8] Kourken Michaelian and John Sutton, "Memory," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2017 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/memory/#CognConsNewFormExteMemo.

Bogdan Popoveniuc presents, in a systemic way, the main modifications brought onto human structure by the technological products. They are somatic, perceptive, mnemonic, cognitive, affective and even in the area of personality disorders. *Cyberamnesia*, or *the Google effect*, distorts the natural mechanisms of memorization, through decreasing the volume of information able to be retained by the human brain and altering the ways the information is processed.[9]

VALUES

Adam Alter[10] is explaining very clear how the game-makers, the movie-makers, the Social Media-makers are using psychological tricks to catch us in their spider web. Half of humankind from the developed world, are addicted to something like phone, shopping, exercise, job, e-mail, etc, briefly we have "behavioral addictions"[11], and the ones that involve a screen are the most difficult to treat. Because the screen is always at one arm's distance.

According to Alter, there are more than 400 treatment centers in China, the first country in the world that has declared internet addiction a "clinic disorder," labeling it as "the biggest threat for the public health among teenagers". More than 24 million teenagers are treated, by force in many cases, with pills or even harsh methods.

For now the American government has decided not to interfere between children and behavioral addiction. There are no public clinics for treatment, and the reason could be that a relative small percentage of addicted children need psychiatric help.[12]

In real life, the rules are not like those from the games, where everybody respects the lines of a software program. We live in societies with all kind of people and some of them do not obey the rule. Teenagers have to be prepared for that. A car can kill you on a crosswalk when you are crossing the street and watching your phone. A thief can attack you in a "neutral" zone as your house, and the internet can perfectly hide a malevolent who wants your money, your body, your life, your intimacy, or anything else that brings him some valuable or satisfaction.

The same virtual reality comes with a deformed or malformed concept about life and death. Here, in real world, killing is irreversible. A life once lost, is lost for good. This kind of loss is losing its importance because of the virtual world amongst the youngsters. Furthermore, it seems that the world of games is making our children more aggressive.

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[9] Bogdan Popoveniuc, "Technophreny. Etiology and symptomatology," *Revista de Filosofie, Sociologie şi Ştiinţe Politice,* nr 1 (170), Academia de Ştiinţe a Moldovei - Institutul de Cercetări Juridice și Politice, 2016, 163-173.

[10] Adam Alter is an Associate Professor of Marketing and Psychology at New York University's Stern School of Business.

[11] Adam Alter, *Irezistibil: Dependenţa de tehnologie şi afacerile din spatele ei* (Bucharest: Publica, 2017), 31.

[12] Alter, *Irezistibil,* 270.

A "meta-analysis[13]" published in October 2018 shows that violence from the video-games affects the behavior of our children. Beyond all the debate regarding this problem, the authors pointed their attention on 24 studies over 17.000 subjects of various nationalities and ethnicities with ages from 9 to 19, time lags ranging from 3 months to 4 years. Their conclusion was that:

> *playing violent video games is associated with greater levels of overt physical aggression over time, after accounting for prior aggression. These findings support the general claim that violent video game play is associated with increases in physical aggression over time.*

The same devices that lead us to the new worlds are keeping us and our children isolated behind a keyboard. Our communications in real life is more than limited, the main consequence being poor vocabulary and reduced conversational skills. The human interaction in real life is strongly affected and the result is an increasing risk of depression. Some studies in that direction showed that

> *Social Media use was significantly associated with increased depression. Given the proliferation of Social Media, identifying the mechanisms and direction of this association is critical for informing interventions that address Social Media use and depression.*[14]

It's obvious that mixture between real and virtual is leading to a new form of conscience, because not only the mind structure is affected, but also the moral compass. The values that the young man is using as principles tend to be different because of the virtual life. The isolation leads to inability to empathize, for example. Behind the keyboard a child does not see how his words affect the man from the other side of the message. And, day by day, he becomes insensible, selfish, with no ability to prioritize. The future adult will be a passive citizen, with no interest for public life, for life in general,[15] for political stage, he will become an insignificant element from an amorphous mass of people, that can be manipulated and used like a "sheep in a flock".

