

ESSAYS

SNOWFLAKE GENERATION – BTWEEN CLARITY AND SPIRITUAL PARALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This material discusses the problem of the young generation, which in the international literature is called the “snowflake generation”. Its main characteristic is its high degree of isolation. This is important because it is linked by experts to several health problems. In other words, emotional instability is also reflected in mental inflexibility. Therefore, another trait of this generation is intellectual paralysis. So, the clarity of mind becomes one of the biggest challenges for them. These are the issues that this material briefly addresses.

Keywords: generation, clarity, mind, paralysis.

CONCEPTUAL DELIMITATIONS

1. Snowflake generation

The concept of “snowflake generation” was introduced by Claire Fox in two of her works *I find that offensive* (2016)³²⁸ and *I still find that offensive* (2018)³²⁹. She uses this term to describe the teenagers born between 1980 and 2000. The main characteristics of these young people are exaggerated sensitivity and loneliness³³⁰ and in this material the accent is put on the generational loneliness. We focus on this phenomenon because studies that link this issue to physical and mental problems³³¹. Robert Putnam was one of the first authors to warn that the loneliness of young people has led to an unprecedented decline in social capital³³². According to a 1985

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³²⁸ Claire Fox, *I Find That Offensive*, United Kingdom, Biteback Publishing Ltd, 2016.

³²⁹ Claire Fox, *I Still Find That Offensive*, United Kingdom, Biteback Publishing Ltd, 2018.

³³⁰ Claire Fox, *op. cit.*, 2016.

³³¹ Janne Vanhalst, Koen Luyckx, Eveline Teppers, Luc Goossens, “Disentangling the longitudinal relation between loneliness and depressive symptoms: prospective effects and the intervening role of coping”, in *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 31, nr. 8/2012, pp. 810–832.

³³² Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York, 2000.

study, the average American had approximately three trusted acquaintances that they considered close and with whom they felt they could discuss important issues. In 2004, however, the number of trusted persons reached almost zero. Comparing the generation of snowflake with previous generations, psychologist Jean M. Twenge concluded that: “It’s almost as if GenMe is starving for affection”³³³.

We see that the Snowflake generation shows a marked decline in social capital: they have fewer friends, less trusted friends in general, fewer amusing relationships (fewer partners – whether they are married or in concubine, even less sexual relations). Why and how can these changes be explained? Psychologist Jean M. Twenge, argues in his book *Generation Me* that the above-mentioned are the result of the fact that the speed of growth of these young people (which she conceptually calls “iGen” or “the internet generation”) has slowed significantly. It should be noted here that the speed with which a young person is aged is a process of adapting to the cultural context. Young people today are following the strategy of slow life³³⁴.

2. Intellectual paralysis

Simion Mehedinți associates these young people with “dead periods”³³⁵ because of their attitudinal lethargy in all aspects of life. Another idea that S. Mehedinți drew attention to is that these generations are characterized by “spiritual immobility”³³⁶. Through “spiritual immobility” Mehedinți understands the excessive preoccupation of young people for “obtaining certifications” and a lack of interest in self-becoming³³⁷. In other words, these young people are concerned with obtaining as many diplomas as possible. This is a problem insofar as diplomas have become the ultimate goal and not the way to self-actualize one’s personality. Therefore, Mehedinți emphasizes that what young people must first care about is their becoming to be “valuable individualities”³³⁸ in the future.

Emotional immobility is also reflected in mental inflexibility.

3. Clarity of mind

There is an interdependent relationship between faith and intellect³³⁹. Therefore, in the absence of a clear soul, the clarity in itself disappears, and man moves away from the truth:

³³³ Jean M. Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled--And More Miserable Than Ever Before (revised and updated)*, New York, Aria Paperback, 2014, (e-book version, pp. 122–123).

³³⁴ Jean M. Twenge, *Generația internetului [Igen]*, translation by Loredana Bucuroaia, Bucharest, Baroque books & Arts, 2020, p. 36.

