

The Body in Visualisations and Images

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Lost in Transition? Managing paradoxical situations by inventing identities

The article focuses on Ashim Ahluwalia's documentation John and Jane, which describes the living conditions, life styles and ambitions of six call centre employees in Mumbai at a time when call centres were not yet questioned in Indian society in respect of their working conditions or social implications. One main focus of the documentation therefore is a more general transition of Asian countries. The call centre agents embody almost perfectly this time of transition: Indians during day time who have never been abroad but become well trained Americans at night, their bodies still in India, but their mind overseas. This striking example is taken to analyse the framing of humans in times of globalisation and the related virtuality of constructions, including their own bodies.

Key Words: Call Centre Agents; Transition; Overcoming Paradoxical Situations; Relation of Person, Body and Consciousness.

Call Centre Agents in India: "John and Jane" in trouble

The documentary "John and Jane" by Ashim AHLUWALIA (2005) describes the living conditions, life styles and ambitions of six call centre employees in Mumbai at a time when call centres were not yet questioned in respect of their working conditions or social implications—the reason why the director had almost completely free access to this today carefully guarded, enclosed world. As the director said in an interview, his aim was not only to show the work and life of the call centre agents he was accompanying for about three years, but also to document the transition of Asian countries at that point of time, shortly before "Amway and discount coupons" started to become commonplace there too (cf. AHLUWALIA 2006a). The call center agents almost perfectly embody this time of transition in India: Average Indians during day time who have never been abroad but become well trained Americans in the night, a setting that is only possible due to globalization and the inventions of the new media. This divided life spent in two completely different spaces has a great influence on those who live in this transitional state. The ways they observe their environment, their expectation regarding their lives and biographies, their images about a good life in general; in short their whole way of thinking and their identity is affected by oscillating between two worlds. I want to use the case of the call centre agents as an example to analyse some of the implications life in this transitional state has. With reference

to the differentiation of person, body and consciousness described by Niklas Luhmann, I will discuss especially implications for identity constructions in such transitions, focusing mainly on the case of the call-centre agent “Naomi” and her strategies of identity management. The role the body plays in these transformation processes becomes obvious in this example. The documentary is chosen, as it seems to reflect the situation of the call-centre agents quite realistically, as an expert discussion in the Museum for Communication, Frankfurt/Main in September 2006 with the director Ashim AHLUWALIA (2006b) and Vinod SHETTY (2006), an advocate for human rights in Mumbai and member of the Young Professional Collective, also suggests. The IT industry has immense significance in India, and call-centres are seen as part of it. While the Indian middle class in general is seen as the motor of modernization by various authors (e.g. VARMA 1999), recently DESHPANDE (2003) or FERNANDES (2000) have pointed out that Indian IT workers—both those who are working in India and in the diaspora—have gained the upper hand over the definition of “Indianess” itself. Therefore the question of call-centres and their social implications are widely discussed in India today.

John and Jane: Working in an Indian Call-Centre

In his documentary, Ahluwalia shows us impressions of a call-centre as a workplace, a world of its own, somehow disconnected from the world “outside” India. We get a feeling of what it means for the call-centre agents to work in night shifts in Mumbai in an almost clinically clean office, surrounded by the symbols of American culture such as the flag and talking to Americans the whole night. “Glen,” “Sydney,” “Osmond,” “Nikki,” “Nicholas” and “Naomi” are answering service calls from American consumers or try to sell products by phone for American companies, the body is in India, but the mind is overseas. In the beginning one anonymous call centre agent describes this situation when he says: “It’s great to speak to the Americans by phone. I have the feeling that I am *in* America, talking to Americans. They are so nice.” In the following we will see that this feeling of actually being in America while calling is one important facet of the experience of the call centre agents.

The transformational dynamic the work in the call-centre develops, affects all three dimensions of meaning construction: the time dimension (1), the spatial dimension (2) and the social dimension (3).