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[13] Anna T. Prescott, James D. Sargent, Jay G. Hull, "Metaanalysis of the relationship between violent video game play and physical aggression over time," *PNAS* 115 (2018): 9882-9888, https://www.pnas.org/content/115/40/9882.

[14] Center for Research on Media, Technology, and Health, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania - Ariel Shensa, Cezar G. Escobar-Viera, Jaime E. Sidani, Nicholas D. Bowman, Michael P. Marshal and Brian A. Primack, "Problematic social media use and depressive symptoms among U.S. young adults: A nationally-representative study," *Social Science and Medicine* 182 (2017): 150-157, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28446367. Liu yi Lin, Jaime E. Sidani, Ariel Shensa, Ana Radovic, Elizabeth Miller, Jason B. Colditz, Beth L. Hoffman, Leila M. Giles and Brian A. Primack, "Association between Social Media Use and Depression among U.S. Young Adults," *Depress Anxiety* 33(4) (2016): 323-31, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26783723.

[15] B. Lachmann et al., *The Role of Empathy and Life Satisfaction in Internet and Smartphone Use Disorder*. *Front. Psychol* 9 (2018), 398, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00398.

Need of Control

So, the answer to our questions regarding the possibilities of the conglomerate that could be called "artificial conscience" to affect the human conscience is "yes". It does and the result is the hybrid conscience, a cognitive-moral structure of abilities and values that will change, for sure, humanity in the future. The elite of our world, the men in power, should take necessary actions to guide these changes, in order not to lose our human essence, not to become more "artificial" than "human".

The need to regulate in this domain – for protection and treatment – has been spoken many times and from high authorities.

The scientists sow the threats of this new world, and proposed e.g. "a set of regulations"[16] for robots and supercomputers. Gunter Meissner[17] says "it is critical". These regulations are for "physical robot":

All commercially available robots should be slow moving, so that humans can just walk away if the robot becomes aggressive

for "supervision of Engineers":

The production of robots must be regulated, in particular engineers who create robots must be supervised to ensure that they cannot create an army of powerful "war-bots".

and for "robot control":

On/Off-switches and power-sources must be uncontrollable to the robot. In addition, every robot should be controlled with overwriting code, possibly a "kill-switch", from an undisclosed, fire-walled, remote location, similar to the activation and deactivation of nuclear weapons.

In the same direction, a course of *Robot Regulation* from University of Oslo,[18] examines how robots and artificial intelligence are regulated by *de lege lata* (the existing laws) and tracks the discourse about the need for new law (*de lege ferenda*). In accordance with the official website of Oslo University, the relevant legal and regulatory issues must include "Responsibility, accountability, liability and insurance", "Human dignity, gender issues and privacy in the context of healthcare robots, cyborgs and augmented humans", "Regulatory responses to emerging artificial intelligence", "Artificial intelligence and copyright protection," etc.

It might seem more sci-fi than real, but the threat is here and becomes real in our day-to-day lives. It is the hybrid conscience that we need to shape, using our greatest weapon: human reason. There are many studies that show the damages technology can

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[16] Gunter Meissner, *Artificial Intelligence-Consciousness and Conscience* (2018), 12-13. 10.13140/RG.2.2.36626.76488.,

[17] Gunter Meissner PhD is President of Derivatives Software (www.dersoft.com), and Adjunct Professor of Mathematical Finance at Columbia University and New York University

[18] University of Oslo, https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/jus/jus/JUS5690/.

do, the scientists have repeatedly warned us. It's time to react in order to treat and prevent, and this reaction must come from decision-takers. We need laws to protect our children from aggression and addiction. We need, in every school, specialists that can see the problems of our students, and know how to manage them. We need I.T. specialists to work with psychologists in order to find out how to use technology in a harmless way.

