ENCOUNTERING THE ETHNIC STEREOTYPES ABOUT THE ROMANIES

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Abstract. *The author has put forward the hypothesis that positive and negative stereotypes and prejudices are the very core of ethnocentrism. His main idea is that the ethnic stereotypes are a form of symbolic or cultural segregation. Their better understanding is one of the necessary presumptions for multiethnic and intercultural society. The Romanies are "the European pariahs" and "our Blacks"; there are many very different stereotypes and strong prejudices against them that, regarding the historical continuity as well as their territorial spreading, range from extremely negative to extremely positive ones. The author considers the most characteristic of them, in both the diachronic and the synchronic perspective. Their investigation explains in an interesting way the relations between Them and Us.*

Some recent studies have shown that the Romanies are most frequently described as gifted for music, vigorous, hospitable (positive heterostereotypes) as well as as noisy, quarrelsome, dirty, lazy (negative heterostereotypes). The positive Romany autostereotypes imply that they are gifted for music, hospitable, religiously and ethnically tolerant. Such tolerance is extremely important for multiculturalism. Many stereotypes are not enough empirically based. As for the Romanies that we personally know, there are no negative stereotypes. One environmental action in the Novi Sad area has shown that it is not the Romanies who are dirty but their living conditions. All the Romanies are not poor; rather, there are rich Romanies, even the richest in the settlement, but the majority of them have impoverished more than others (as is the case of Rumania).

Key words: *Ethnocentrism, Ethnic Stereotypes of Romanies, Romany Autostereotypes*

"It is good to know something about other peoples' customs in order to make sound judgements about one's own and to aboid thinking that all that is contrary to our taste is funny and meaningless as habitually done by those who have failed to see anything" - Rene Descartes, *Discurses on the Method*

What lies at the very core of ethnocentrism as a backbone of nationalist narow-mindedness and chauvinist exclusiveness are stereotypes both positive and negative ones. The ethnic stereotypes are not to be regarded as simple and naive jokes since they can easily develop into social prejudices justifying various forms of discrimination and segregation including some horrifying genocides as in the case of the Romanies. In the last five or six centuries the encounter of, on one hand, the European - first feudal and later civil - society and Western civilization including our traditional culture and, on the other hand, the Romanies' ethnicity as an outstandingly nomadic tribal and exiled society with quite oriental-oriented culture has given rise to almost innumerable and very diverse racial and ethnic stereotypes and prejudices about the "European pariahs" and "our Blacks." Facing the existing prejudices, we have decided to get to know them much closer, to systematize them and question their empirical, logical and value basis as well as their modern transformations. In the research it has turned out that their genesis and functioning are exceptionally edifying for the study of this inter-relation within the European space as well as on its social and cultural periphery. What has all of a sudden appeared in front of us is not just a new picture about who They are but who We are as well. What was it like, what is the nature of our societies, cultures and personalities like? What is so peculiar about Their ethnic identity? Can we ever free ourselves from being enslaved by stereotypes or can we alleviate at least their influence? And we can, how? What are the potentials as well as prospects of multiethnicity and interculturality in modern society regarding the ethnic stereotypes about the Romanies?

Before proceding to a hypothetical and analytical discussion about the stereotypes and prejudices we should stress so far that in our country their social-psychological research has gone very far while, at the same time, there are serious debates and announcements of the oncoming research in the sociological, ethnological, political, legal and literary sciences (See References). It is thought that the sterotypes, prejudices and superstitions are sub-species of false beliefs. It is emphasized that the concept of the stereotype is in its meaning much wider than the prejudices since it also comprises them; in other words, it is said that the prejudices are a special or maybe the most characteristic case of stereotype. On the other hand, there are other opinions that both the ethnic stereotypes and the ethnic distance represent special issues within social prejudices, that is, they represent their forms and indicators.In fact, while in some authors' opinion, the stereotypes are incomplete inductions and unjustified generalizations among which at least some of them contain a part of truth on the basis of a particular experience, for others, they are an expression of the prejudices' rationalizatioon since they are, despite being false and incomplete beliefs, fairly persistent mostly due to their being related to the prejudices. The prejudiced way of thinking preceeds reasoning; therefore, the prejudices are an unthoughtful judgment or a false deduction rather than an incomplete induction since they reject opposite or new experiences as untypical cases or exceptions that confirm the rule. The prejudices are the statements that exist or do not exist while the stereotypization is neutral, at least at first sight, though many studies have shown that the sterotyped estimation hides the attitudes, that is, the prejudices, while, at the same time, some of them imply some partial truth. Unlike the sterotypes that may also include a positive attitude, the prejudices always imply a negative or even inimical attitude (though some authors claim that there are positive prejudices as well); they show greater resistance to the change as well as a more evident action impact. The stereotypes as delusions are more