(1) The most obvious changes or even challenges the agents are facing are related to the time dimension. Their shifts end when night is falling in America and the day is starting in India. When they go home and try to sleep, the “Maximum City” Bombay (MEHTA 2004) is awake, making sleeping very difficult. As a result they are always tired and their rhythm of life is disconnected from that of their family and friends. That means that they live in a different time zone from that of their every day surroundings. This of course implies an alienation from their every day world, too. The commonly shared experiences with their social surroundings become fewer and fewer; their reality seldom overlaps with that of the others at all.

(2) The same division can be observed with regard to the two spaces the agents are living in. Sydney puts it this way: After a whole night shift you are *back* in India. And Nicholas later tells us that he wishes he could stay in the centre and not have to go out into this “hassle dazzle” at all. Similarly, Osmond expresses his admiration for the perfect organisation of the call center as one of the things he most likes. In fact, he adopted the precise organisational structure of the call centre for his whole life, planning 24 hours of his day. It follows that one can assume that the call centre is conceptualised by the agents as exactly the opposite of what they consider to be Indian or Indianness. To explain to the Indian agents the customs and habits of buying and selling in America, one of the coaches who is teaching in the call center all about America makes the students compare Indian vegetable markets with shopping facilities in America. In comparison to the image of crowded and chaotic Indian markets she shows them photos of American supermarkets, endless rows with a huge variety of products, neatly piled up, everything shining clinically. This comparison of the places seems vividly to sum up the images behind the statements of Sydney, Osmond and Nicholas. On the one side the image of a systematic, well organised, rich, modern, clean and beautiful place called America, reproduced in the call centre reality, and on the other side the “hassle dazzle” of India.

The interesting fact however, is that the call centre can then be seen as an “in-between” space: Although not located in America itself, it seems to be a perfect copy of the country, at least for the centre agents, as none of the six persons have ever been abroad, let alone been in America. In any case it is a place completely different from the daily life of the agents and their experiences and living conditions. Sydney’s statement of being back in India after a shift has to be seen in this context. In consequence, the call centre as an in-between space is like a “virtual space shuttle” which the agents enter every evening; placing them in another world altogether (compared to the daily life of India outside) most of the time of their time awake and even while sleeping. We are told that they also dream of the call centre, answering calls in their dreams, even moving their fingers to type while sleeping. And Sydney tells us that while lying in bed, he always thinks about the last call: Was it a good call? Did he mess up something? That means as a consequence, that the agents spend most of their time actually in a space that is disconnected from everything that might have been around them before joining the call centre: their Indian daily life. And of course the *comparison* is always in their mind.

It is therefore surely not by chance that transitional stages and times like waking and sleeping are shown in the documentary, situations of transition of the consciousness where the agents have to find themselves back in one reality that has not much in common with that one they spend most of their time in. After waking up they are back in their noisy, hot and small flat, the old fashioned furnishings and equipment, the restrictions of a family, the lack of understanding of their situation, the demands that might let them flee their homes once again like Glen. With regard

to the spatial dimension, a clarification of the description given above is necessary. While the minds or the consciousnesses of the agents may be in America while calling and speaking to Americans the whole night, their bodies are *not* in India (in the sense of the chaotic “hassle dazzle” that seems to represent India in the images of the agents, especially in comparison to America), but in the in-between space of the call centre. I will come back to this later while analysing the case of Naomi.

(3) The most far-reaching consequences of becoming a call centre agent and working and living under these specific conditions can be assumed with regard to the social dimension. In the call centre, the agents were trained in all aspects of their job. Speaking English is a must for the agents of course, but the real challenge is to speak like Americans. To achieve this goal, teachers from the US were brought to India. Sydney speaks so fast that even one American customer is not able to understand what he is offering him, and Nicolas admires the way Americans speak English and feels sorry that he will never be able to speak like that. When we meet Naomi, the Gujarati girl, she is speaking with a Midwest accent, and even Glen, the only introduced agent, who hates his job and the call centre, has adopted American slang (including saying “fuck” as often as possible). All of them also speak English outside the call centre now. The language is a sign and symbol of the transformation of the consciousness of the agents. Nicholas tells us that earlier, he used to talk in Hindi mostly, but after entering the call centre, he changed to English: “English started coming into me, an American feeling that I started to have. That culture has gone into me.”