In one of the scenarios Yuval Noah Harari[19] is presenting in *Homo Deus*[20], the humankind, in data era, risks losing his status and becoming insignificant, the algorithms taking its place. The human being is no longer important as soldier or worker, but as a consumer, so the differences between poor and reach will divide humanity in two, the useless peoples and the humans that will have enough money for becoming younger, healthier, more intelligent, more powerful, all thanks to technology. They will be in charge with A.I. progress, and will try to dominate the new reality: the world of information,

> these "new superhuman caste that will abandon its liberal roots and treat normal humans no better than nineteenth-century Europeans treated Africans."[21]

The solution that appears in order to prevent our universe being conquered by the reign of information is to regulate. Harari is warning that the politicians shouldn't be that unaware of all these, because their absence in this field could leave the power in the hands that has no human conscience at all.

> *Yet mixing godlike technology with myopic politics also has its downside. Lack of vision isn't always a blessing, and not all visions are necessarily bad. […] It is dangerous to trust our future to market forces, because these forces do what's good for the market rather than what's good for humankind or for the world. The hand of the market is blind as well as invisible, and left to its own devices it may fail to do anything about the threat of global warming or the dangerous potential of artificial intelligence. […] If in the twenty-first century traditional political structures can no longer process the data fast enough to produce meaningful visions, then new and more efficient structures will evolve to take their place. These new structures may be very different from any previous political institutions, whether democratic or authoritarian. The only question is who will build and control these structures. If humankind is no longer up to the task, perhaps it might give somebody else a try.[22]*

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[19] Professor in the Department of History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the author of the popular science bestsellers *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (2014), *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (2016), and *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* (2018).

[20] Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus: Scurtă istorie a viitorului* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2016), 303-307.

[21] Harari, *Homo Deus*, 307.

[22] Harari, *Homo Deus*, 329.

According Dr. Mary Aiken,[23] even the creators of the World Wide Web[24] became more and more circumspect, in the last few years, regarding their creation and shaped their plans for a "Magna Carta of Cybernetic".

From my point of view it would be a very good idea. With what to begin? In order to find solutions we have to clearly identify the problems." (…) Let's ask that technology should serve the general good. We need a global initiative. The United Nations Organization could lead in this field and the states from the entire world could involve.[25]

It is clearer than ever that we need regulations for the big companies, the big players in virtual life. Similar to the ones in tobacco world: they should pay for public relations strategies and information campaigns. In order the people to know the risks. As the one of addiction or psychological alienation. The governments should act in the field of treatment infrastructure, in order to assist doctors, teachers, parents and, of course, children.

So, we admit the advantages of a world build with A.I., but we have to remain human. And we need help! It is time for the intervention of the authority, because a great power comes with the responsibility. The humanity must understand more, and act. The concept of "responsibility" must be brought in the virtual world. Not only to protect money, but to protect happiness, innocence, the hunger for wisdom, patience, the ability to work, attention, critical thinking, the real life and human conscience.

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[23] Mary Aiken, Cyberpsychologist and honorary Professor in the Department of Law and Criminology at the University of East London.

[24] Tim Berners – Lee, named "the father of web" by Mary Aiken *The Cyber Effect Psihologia comportamentului uman in mediul online* (Bucharest: Niculescu), 336.

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Tips for Using Cooperative Learning Groups effectively in the EFL Classroom

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Abstract

A good amount of research has been done on cooperative learning (or sometimes referred to as collaborative learning). Simply said, it stimulates students learning from one another in a group. What makes this technique distinctive is the way through which students and teachers cooperate together. Students are taught collaborative skills that will enhance their independent cooperation more effectively. We have heard teachers complaining about the limited possibilities of using group work, they have a tendency to evade it seeing that it may lead to an unrestrained process, with no or little sequential learning. In order for group work to go smoothly and be effective, as it should, it needs to be carefully designed and planned. Not all tasks are appropriate for group work, so teachers should have a strong motive to bring group work in the class. This paper aims to suggest some practical tips in creating successful cooperative learning groups in our EFL classes.