³³⁵ „timpuri moarte”, in Simion Mehedinți, *Către noua generație, [Towards the new generation]*, Bucharest, Minerva Publishing House, 1912, p. 120.

³³⁶ „imobilitate sufletească”, in *Ibid.*

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ „individualități de valoare” in *Ibid.*

³³⁹ Radu Baltasiu, *Introducere în sociologie. Spiritualitate, națiune și capitalism. Considerații de sociologie românească și weberiană, [Introduction to Sociology. Spirituality, Nation and capitalism. Considerations of Romanian and Weberian sociology]*, Craiova, Beladi Publishing House, 2007.

“... without faith, we would not find ourselves as beings, we would be mere existence deluded by our own imagery of uncontrollable needs”³⁴⁰.

Carol Dweck said there are two types of thinking one that claims that intelligence is fixed and one that focuses on the idea of accumulation (intelligence is “mobile” in the sense that it can be extended by acquiring new skills)³⁴¹. Based on the two types of thinking identified by Carol Dweck, Tim Urban states that most of the young people we have agreed to call the “snowflake” generation tend to have an inflexible thinking pattern because they have been educated (by parents, school, media, etc.) to believe that they have exceptional natural abilities, that will propel them to the heights of success simply because it comes naturally to gifted people³⁴². This leads to a situation where, according to Paul Harvey, a professor at the University of New Hampshire, members of “generation y” have “unrealistic expectations and strong opposition to negative feedback”³⁴³.

Young people without a lucid mind therefore fall into the category of those with a rigid intellect.

THE PROBLEM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ANTICIPATORY SOCIALIZATION PARADIGM

The snowflake generation matures more slowly than the previous generation because it adapts more slowly to the cultural context than previous generation. What causes this delayed maturation process? Considering that adaptation is a form of socialization, we can ask why the anticipatory socialization process of young people has been slower than in previous generations? To answer this question, we bring into discussion the paradigm of anticipatory socialization:

“Social conformity to the values of a reference group, different from the group to which one belongs, leads to anticipatory socialization of individuals”³⁴⁴.

Why, then, has the process of conforming to the values of the reference group not taken place in these young people as in previous generations? Firstly, because of the lack of social pressure from mature groups. Parents no longer have authority when it comes to their children’s decisions. Moreover, the power of the traditional order has weakened. Secondly, from the lack of contact between young people and

³⁴⁰ „fără credință, nu ne-am regăsi ca ființe, am fi simple existențe amăgite de propriile imaginerii asupra unor nevoi fără de control” in *Ibid.*, p. 267.

³⁴¹ Alina Kartman, “The self-esteem movement and the unhappiness of a generation”, June 10, 2021, Available at: <https://st.network/analysis/top/the-self-esteem-movement-and-the-unhappiness-of-a-generation.html>, Accessed on March 10, 2022.

³⁴² Tim Urban, “Why Generation Y Yuppies Are Unhappy”, in *Huffington Post*, November 8, 2017, Available at: <https://www.huffpost.com/entry/generation-y-unhappyb3930620>, Accessed on March 10, 2022.

³⁴³ Simon Oxenham, “How being called smart can actually make you stupid”, in *Big Think*, August 13, 2013, Available at: <https://bigthink.com/articles/how-being-called-smart-can-actually-make-you-stupid/>, Accessed on March 10, 2022.

³⁴⁴ “Conformismul social față de valorile unui grup de referință, diferit de grupul de apartenență, determină socializarea anticipativă a indivizilor” in Ion Ungureanu, *Paradigme ale cunoașterii societății [The paradigms of society knowledge]*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 1990, p. 60.

role models. They have not been cultivated to read fairy tales or great literature. They are important because they provide mature role models. In the absence of this pressure and encouragement, they have adapted to immature groups.