To make sure that is exactly what happens, the agents were trained in many aspects of the American way of life apart from the language. When they enter the centre, they pass a map of America, decorated with the flag and famous slogans such as “Don’t mess with Texas!”. They study advertising brochures, catalogues and photos of shopping malls, repeat nursery rhymes and learn the values of the average American man and woman, John and Jane, which are individualism, achievement and success, patriotism, privacy, progress and striving for happiness according to the coach. The goal of this training is obvious: to be able to sell to Americans, the call centre agents should not only talk like them, but also think like them. The goal is a transformation of the individuals, eliminating certain Indian habits and ways of thinking and taking over a schematic and simple version of Americanism that is offered by the call centre company and which cannot be questioned by the agents because they have never been to the US. Therefore the process of giving these employees new, American names is an excellent symbol for the transformation of the Indian agents. They should become just like “John and Jane,” the average American man and woman, those people to whom they sell the products by phone, and should suggest to the customers that they are talking to compatriots. Therefore, when the documentary starts and we hear one woman introducing herself with “my name is John Doe,” it sounds like a hint for the extent to which the agents should transform their personalities. As explained later, in

America an unidentified dead body is called John Doe—another fact of the American everyday world the Indian agents are learning.

Inventing Identities in Transition

But the agents fill their “average American” identities with life and personality apart from the sterile image the call centre is offering. And as shown in the course of the movie, they also start using these names outside the call centre, taking certain parts of this world with them: the culture that has gone into them. They transform the virtual personality developed only for economic purposes into a lively part of their identity. In consequence my suggestion is that the emerging identity of the agents is neither an American one nor do they stay “Indians,” but that they develop an identity that is as much transitional as the in-between space of the call centre itself and directly connected to its specific working conditions and lifestyle.¹ In the following one could say that they are not getting Americanised but “Indian call-centreised.”

The meaning of the term “transition” or “transitional” has to be defined here. When talking about transition, it is not suggested that there are somehow stable states—like being an Indian or being an American—and that through a certain process an individual crosses from one form to another. Instead transition has become a permanent fact and condition of identity constructions in modernizing societies. Just as gender has become a matter of negotiation and sub-differentiations (REDDY 2007) and the range of sexualities goes far behind a “Third Gender” (CHAKRAVORTY 2007), identity is dynamic and unstable. As a result, the individuals have to oscillate between different frames of their everyday world permanently while observing themselves and re-constructing their identities. The same is true for the division into a virtual and a real world. In a commercial for Indian call centres shown in the documentary, the slogan is: “Call centres have made the virtual world into reality.” It was created with regard to the fact that Indians now sell insurance to people in America. But developments and changes provoked through the possibilities of the new media as shown in the documentary go far beyond this, up to the point where the division of the virtual and the real itself becomes questionable. If employees in India doing “virtual” jobs, supported by the internet, people in Europe or America might lose their job in “reality.” If a scientist joins a subgroup for a specific research question via internet, he might get “real” information, publications or invitations for congresses. Managers join weekly internet conferences and may never meet in reality but their decisions can change the reality of many people completely etc. And no one can decide on the basis of some objective criteria whether the friends a teenager has found in his internet community are less “real” friends than those he meets at the bus stop.

¹ One should not forget that the conditions in Indian call centres are very specific and much worse than in other countries.

Especially when it comes to identity constructions, the influence of the images delivered through the media cannot be overestimated, and the division between the real and the virtual world erodes. As a consequence, identity construction is in permanent transition for those living under the conditions of a modern media society. Living in transitional states itself is a characteristic of this society. This becomes extremely problematic if the different living worlds get into competition with each other and one is seen as inferior in comparison to the others. This leads to the schizophrenic situation where the individuals would prefer one of the options but have to live in the transition, have to divide their lives and live at least partly in worlds they despise. The call centre agents are however an extraordinary and explicit example for constructing identities under the conditions of transitions, and a creative way of dealing with the demands of the very different worlds and frames can be seen.