Keywords: *group work, collaborate, pair work, cooperative learning, concerns.*

Introduction-Literature Review

"Cooperative Learning, sometimes called small-group learning, is an instructional strategy in which small groups of students work together on a common task. Individual and group accountability: Each student is responsible for doing their part; the group is accountable *for meeting its goal.*"[1]

David Jacques suggests that "*Learning in groups,* rather than in formal lectures or training sessions, *allows students to have greater scope to negotiate meaning and express themselves* within the language of the subject. It can also play a central part in

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[1] David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson, "An Overview of Cooperative Learning," *Cooperative Learning*, accessed November 9, 2019, http://www.co-operation.org/what-is-cooperative-learning.

developing key professional skills, such *as listening, presenting ideas, persuasion, self-direction, self monitoring and team working*."[2]

A Cooperative Group "…three to four students who are tied together by common purpose to complete the task and to include every group member".[3]

Collaborative Learning "An instruction method in which students at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal. The students are responsible for one another's learning as well as their own. Thus, the success of one student helps other students to be successful."[4]

But according to Sara Matthews, Educator, "The concept of *group work / cooperative learning* was pioneered by two brothers both with Ph.Ds in education. If you look up «Johnson brothers group work» – their story and/or the papers they've written on it will come up. *Cooperative learning by definition has to be done in a group - otherwise with whom do you cooperate?* I suppose it could be argued that *«group work»* can be assigned but the teacher would not necessarily expect students to cooperate – to divide up the work between them. But the point of the Johnson brothers idea was that in the work world we tend to work in groups and we are supposed to cooperate with our work peers – and that traditional school did not address the work-place reality that we work in teams, in groups. So in reality the founders of the *"Group Work – Cooperative Learning Movement"* did not intend there to be any difference between those two terms as cooperative learning can only be learned and carried out – *in a group.*[5]

I. Some teachers' resulting difficulties to use cooperative learning groups effectively:
- Students can't move easily
- Teachers can't move easily
- The seating arrangement seems to prevent a number of activities
- There is limited eye contact from teacher to students
- Interaction tends to be restricted to those closest to the front
- Discipline can be a problem
- Teachers can't give attention equally to all students

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[2] David Jacques in Abrami et al., *Classroom connections: Understanding and using cooperative learning* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1995).

[3] Robert M. Homan and Christopher Jon Poel, "Developing Interactive Group Skills Through Cooperative Learning," in *Cooperative Learning. JALT Applied Materials* (EDRS Reproductions No. ED437849, 1999), 128.

[4] Anuradha A. Gokhale, "Collaborative learning enhances critical thinking," *Journal of Technology education* 7(1) (1995), https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JTE/v7n1/gokhale.jte-v7n1.html.

[5] Sara Matthews, Educator, https://www.quora.com/profile/Sara-Matthews-5.

Teachers say: "I can't use group work or pair work, because the class is over - crowded, there are many students (more than 25) and it's difficult for them to move from their seats" "or teachers can't walk easily through the desks, or this classroom arrangement doesn't help the performing of a variety of activities, etc". But in fact, the hindering reason might be teachers' own concern or fear of practicing something new or different from what they normally do. We should take a look here, and see if the problem is an "outside" or an "inside" concern. Sometimes what teachers consider as "outside" constraints (i.e. forced by school, or by government or by curricula) may also be partly "inside" constraints, (i.e. a personal decision not to practice something.)[6] So if we take for example, "*students find it difficult to move easily*" or *"cant move from their seats"* – this really means "*I decide not to move students from their seats because this would result in discipline problems and chaos in the classroom.*" If discipline becomes a problem, it's better to ask the learners themselves to give advice of how to soothe the situation or what could be better done by the teacher. If possible, agree on a behavior code and punishment in advance of arising problems. By putting the blame on the educational institution, or government, teachers remove the recognition of having few potentials for influencing the circumstances. It may seem dangerous to offer solutions, but all the same, some suggestions or practical tips may be helpful. In order for cooperative group work to go smoothly, it needs "to be carefully designed and planned."[7]