easily eliminated by experience and check-up while for the elimination of the prejudices that are not experience-based it is necessary to re-structure deeper instinct-affective and motivation structures of the personality. If a prejudice is deeply-rooted in someone then any attempt to change his attitude and behavior appears poor in its powerlessness and inefficiency. In social psychology the greatest attention is paid to the study of negative ethnic and racial prejudices.

As a psychological phenomenon the ethnic stereotypization comprises three components and functions, namely, the cognitive, the affective and the connative ones. The cognitive component makes observation and getting along much easier due to the need for categorization and typization in the process of stereotypization; in this respect the ethnic sterotypes are very simplified, rigid and wide-spread views. The stereotyped estimation is habitual, enduring and rigid repetition of the false images, words or procedures with an almost schizophrenic persistance in all the relevant situations (the term is anyway picked up from psychiatry). From the standpoint of formal logic, it is a judgement which is not empirically and logically based and which is generalized to all the group members with neither proper justification nor basis. If the ascribed characteristics are desirable, then we speak about positive stereotypes accompanied with positive feelings of sympathy and readiness to do some actions benevolent for a given group, while it is the opposite with the negative sterotypes; in the case of the existence of both the positive and the negative stereotypes the emotional attitudes including the action itself are ambivalent or neutral. In the case of negative conceptions and a negative emotional attitude there is willingness to undertake inimical acts and then we speak about (negative) ethnic stereotypes. Therefore, the prominent negative steretyped estimatation makes the sterotype move towards the prejudice. The autostereotypization refers to one's own group while the heterostereotypization refers to some other one.

In Gordon Allport's opinion (1954), there are five aspects and degrees of prejudice, namely: 1) gossiping, stressing only negative aspects or stereotyped estimation in which the members of a group or nation are represented as lazy, cunning, cowardly, dirty, evil, etc, 2) avoiding any contacts and creating a social distance, 3) discrimination in various spheres of life by which particular rights of the group in an inferior position are deprived, 4) physical attacks as a transition from the verbal to the body aggression and 5) extermination (pogroms, genocide, ethnocide).

Obviously, the stereotypes and the prejudices are not only psychic but also social and cultural phenomena. The main characteristic of the prejudice does not spring so much from false, logically and empirically unfounded conclusion-making but from its social function that is regarded as the most important one. It assumes the preservation of in-group cohesion as well as the making of the borders towards other groups. The prominent in-group cohesion activates out-group distancing according to the Us - Them model. The inter-group dynamics and the conflict versus the outside strengthens the group from the inside. At the same time, it is important to stress that the power relations are reproduced not only towards the outside but towards the inside according to the hierarchical line especially in the totalitarian societies. Let us remind ourselves that the racial and the national prejudices were a favorite means of spreading neofascist propaganda. With the ethnic and the racial prejudices the dynamics of the group inclusion and exclusion is as a rule accompanied with the tendency to regress to the primitive forms of aggressiveness in the case of deepening social crises and increasing inter-group tensions. In this case the

instinctive mechanisms are activated as well as the principles of action of an expressive and aggressive mob. The prejudices are more expressed in the personalities that are unsure of themselves and frustrated. They are related to dogmatism, to the authoritarian personality and the need to find a scapegoat in the situations of a prominent social deprivation and threatened self-respect. This is especially manifested in a declining, regardless of how high, social status. Hoever, regarding the source and the intensity of their emotional and the connative components, the prejudices differ among themselves. The mildest ones as well as the easiest to suppress are those that come as a consequence of conforming to the group norms; then follow the ones springing from the traditional way of life and the deeply-rooted traditional attitudes (for example, towards the Blacks in the USA or towards the Romanies in our country and in Europe), while the most difficult ones derive from the authoritarian structure of personality. In Adorno's opinion, the authoritarian personality is a psychological basis of fascism. Some of the outstanding traits of such a personality are, among other things, xenophobia, rigid adherence to conventions, dogmatism and acceptance of rigid social hierarchy, emphasis on force and compulsion and strict punishment of the deviant while, at the same time, violation of the human freedoms and rights, etc.