When we look at the six agents introduced in the documentary, unquestionably a certain “Americanisation” in the sense the call centre rhetoric is suggesting can be observed. To start with Glen, the only one who is very unhappy with his job, even he has taken over some ideas of the American dream—although this dream is most probably a universal dream today. Instead of wasting his time as a telephone operator he wants to become a model, modelling for Dolce and Gabana or Gucci. In his free time we see him hanging around with friends drinking beer in a bar or smoking drugs in the lonely places of Mumbai, sitting on the bonnet of the car and thinking about humiliating his boss by having a sexual affair with his wife. It appears that he has taken over some of the less wanted American habits and lifestyles. Glen is the only one who expresses very openly the feeling of being humiliated by the work in the call centre. Sydney also dislikes his job and thinks that he could do “something better.” He loves to dance and dances for entertainment at parties and teaches other boys. Most certainly he thinks of himself as a professional dancer. The documentary shows Sydney strolling in a fancy shopping mall comparable to those in the pictures from America, looking for t-shirts and suits he cannot buy but flirting with the idea of doing so. He wants the shop assistant to believe that he could buy something, if he would like to, and of course he goes for American brands. Sydney describes the enormous effects of work in night shifts in a call centre: “All I can think about is work. All I do is work. All people I meet are working people, the same people as me” (i.e. call-centre agents). The consequences for his personality are obvious: even though Sydney does not like the job, the job has taken over and is dominating his thinking.

With Osmond, we meet a person who is dedicated to the American company Amway and the “American values” as taught in the call centre. He has organised every hour of his life in a time table, and everything in the present is subordinated to his future goal of becoming a millionaire. He listens to coaching tapes, reads self-help literature with titles like “The Magic of Believing” and has pictures of products on his walls such as a motorbike and a villa with dates on it: on the 25th October 2005, he will own the bike, and on the 26th October 2006 the villa. “No

one can stop me,” is his slogan. He and Naomi connected the call centre directly with America. America, in his view, “has always been ahead of all nations,” in contrast to India, which he considers to be very uncivilised in some places. As everyone who goes to the US becomes rich in his view, his goal is to get there. Osmond expresses directly that his personality has completely changed through the call centre. Before he worked there, he was “very negative,” “a minus,” now he considers himself as a “plus.” The call centre is his road to success and has taught him the necessary skills and experiences to become rich, the only goal he mentions.

Nikki, too, thinks that she has changed dramatically through the work in the call centre. She says that when she came to the call centre, she was introduced to a new person: herself. She excels there and has discovered an ability to be successful and at the same time useful for other people, as for her calling people means to help them: “You just want to give.” For Nikki, the call center is a place of love and “like a family.” Similar to Osmond, she is an orphan, what leads Osmond to say that Amway is like a mother to him: “A mother cares.” “Everything I have missed in life (like family) I got in the call centre,” states Nikki. She seems to be religious and express her belief that god will always look after her. In her free time, she goes to a Christian church, the praying led by white women.

From Nicholas we have already heard that he would prefer to live in the call centre to avoid the “hassle dazzle” outside and that through the English language, an American feeling was instilled into him. This culture has gone “into” him. Nicholas is the only one who expresses what seems to underlie the statements and feelings of many of them: “I don’t want to be an Indian any more.” He met his wife in a call centre, but now her shift has changed, so she works by day and Nicholas at night. In between they meet for 20 minutes in a mall next to her call centre, eating in a fast food restaurant.

Body in Transition: The Case of Naomi

With the case of Naomi, I want to point out the role the body has in these transitional processes. Until now aspects concerning the body have been only marginally touched. Although such aspects are implicit in the other cases, too, Naomi can be seen as a kind of cumulation of transformations and is as such appropriate for a more detailed analysis.

Naomi is the last agent we come to know in the documentary of Ahluwalia and embodies the ultimate of his picture about the alienated employees. She has transformed herself and her body nearly completely into a new, non-Indian being with blond curls, lightened skin and Midwest American accent. Even her eyelashes are bleached and she refuses mascara when advised by a make-up assistant in a shopping mall—it is obvious that she is very proud of this detail of her appearance. Of course Naomi also reports that she has changed completely after her training for the call centre. Now, she is “totally hip, totally different from all the other Indian girls,” and the boys especially want to know her. When they see her, she reports, “they are like asking: Where do you come from?” Naomi enjoys this thought so

much that she relishes it a second time. “Where do you come from?”, expresses all her strangeness, her exoticness and difference, as the answer is certainly not “from India” but from America. “I am totally very Americanised,” she states, and that she is “very much into today’s world” which most probably means in the modern, Americanised world and not in the crowded Indian street we see her strolling, being asked something here and there by the boys hanging around as it is not possible to overlook her. Naomi is obviously enjoying the result of her efforts for her outfit very much. She expresses a great satisfaction with herself and loves to be “just me,” “be myself” and “recall on myself,” as she says. Together with Nikki, who has developed a deep belief in her god, Naomi is the only one who lives fully in the here and now and lives her life as it is with pleasure.