ANOTHER CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM

A trigger for this slowdown in young people's psycho-emotional development is generated by the "intensity" of socialization/interaction in and through the online environment: from games to funny videos, songs, and all the diverse range of "attractions" offered to "snowflake" generation through technology and the Internet. Professor Virgiliu Gheorghe states that the more often and the more the child comes into contact with the "screen", the more the brain, at the neuronal level, develops more slowly³⁴⁵. Thus, the loneliness and sensitivity during adolescence is the result of a lack of interaction at an early age.

In this regard, Virgiliu Gheorghe considers that the time spent in front of the TV causes mental states that fall into the family of altered states of consciousness:

"The effect of audio-video media is top magic given the fact that after only two minutes of sitting in front of the TV, the emission of alpha waves, passivity, semi-hypnotic state, reverie, and tele-dependence, etc., increases fantastically. The beta-type activities of the cortex diminish toward the threshold of zero, the selective faculty ceases to manifest itself, the axiological functions are suddenly suspended, the individual is deprived of any psycho-moral initiative, he behaves as if he were being directed by 'someone else' as in sleepwalking states. This is why (...) exposure to television induces mental states that we can classify as altered states of consciousness (...). a person who spends about 3–6 h in front of the television (...) is bewitched, mentally and emotionally seized by television fantasies, so that he almost no longer belongs to himself"³⁴⁶.

Adding to this is the lack of lecturing. Thus, a person's second vital element, imagination, is annihilated or poorly developed. For example, in *One Thousand and One Nights*, the way the narrative is described is incredibly "real". For example, in a story, a rich man becomes poor and gets the idea to steal a bag full of gold coins from a rich man's pocket. He is caught and is punished by having his hand cut off. The most interesting thing is that the character's feeling description is so realistic

³⁴⁵ Virgiliu Gheorghe, *Revrājirea lumii sau de ce nu mai vrem să ne desprindem de televizor [The world's enchantment or why we don't want to let go of TV anymore]*, Vol. II, Bucharest, Prodomos Publishing House, 2006.

³⁴⁶ „Efectul mediei audio-video este unul de top magic dat fiind faptul că după numai două minute de la instalarea în fața televizorului crește fantastic emisia undelor alfa, ale pasivității, stării semi-hipnotice, reveriei și teledependenței, etc. activitățile de tip beta ale cortexului se diminuează spre pragul de zero, facultatea selectivă încetează să se mai manifeste, funcțiile axiologice sunt brusc suspendate, insul este deposedat de orice inițiativă psiho-morală, se comportă ca și cum ar fi dirijat de «altcineva» ca în stările de somnambulism. De aceea (...) expunerea la televizor induce stări psihice pe care le putem încadra în familia stărilor alterate de conștiință (...). un ins care petrece circa 3-6 ore în fața televizorului (...) este vrăjit, confiscat mental și simțual de fantezmele televizuale, astfel că aproape nu-ți mai aparține”, in *Ibid.*, p. 1.

that it manages to put the reader in the character's shoes. We infer from this that a great book grows you both cognitively and emotionally.

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Given that the clarity of thought is given by the clarity of the soul, a legitimate question arises, how can these young people be brought out of the state of soul immobility? One answer to this question would have been through the rituals but given that these are less and less present in social life, we shall return to Church, Reading and physical exercise.

Why the Church? Because it is the link between God and people. Thus, this institution helps the man not lose himself. Going to Church helps him discover himself and understand the world. The Church teaches him what love is, and with love, he may rise up his social capital. So, the Church teaches us how to be together.

Contact with classic literature offers the snowflake generation and people in general access to models. Role models are important because they help you develop clarity of the soul and intellect. Through role models, young people will acquire the "tools" to connect with the world around them through empathy. From this viewpoint of the readings, through the models they provide, help the snowflake generation to discover themselves and understand the world.

Finally, why sport? Because a healthy mind is possible only in a healthy body. Soul, mind, and body are one. If one of these has problems, the whole system is affected. Healing the snowflake generation requires simultaneous action on all three levels.

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