II. A few ideas that may suggest a possible answer that is workable:[8]

- Have a strong argument for using group work (Go to the school hall for English lessons, if the class is really small)
- Make collaborating worthwhile
- Do pair/group work in the middle of the lesson
- Instruct before making groups
- Use pair work a lot (storytelling, gap filling, picture dictation, reverse guessing, information gaps, things in common).
- Organize groups quickly
- Arrange endings in advance

1. Have a strong argument/motive for using group work (*Go to the school hall for English lessons, if the class is really small*)

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[6] Jim Scrivener, *"Learning teaching": The essential guide to English Language Teaching* (Macmillan Publishers, 2005), 232-233.

[7] Penny Ur, *Penny Ur's 100 Teaching Tips* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 37.

[8] Ur, *Penny Ur's*, 38.

➢ It's good to have our students cooperate in order to learn, but only if this does result in useful learning.

➢ The importance of using group work, has sometimes been over-rated in professional literature. Teachers should think twice before deciding to use group work.

➢ Better understanding of the group, results in more successful lessons. In some classes group work involves only "busy work" with little learning.

➢ Some tasks are inappropriate for cooperative learning.

➢ Students learn in different ways, some of them may dislike collaborative learning, others enjoy working in groups, or some others prefer teacher-directed whole - class activities.

➢ Classes may come from different experience background of group work. If students have done a lot in the past, then it's easier to use it in our lessons. But if they haven't, we may face reluctance or rejection.

So our advice is to use group work occasionally, to use it when we are sure that working in groups will meet the goals in a better way than working through individual or whole-class activity. Normally teachers use group or pair work for speaking tasks, or for oral fluency activities, but we need to hear our students' views on speaking tasks and not to exaggerate or overuse with group working activities.[9] (*Some of their comments are: "I don't want to talk to other students. They speak badly."* Or "*I speak a lot, they only hear and no one corrects my speech." "There is no point in doing this task in group if we use bad English."* Teachers need to monitor groups discreetly to avoid such comments.

2. Make collaborating worthwhile (Ask the students what they think about these ideas)

Not all tasks are appropriate for group work. If a task can be done in a more convenient way by a single learner, then there is unlikely to be much collaboration if it is done in groups. This needs to have our attention, especially, in *writing activities*. Writing is usually an individual activity. If there is a gifted student in the group, that has a lot of new ideas, then he/she will do the majority of work, though the group has been instructed to cooperate.

Brainstorming activities, or *recall* activities are similarly better done in groups. (*How many of the words we have learnt over the last two weeks, can you remember? Close your books and recall as many as you can).*

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[9] Jack Richards and Theodore Rodgers, *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). 100 Secondary Education development Plan (2010) as retrieved from http://www.hs.gov.sa/pagedetails.aspx?Page_ID=17.

Or another option is to design a task so that each student has only a portion of information necessary to meet the goal. For example a group of five students each, should collaborate with others in the group and later with other groups to make up a story. (*Scrambled words, or scrambled paragraphs, scrambled pictures* may be convenient).

3. Practice group work in midst of the lesson

It is considered a good idea to organize group work in the midst of the lesson: not to practice it into the beginning, or leave it for the end.

- In general the beginning of the lesson is normally used by the teacher to review/explain/reinforce new language or for interpreting reading texts: this because students' attention span is higher and longer. But when we spend time on focused work on new material, it's worth stepping aside and allow the students communicate with one another rather than being directly guided by the teacher. On the other hand, the ending of the lesson, should normally consist of a whole-class rounding-off activity. Letting group run right to the end of the lesson doesn't allow for this.
- Another argument for timing group work for the midst of the lesson is that it's quite difficult to predict exactly how much time it will take (even experienced teachers are never quite sure how long a particular group task will take with a given class).
- Planning it in the midst of the lesson provides teachers with the necessary tolerance and flexibility.
- If, on the other hand, the process comes to an end sooner than expected, then we are able to stop it earlier, and add another reserved activity.