In consequence of the thoughts underlying the question “where do you come from?”, Naomi declares and repeats seriously: “Don’t mistake me for anything else, I am totally naturally blond. I want to make it officially right that I am totally naturally blond.” The contradiction to what every one can see—her facial skin looked somehow burned—seems not to bother her. In her perspective, Naomi, as she has created herself, is obviously a naturally blond girl. The last shot with her makes unquestionably clear how serious she is with her statements. Standing in a discotheque, smoking a cigarette and drinking a beer she explains her philosophy: “I am looking for an ideal man. My ideal man should be just like me, a light guy. Blondes get attracted by blondes, I believe that. That’s really natural. A natural tendency that happens.” The camera then swings round and we see Naomi dancing, the only blonde in a crowd of black hair.

Person, body and consciousness—a theoretical differentiation

How could such a radical transformation of the identity, and in Naomi’s case also of the body, be explained? And how can the dynamics and processes be described that result into self constructions like these of the call centre agents? Who are the “actors” in this interplay? To offer an interpretation, a theoretic framework is needed that takes the individuals and their perspectives and meaning constructions seriously on the one side and avoids pathologizing them on the other. I want to propose the theoretical differentiations between the concept of person, body and consciousness worked out by Niklas LUHMANN (2008) for a further analysis.

Luhmann’s systems theory (LUHMANN 1987) conceptualises systems such as social (families, societies etc.) and psychic systems (“human beings”) as autopoietic systems, which means that they are self-referential and link their operations only to their own earlier operations: they reproduce themselves by their own operations in consequence. This implies that they are closed systems, and nothing from outside can intervene. Changes are then always self-made changes; these systems can observe their environment of course and can also orientate their operations in accordance with these observations. But still these operations are based on the observations of the system itself and not on the “world outside.” Social systems and psychic systems are structurally coupled during the course of

evolution and as such are interdependent. Each of them provides necessary performances for the other. The basic system maintaining operations of social systems is communication—a social system has to link communications to earlier communications and communication must go on to maintain the system. The basic operation of psychic systems is thoughts: thoughts have to be linked to earlier thoughts and the consciousness can only continue through thoughts. As the focus here is on the self conceptions of the agents—the way they manage to oscillate between the different framed worlds they live in—and the changes of their conceptions due to the specific constellation of the work in the call centre, in the following I will focus first on psychic systems.

To generate an own unity and to maintain it, any system has to differentiate itself from its environment. It has to discriminate between itself and the rest of the world. Everything that is not conceptualised as part of the system belongs to its environment, like a baby has to learn that it is not identical to its mother. In the course of time, every system develops certain structures or patterns while observing and constructing itself and its environment to simplify the process of self constitution. The way a system differentiates itself from its environment constitutes its individuality, its uniqueness: that's me! For the psychic system, normally the body serves as a demarcation line between it and its environment. However in the systems theory approach, consciousness as a basic operation of human beings and the body is *not* a single entity, also consciousness cannot detach itself from its body. Whenever and wherever the body is moving, it has to follow. Because of this consciousness develops right from the beginning in identification with the body (LUHMANN 2008). The human organism is a symbiosis of many autopoietic systems then, but consciousness constructs them as a unity and observes its own body as a priority. Only through this observation and through clues it gains from it, can it develop its own identity. The body therefore is existential for consciousness and its observations, but not identical to it. Identity as a consequence is an achievement of consciousness, a unity construction consisting of itself and the body. The term identity is consequently used with regard to this definition.