It has already been stressed that the ethnic prejudices are a considerable social problem and that the fight against them is quite difficult or sometimes even futile. Still, it is recommended to do the following: 1) to make non-discriminatory legislature, 2) to introduce systematic informing about their non-justifiability, 3) to educate for tolerance, 4) to establish direct contacts, and, 5) to proceed to common solving of the problems within the same community. The improvement of the contacts between the two groups, that is, any intensification of interaction and communicatuon is a very important factor for an efficient change of the prejudiced views though only partially. The mutual sympathies are increasing but, still, if it is, for instance, found out that someone is not lazy, this refers only to the role of worker but it is not generalized to other situations. Only common efforts to solve the problems within the same community can uproot the prejudice (Rot, 1975: 390-392; Rejk – Edkok, 1978: 52-53). We would like to add that this implies a set of coordinated and integrated actions on the part of the civil society actors on the basis of dialogue and tolerance, multiethnicity and interculturality. That is why we are trying to observe the ethnic stereotypes as a form of symbolic or cultural segregation.

The ethnic stereotypes about the Romanies appear in their historical continuity in a wide range from the extremely negative (more frequent) to the extremely positive ones; they rarely emerge isolated and instead, they tend to be clustered with ambitions to characterize the whole ethnicity as an entity.

As an ethnic community the Romanies are even today surrounded with much prejudice and they were and still are the victims of the centuries-old stereotypes and prejudices that brought about incomprehensible hatred, xenophobia and genocide (*Politika,* 22, December, 1996:9). The question is "where such strong prejudices have sprung from, namely those that have never been swept away, eliminated or neutralized but instead, they have kept increasing in all the epochs and all the civilizations..." (*Krlo e romengo - Glas Roma,* November, 1982:3). As early as in the Byzantine anonymous satirical literature dating the fourteenth century the Romanies' stupidity, uncleanness and poverty were stressed (Mirga – Mruz, 1997: 20). In a dictionary dating the seventeenth century the Gypsies are defined as "wandering poor, vagrants and rakes who live on theft,

cunningness, robbery and cheating." The examination of the court archives reveals that the rumors were spread among the people that the Romanies were setting fire, stealing children and doing unspeakable terrors; the archives do not offer enough proofs that the accusations were justified, but still the widely-spread myth about their terrifying crimes was transferred to the late nineteenth century (Asseo, 1974: 50 and forward; Calember, 1984: 1299, 1304). In the Kikinda daily press "Orao" dating 31, August, 1886, the Gypsies are pejoratively spoken of as a Pharaon sect, while as their general characteristic it is said that they are fast, cunning, deceitful, witty, cheating, thieves and for this reason they are regarded as dangerous for the social life. In the following years as well the Kikinda daily press published articles decribing the Romanies as people who cheat, deceive, steal and kidnap though "our Gypsies of Kikinda have not … so far been like that" (Naša reč, br. 4/1939; Dejanac, 1997: 316).

"However, the Gypsies were also evil subjects as well. The dangerous traits that they had in all the countries they also had in Serbia, namely almost all of them were regarded as thieves, vagrants, deceivers, runaways from the tribute, criminals, murderers and all other kinds of criminals" (T. Đorđević, 1984, Book. 2: 326). "Under so hard living conditions, they had to develop, very early, even prior coming to Serbia, some of the traits that characterize them everywhere, namely: begging, theft, lie, inferior kind of work, despised and dirty jobs and so on" (Ibidem, Book. 3: 10). In making some other conclusions, however, this most distinghed of all our romologists as well as the world famous one is much more cautious and precise. Discussing the Gypsies and music he says: "Whether and how much these conclusions of mine can spread to other countries of ours except for Serbia, I cannot possibly tell since I have no available data" (Ibidem, Book 3: 39). "In view of the way the Gypsies were treated in other countries, they did not feel so bad among the Serbs... Even if they are Gypsies, they still have souls - that is what our farmers say... But, all in all, the Serb always considers the Gypsy as lower than himself" (Ibidem, Book. 3: 122). But this attitude was not the same in all the Serbian regions… "The primitive barren Western regions of the Serbian lands did not feel any need for Gypsy crafts and, thus, no need for them, either. In those parts they are absolutely scorned so that they are either totally absent or present just for a short period of time or there are only very few of them" (Ibidem Book. 3: 10).