4. Instruct before making groups

It is crucially important to let students know what will do before moving into groups. Setting students into groups can be quite a challenging moment. The mistake teachers normally do is that they complete the organization into groups first and then give instructions, which seems most straightforward. It's better to do it the other way around. If the students work in groups or in pairs, they face each other and their attention is directed to the group not to the teacher. So we advise to have our students undivided attention for our instructions, they should be facing us with full eye contact and they will listen and understand perfectly what they will be doing once they are left in groups of their own.

- With less advanced classes, we suggest the instructions be given in the students' mother tongue.

- Or to write up the instructions on the board as we give them.
- To make sure they are understood by all learners if the instructions are given in English we ask one student to repeat them in the mother tongue.
- It's good to do a demonstration of a sample task with a volunteer group of students while the rest watch.
- Finally give students the opportunity to ask questions if they feel anything is unclear; we should have a "yes" to the question *"Do you all understand what to do?"*.
- Only then we recommend to divide our students into groups and tell them to go ahead.

5. Use pair work a lot (*picture dictation, reverse guessing, information gaps, things in common)*

Sometimes pair work gets better results than group work: it's easier to set up and control and provides more participation. It is considered time-consuming to get in and out of groups, but pairs are much easier to organize: just get students turn to the person next to them or in front of or behind and that's it. Pair work is a lot easier to control than groups of three or more. The main advantage of pair work is the amount of active participation. There are a lot of fun tasks that are particularly suitable for pair work, *for example:*

- *picture dictation* – one student tells the other what to draw or there is one basic drawing and the students take it in terms to tell each other what to add, change or color.
- *Reverse guessing* – each student has a pile of words or pictures or situation descriptions. He or she *provides hints or descriptions until the partner guesses the answers.*
- *Information gaps* – each student has a table partially filled in, the missing information inn one student's table is shown in that of his or her partner. They ask and answer questions in order to fill in all the missing information.
- *Things in common*-students talk to each other in order to find out at least three things they have in common.

6. Organize groups quickly

Teachers spend a lot of class time getting students into groups. Some strategies are recommended to help us achieve this, *quickly* and *smoothly.* It is time-consuming to ask students to form groups on their own, but also tends to result in unbalanced group compositions, often with the more gifted students getting together and the less proficient left to form other groups. Also we may have groups of wildly varying sizes

or sometimes less distinguished students may find themselves left out. So it's the teachers' duty to take the initiative in deciding who will work with whom.

Two strategies that we frequently practice, especially, with ESP classes (*Albanian literature and linguistic courses*) to divide students into groups are:

1. If they are sitting in rows tell each pair of students in a row to turn to face the pair behind them-and so on.
2. We number off all the students in the class, according to the number of the groups we want. So if we want five groups we number them off "*one… two… three… four… five… one… two… three…*" Then all the ones get together, all the twos and so on.

Sometimes there is the problem of the students who refuse to work together. But once we get to know the class, we find ways to make sure to avoid putting them together. It is recommended to keep the groups fixed for a few weeks before changing them. Thus if students know their groups then they move in and out of them quickly and smoothly.

7. Arrange endings in advance

It's difficult to draw group work to a close, it helps a lot to build in arrangements for ending within our initial instructions.

Teachers need to make sure from the beginning that the students know what the signal to stop will be. It could be simply that we call out "*pens down*" or "*stop*"/ "*a buzzer*". It is also very useful to give a time limit in advance: "*In ten minutes time you should be ready*". If students know time has run out, it's much easier to stop them and teachers can always add extra time if required, or finish early if we see that the activity has come naturally to an end. A useful tip here is to give notes to the students like: "*In two minutes, the time limit is up*".