The difficulties start with any social situation. Consciousness cannot be communicated, and identity cannot be communicated, either. In addition very often it is not necessary to notice someone as a unique individual with all the resulting uncertainties in a communication, or on the contrary this would make certain communication and social processes (such as teaching or working) impossible. Therefore in communication the psychic system is often reduced to the form of a "person." Persons are a certain form to regulate social interactions and to observe individuals in a focused and reduced way. Observing someone as a person means to attribute a specific behaviour and enable a set of expectations. It reduces the expected repertoire of behaviour and simplifies social interaction as one does not have to take into consideration the whole individual but only some specific aspects of it. Typically in any professional setting individuals are observed as persons: A teacher observes his students in their roles as students and reduces them

accordingly to this role, from a colleague in the office one can expect a certain behaviour, and when we meet our tax consultant he is not supposed to ask us about our eating habits like a physician probably is. All this makes social interaction easier and enables communication that does not have to take individual uniqueness into account. The observation as person therefore serves only the self organisation of social systems and not any psychological needs. But this in return does not mean that the person has no relevance for the psychic system.

Observing someone as a person helps the psychic systems to know which restrictions can be expected in social interactions and which restrictions they have to follow. They also make it possible for the psychic systems to experience these restrictions by themselves. "The consciousness to be a person gives the psychic system a social OK for normal situations" (LUHMANN 2008, p. 146, translation by I.C.), it knows how to act and behave. In cases of deviation the pattern of persons gives the psychic system a guideline of how much deviation can be absorbed as confusion. The psychic system "notifies if it gets into trouble with itself as a person and has the possibility to search for ways out" (LUHMANN 2008, p. 146, translation by I.C.). In any case of trouble, in cases where the psychic system observes itself in deviation to itself as a person, many strategies to overcome the discrepancy are possible. An interesting perspective here includes the body into the relationship of psychic system (or consciousness) and person. A body can become a person or at least an important part of it, for example as a model or a professional sportsman. In case of confusion or trouble, if the body cannot fulfil the expectations for example, the psychic system can dissociate itself from the body: I have lost the match, but I am still a smart guy! Coming back to Naomi and the call centre agents the question here is now, whether in return a person can demand for a certain body and what happens if a deviation between consciousness, person and body or between different concepts of person occurs.

Getting into trouble with the identity construction: Strategies for overcoming paradoxical situations

After these short theoretical clarifications, the trio of consciousness, person and body now can be used to analyse the difficult identity construction by the call centre agents. The situation occurs that consciousness has to manage the fragile oscillation between very different frames of communicating and acting. There is the specific image of America, the virtual space-shuttle call-centre to sit and work in and India's every day world to sleep and live in.

As described, one goal of the training in the call centre is to change the habits and behaviour of the agents in a specific way to guarantee better selling results for the company. In accordance with the theoretical definition we can say that the agents are observed and addressed as persons in the call centre. The common shape of the person "call centre agent" has a specific set of competencies, behaviour, attitudes, language etc. This person is John and not Raju and Jane and not Gajatri. John or Jane should act and speak as much *like* an American on the phone as

possible, should act as persons “as if” they would be Americans. But at the same time, he or she is definitely not supposed to *be* an American. Their working conditions and payment are Indian. The American values taught in the call centre like privacy, individualism and striving for happiness are not valid or intended for the Indian employees. Otherwise taking the image of America seriously, they obviously would not let them be exploited like they do, but would act individualistically and uncontrollably, and of course they would be much more expensive for the call-centre. In consequence, the expectations related to the person of a call centre agent are to be Indians who act professionally as if they are Americans, sitting with their bodies in the in-between space of the call centre.

Evidently this is not what the agents seem to experience. Their construction of their person deviates from that of the call centre. The possibilities of the new media to experience closeness apart from great geographical distance and intervene into processes thousands of kilometres away in real time supports the feeling of disconnection of the actual whereabouts or at least marginalizes the importance and relevance of the actual placement. Even more, consciousness is led by the experience of actually being in America. Instead of a passive reception of the offered contents and images as with TV, the agents interact many hours a day with Americans and intervene in their lives while changing certain conditions for them through the internet. Additionally, as the agents describe in the documentary, their consciousness is changing due to their work. Even when they are “back” in India after a nightshift like Sydney has said, their thoughts stay occupied with the calls, the centre and their image of America. They use their American names or at least the language outside the call centre. They are dressed as Westerners and behave in a manner that is adjusted to their image of America. All this can be interpreted in that way that, firstly their concept of their person is one other than that which is functional for the call centre and, secondly that the differentiation between the self as a person and their identity construction is vanishing. More and more the person has to be included and extensively recognised by their consciousness while creating its identity conception. Now, they *are* John and Jane.

