THE PHENOMENON OF ACCULTURATION

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Abstract: *Culture is an attitude in the public space, it is man's everyday life, his inner attitude, the way he relates to social and material reality. Culture is a set of accepted symbols and values that form a logical network and affirm desirable qualities, while having a normative and axiological character based on moral theories. What does culture do? Culture gives meaning to human existence, establishes norms of behaviour, social rules and sets values. What would happen to human society if there were no culture? Language, customs, moral values, tastes and standards, family structures, attitudes to gender, attitudes to self, self-boundaries, attitudes to community and civility would be out of balance and would lead to chaos. Culture is the basis of today's society, which has undergone major changes over time, and this is the main essence that can shape the popular mass, in the formation of man's personality. Under specific historical conditions, people have expressed their own vision of life and the world, of man, formulating a system of values, and have created forms of culture through which they have revealed their spiritual choices, ideals, expectations, disappointments, or rejections.*

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1. The emergence of acculturation

The phenomenon of acculturation, born as a result of a number of changes occurring in a community, of contact between social groups and cultures different from the original tradition and culture. This can occur at the level of the individual or at the level of society.

At the individual level, the term means the process of adaptation to a new culture, when the individual comes into direct contact with the new socio-cultural environment and begins to assimilate elements of the new culture (norms, values, symbols, even mores, etc.) and to change old cultural dimensions. The term is used particularly in cultural anthropology in connection with the contact between the cultures of primitive societies, and in sociology in conjunction with the phenomena of urbanisation of rural life through the migration of rural people to urban areas, but most significantly through the phenomenon of migration of people.

The first definition was given in 1935 by the "Social Science Research Council", after other terms had previously circulated: diffusion (Powell, 1880), disseminate (Boas, 1928).

In general, the term acculturation is the complex process of cultural contact through which entire social groups or societies assimilate traits of other groups or societies. The term was introduced by the culturalist movement and underlines anthropologists' retrospective interest in the consequences that colonial expansion brought with it in the cultural life of non-European communities. A classic definition of acculturation was advanced by the students of Franz Boas (1922): "acculturation encompasses phenomena resulting from the direct and continuous contact between groups of individuals of different cultures, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of one or both groups".

Until now, studies of acculturation have focused on societies with unequal power, one dominant, the other dominated. Most of the time, the dominant society being the European, Western, colonial society, acculturation has been studied in two main socio-political and cultural areas. Latin America, with its pre-Columbian cultures (Mayan, Aztec, Inca) and pre-colonial Africa. This gave rise to two complementary characters of acculturation: one internal, the heterogeneity of contemporary cultures, and the other external, the dominance of one

culture over another. Out of this imperialism of cultures has also arisen the unique sense of influence and contact, from superior to inferior, from dominant to dominated. But what is interesting is that these so-called inferior cultures have resisted the economic and social pressures by which Western cultures are trying to disintegrate their value systems. The resistance of the patterns of Eastern cultures to Western techno-scientific civilization demonstrates that we are dealing with a phenomenon deeper than the mere propagation of top technique and technology, i.e., industrial civilization, horizontally. Cultures are not abstract entities; they live only through the crystallization of values in a geographic environment.

In any kind of acculturation, we are talking about a power relationship, a dominant segment of influence. This phenomenon can be triggered by force, such as colonisation, or naturally, such as migration, and the population borrows the culture and cultural expression of the place to which it has migrated, even down to the language and language spoken in common. Another source of acculturation is globalization. To achieve this effect, the more powerful cultures impose their customs through the media, marketing products that did not previously exist, generating new ways and traditions that sometimes replace those originating in the regions, indigenous regions with less power, in a specific way of functioning in that environment. When we talk about these phenomena, we can classify them in several categories such as multiculturalism, assimilation, insertion or integration.

2. Characteristics of acculturation

From integration policy to acculturation was only a step. Cultural integration is the link between ethnic groups that differ in origin or values and represents the positive aspects of this social phenomenon.

Cultural integration occurs when individuals from one culture adopt the essence of another culture while retaining the values of the original culture, preferring to merge rather than preserve or lose their own culture or reject the new influence entirely. They adopt behaviours manifested in language, gastronomy, traditions, art or culture from neighbouring people without having travelled to specific geographical areas. Cultural integration is an important phenomenon because people retain their own culture or parts of their cultural identity that are essential to them, unlike the phenomenon of assimilation. Integration can also be driven by marriages between individuals from different cultures.

Cultural assimilation can be part of the process of losing one's original identity by borrowing the values of another group entirely. Assimilation is an unconscious, slow phenomenon that becomes permanent. It defines the changes that occur in beliefs, feelings, emotions, thinking and social behaviour through fusion with another group sharing experience and history and incorporating it into a common cultural life.

So, acculturation is a process of the mediation of cultural beliefs and customs of a community or individual by borrowing traits from another culture. It happens when a child is exposed to more than one culture and/or when contact with people from different cultures is over a long period of time. For example, people who travel to study for a period of time in a different country borrow behaviours specific to that country.

3. Globalisation a form of acculturation

When groups with different cultural backgrounds, through their individuals, intersect, collaborate or live together, the process of acculturation begins. Another process that integrates this phenomenon of intercultural contact leading to individual and cultural change is that of globalisation. These two processes induce several changes among non-dominant people and the result will be the loss of cultural and behavioural traits of the members of these communities, thus cultural absorption into a homogeneous society.

One of the most important dimensions of globalisation is the cultural dimension. Through this phenomenon the cultural map of the world has changed and human networks have crossed national and even continental borders, providing cultural links between countries

of origin and adoptive countries. Thus, several languages of international circulation are beginning to predominate around the world. Cultures can exist in increasingly isolated places where there is no information flow through the media or the internet, or tourist flow. The forces producing a global culture and developing the phenomenon of acculturation include television, the emergence of global cultural industries, global citizens (managers of large corporations who identify with a global, cosmopolitan culture through the diversity of the places in which they operate), a range of international organisations, and electronic communications.

It can be concluded, however, from studies of globalisation, on the specific characteristics of acculturation and not the elimination of traditional cultures by replacing them with new, radical cultural values. Although globalisation is often associated with changes within large systems, it is simply an 'inherent' phenomenon that affects our intimate and personal lives in different ways. Our lives have changed as globalizing forces have invaded us through impersonal sources - the internet, media, popular culture, homes and communities, and personal contact with individuals from other cultures, too. It fundamentally changes our everyday experiences, redefining personal and intimate aspects such as family, gender roles, personal identity and working relationships. The way we think and our connections with others are profoundly shaped by globalisation.

4. Conclusions

Acculturation or melting pot is the new current of cultural transformation. Instead of a people's traditions dissolving in favour of dominated nations, they blend and take the form of new, evolved cultural patterns. In a society, the different norms and values are those that are national and those that are brought in from outside, those with which individuals have resonated more, and diversity is created as ethnic groups adapt to the wider social environment.

In the history of different ethnic groups, different phases can be observed: as European societies extend their dominance in space, borders disappear and societies come under the direct control of the West. But if the general evolution leads from spontaneous acculturation to imposed acculturation, the opposite phenomenon often occurs. These forms of acculturation have a special relevance for the operationality of the relationship between cultural conflicts.

Cultural contact has a narrower scope of manifestation; contact can be established without mutual or univocal penetration of the two value systems. When two cultures meet without influencing and penetrating each other, it means that there is not yet true acculturation until the individuals' conception of life is transformed from the inside.

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