Though some tasks can go on indefinitely, others clearly end when the goal of the task has been achieved. This means that some groups will finish earlier than others. Therefore, teachers must prepare a reserve activity in advance to keep them occupied. But in any case teachers have to let students know in advance, what will be asked, if they finish their task early.

Conclusion

Using cooperative learning groups effectively in the EFL Classroom help various small group students' work together on academic tasks. They help themselves and their classmates to learn together. It might be an effective way to:

- stimulate students
- stir up active learning

- expand critical-thinking skills, communicative abilities and decision-making capabilities.

Cooperative learning as a strategy is not new, it has existed for many years, and there is abundant research evidence to support learning activities in the classroom. It operates with three principles: *group goal*, *individual accountability, and equal opportunity for success.*

While implementing cooperative learning groups effectively, the role of the teacher, includes not only instruction and monitoring students, but also active involvement in helping students to get the advantages of collaborative learning. The above-mentioned tips will help novice teachers use cooperative learning groups in the right way in their classrooms. If we tend to have student-centered classes, good critical thinkers and skillful future teachers, those tips will be efficient.

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ESSAYS

PRESENTATIONS

REVIEWS

"Domestic Journal 1971 - 2017:
The Notes of an In-form-er"
Ion DUR

Review

Jurnal domestic 1971 - 2017: însemnările unui in-formator,
Cartea Românească, 2018

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Ion Dur's *Domestic Journal 1971-2017* is a genuinely personal combination of the inner and outer self. On the one hand, the book reveals "the image of a nostalgic man, somehow doubtful about the meaning of life"[1], a man who led "a rather ordinary life, with *human, all too human* trivialities."[2] The journal is "*a tribute to the petty things, the simple joys of the human being, of the secondary*"[3], in whose wide range the diarist oxymoronically places himself as "*a noncorformist, but balanced critical spirit*".[4] The subtitle of the journal is interesting because it covers a large amount of content: *the notes of an in-form-er*. In this case, the *In-form-er* is nothing else but the professor who, from an Aristotelian philosophical perspective, in-forms by re-shaping and re-modelling the matter. He is "the one who had so far shaped in a certain form (an essential one) dozens and hundreds of students".[5]

On the other hand, the journal consists of the ideas Ion Dur wants to share with the other people: ideas about freedom as wreckage, about *the instant-culture*, the degradation of the symbols, memory, time, the stages of apprenticeship, the hermaphrodite discourse of philosophy, *the spa philosophy*, television as the perfect means of manipulation, Romanian culture, etc.

Most readers will undoubtedly be interested in the pages about Emil Cioran, whom he had actually invited to the first symposium in his honor at Sibiu. They will also be drawn to his notes about Gabriel Liiceanu or the written records of his Păltiniş

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[1] Ion Dur, *Jurnal domestic 1971 - 2017: însemnările unui in-formator* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2018), 13.
[2] Dur, *Jurnal domestic,* 10.
[3] Dur, *Jurnal domestic*, 289.
[4] Dur, *Jurnal domestic*, 14.
[5] Dur, *Jurnal domestic*, 9.

meetings with Noica, the "lay monk", a role model of the exceptional youth who were willing to actively get involved in spreading genuine culture. Ion Dur reminds his readers of Noica's famous notebook in which he used to write down the development stages of 22 young disciples – or even more – whom he intended to train into what he called *the culture of performance*; the notebook was finally destroyed for fear of not ending up in the hands of the State Security during Ceaușescu's dictatorial regime. Without Noica's little "grade book", we can only guess the names of those who really interested the philosopher. "Is Noica's phalanx merely a binomial made up of G.L. and A.P.?" Ion Dur was asking himself rhetorically after the one who wanted to found the elite school passed away. Lenient with the cultural tourists, Noica was conversely demanding with his disciples whom he expected to follow the development stages of a genuine man of culture: the critical attempts, the translations, and only afterwards the original works. When Ion Dur engages in his research project of the Romanian culture having Eminescu at his core, Noica does not hesitate to raise objections: "Romanian identity (…) should not be analysed, but *left alone*".[6] Likewise, he does not hesitate to scold him when he thinks he makes a series of missteps: "nobody, but absolutely nobody, cannot aspire to the open sea, to *universality* as long as he did not *assimilate* – and did not allow himself to be assimilated by – the shape of his own *national identity*".[7] The text reveals a Noica who was strict with his disciples, but also weak in facing a totalitarian regime: "he would rather read Platon than rise against Ceaușescu".[8]