The assumption here is, that the psychic systems have to handle a paradoxical situation when the differentiation between person and identity conception becomes more and more dissolved on the one side, but the expectations and demands regarding their person and their identity from their environment stay different: Be an American, but stay Indian. Act and speak according to a culture that is taught in the call centre, but live your daily life in another culture that is described as inferior. Talk about the snow in the morning in Colorado without knowing what snow feels like. Be Jane, but do not expect as Gayatri to live like Jane in her American world or to be treated like her. The identity conceptions of the consciousnesses have to cope with this paradox situation. As a consequence, the psychic system does not get in trouble with itself as a person as stated in the Luhmann citation, but has difficulties to dissociate the person from the identity

conception and is additionally confronted with different concepts of person and identity by its environment.

How to live with a body in a transitional state?

In a certain way, the agents have to cope with these contradictory demands. But what, if consciousness is no longer coincident with the body? What, if the body is observed in a growing deviation to consciousness?

As stated, consciousness develops right from the beginning in identifying with the body and the body is existential for consciousness and its observations. Therefore it is consequent when the body gets involved in a solution for the paradoxical situation. Osmond and Naomi, most probably not by chance the two agents which identify the most with the call centre and especially with America, are seeking for a body-inclusive solution. Osmond actually wants to go to the U.S. If he were to live in the U.S., acting and behaving like an American would be the most normal thing of course. He would be one of them, and the discrepancy between feeling like an American in America and being one would disappear. He could reconcile his identity constructions with the observations and expectations of his environment. So going to the U.S. is his destiny and the here and now is only a waiting period which should be used best for preparation exercises.

Naomi however is using a different strategy instead of fleeing the now and here. She does not talk about migrating like Osmond, and she also does not want to live in the call centre, the proposed strategy of Nicholas to cope with the conflicting demands. Like Osmond Naomi no longer differentiates between herself as a person and her identity construction. The person has become an important part of her self concept or even the most important source for her identity. For doing the job in the call centre it would have been sufficient to adapt the consciousness to the American context while calling, as trained, and to change to the context of origin after leaving the centre. But Naomi has adopted everything to her call centre avatar, and in consequence her body has also been changed.

Naomi's strategy to reconcile the observations and experiences of her consciousness with the body is to adjust the body to the identity conception. With the blond hair and light skin her consciousness can harmonize its observations of the body with its conception of the self. In this perspective she is indeed "totally naturally blond," as it is most obvious that her identity as an Americanised, modern girl needs an expression, a sign visible for everyone, especially for herself. Otherwise, the difference between her consciousness and her body would have been much too big. No one would see who she is, would recognize her in the way she wants to be recognized, would ask: Where do you come from?

With this strategy she is an extraordinary example of what it means to live in a transitional state, using the body as means of transition, too. In times where the body can be created or recreated in many aspects due to new techniques or treatments, it has become nearly as available to changes and adoptions as anything else. After the death of god and that of man (Foucault), the body remains as a

resource for creating meaning (WULF 2008). Sometimes even an obsession with regard to the thought of an improvement of the body is observable today (POSTER 2008). In consequence, the body can be adjusted to the demands of the consciousness. In the case analysed here, the consciousness, the body and the person have been harmonized to a unity, a kind of an artificial product named Naomi to overcome the paradoxical situation.

One last word about the framing. The stage for this artificial product is however Naomi's Indian whereabouts and not like in the case of Osmond, related to the future and another country. Naomi does not want to become someone else in an invented future. It is her Indian context that makes her something very special. It is there that the people ask her: Where are you from? Only within this Indian frame she can enjoy her efforts. She has made herself comfortable in the stage of transition.

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