Among other things, Noica confesses to Ion Dur: "I cannot say I had any revelatory ideas, my life was an ever-growing experience. I cannot say like Kant that one day I had a revelation (when he thought of the dissertation forseeing *Critique of Pure Reason*). What I can say, though, is that I have always been discontent. More precisely, I could not say either that I failed or that I completely succeeded. I felt like in Creangă's words: «It also seems that he must have come since he has not come after all.»"[9] Three months before his death, the philosopher was saying that "as far as he was concerned, he has about three more works to finish: the book of quintessence (he does not call it the book of *archetypes* anymore), the book in which he returns to the concept of holomer to endow it with a pure logical status, and, finally, the book of *the avatars of ideas* in his work."[10]

In one of his notes from July 1980, Ion Dur honestly shares his opinion: "journals are meant to be read and rarely to be reviewed because the writing *about*

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[6] Dur, *Jurnal domestic*, 167.
[7] Dur, *Jurnal domestic*, 169.
[8] Dur, *Jurnal domestic*, 237.
[9] Dur, *Jurnal domestic*, 111.
[10] Dur, *Jurnal domestic*, 176.

seems to kill the discrete charm of the confession."[11] Nevertheless, I would like to mention the names of the very few who got involved in the delicate and risky endeavour of making comments on the deceiving journal of ideas. In "The Exigence of Pudicity and the Exigence of Truth,"[12] Radu Vancu goes into depth about the chronological details, enumerates all the outstanding scholars mentioned, met, or known by the diarist, and bets on a description in contrast with his "cultural alterities", Constantin Noica and Dan C. Mihăilescu. For Horia Pătrașcu, the extensive review in *The Philosophy Magazine* is also an opportunity to digress on the topic of the philosophical journal or to force the interpretation of the *domesticity* of the journal into the story of an ubicuu *domus*.[13] I would be rather wary of such an interpretation since Ion Dur does not strike me as someone who "*would feel everywhere at home*,"[14] especially during the time he spent in Craiova, a place where the only times when he felt at home were his rare meetings with truly exceptional people like Ion D. Sîrbu. It would have been impossible not to have somebody who would question the diarist's confession. Victoria Murărescu Guțan, always on the lookout for inaccuracies, does just that. This is the reason why her chronicle, "A Book of Self-Discovery, of an Embellished Sincerity" rests within the confines of doubt as she wonders whether Ion Dur is a scriptor or a *criptor*,[15] whether the journal is authentic or embellished, *genuine truth* or fictionalized truth, etc. In "The Adiabatic Individual", Sorin Lavric talks of "the biography of a vectorial individual who is determined to build a cultural identity for himself despite the adversary circumstances."[16] He even dares to detail upon the author's great love, a chapter I have respectfully chosen to avoid, leaving the *hic sunt excelsis animae* to the exclusive pleasure of the readers.

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[11] Dur, *Jurnal domestic*, 79.
[12] Radu Vancu, "Exigența pudorii și exigența adevărului," *Transilvania* 2 (2018), 23.
[13] Horia Vicențiu Pătrașcu, "Ion Dur, *Jurnalul domestic. Însemnările unui in-formator 1971–2017*, Cartea Românească, 2018", *Revista de filosofie*, Tomul LXV, 3 (2018), 305.
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