Bora Kuzmanović (1992: 120-121) estimates that some generalized popular beliefs contain a part of the truth since they have been made on the basis of some experience and that some of these beliefs, on the basis of his own studies, are shared by T. Đorđević as well. For instance, he refers to such remarks as that playing is a general Gypsy gift, that the theft is a component part of their trade, that they are lazy workers who get tired easily, that they are not especially industrious, etc. But if some absolute generalization is made and if some traits are proclaimed as eternal and unchangeable - such as, for example, that begging is in thier blood, regardless of how rich they are - than we are dealing with a particular prejudice. Even science itself can contribute to the forming of stereotypes, Kuzmanoviћ implies, if it shows in a simplified way some tendencies and complex processes. Mirga and Mruz (1997: 4) stress that the scientists often approach the Romanies in an external way and that they share the beliefs and negative stereotypes about them, namely, those stereotypes that function in the widest possible scope. The conceptual means for their study has not been fully developed yet, as duly claimed by Radoslav Đokić in the preface of his book. Svenka Savić (1990: 33) also thinks that the

stereotyped understanding of the Romany way of living springs, to a large extent, from the estimation made regarding the West European or our traditional culture. Anyway, the word "Tsiganin" is of Greek origin (*anthiganen*) meaning "untouchable, dirty, pestilent" (*Politika*, 19. I 1995: 13). The Gypsies are calling themselves Romanies, while the Romany in their language means "man", "husband" while all the others, namely non-Romanies are called "gadja" which is an exclusive name with pejorative meaning "jerk, uncultivated, barbarian" (Encyclopedia Britannica, in PČESA, 1997: 65).

Mirko Barjaktarović (1997: 52), while partly summarizing the findings of Tihomir Đorđević, points in a very systematic way to a series of the most negative stereotypes about the Romanies in various European environments: "They have been considered as well as called not only wanderers and vagrants but also thieves, bandits, disease-carriers, water-poisoners and fire-setters. Sometimes they were accused of being someone's spies and dealers of forfeited money. The rumors were spread that these people steal other peoples' children and then blind or mutilate them so that they could make a better use of them in begging. Mothers scared their children with the Gypsies threatening that they would take them away and put them in their bags. It was said that they were some special species eating human flesh. What else was there to invent and ascribe to this unfortunate people? Since many of them were blacksmiths it cannot be anyone else but they who forged the spikes for probing Christ's body on the cross! Other rumors were spread that they were descendents of Cain (son of the first people, Adam and Eve) who killed his own brother! There were special laws and regulations issued against them". A few pages later it is added (p. 57): "The Gypsies are otherwise a clever and witty nation, shrewd and of keen senses. A long and troublesome history has made them somehow timid and naive, not so trusting towards others".

The writer Edhem Mulabdić (1910) felt in a brilliant way where the functionality of the Romanies' stereotypes really lies. He says: "What if there were not them at all? Who else would be an object of mockery for a richer world; who else would be suspected for the 'horses taken away", who would be the humiliated group of people that bears upon itself a mark of regression in the moral and the intellectual respect? Who else, but them, the Gypsies? It seems that they are made for all this. In our regions you will find enough people and families much poorer than any Gypsy home; still, our people would not mock someone's weakness or someone's moral or intellectual inferiority. However, to mock at the Gypsies is almost a fun and it is not a sin at all. The Gypsy himself has got used to it; neither does he know how to get angry nor will he ask for protection as a citizen; if he reacts to it, pretending to be offended, his words will again be turned into jokes and will increase the laughter. If a horse is stolen, it is first looked for among the Gypsies and then among those who have, to a great number, surpassed the Gypsies in this nasty craft... Well, this is the luck the Gypsies have found in our country regardless of the fact that some of them are as industrious as ants and as peaceful as lambs'. He also adds that "they are in general of very joyful and vigorous nature", that they spend time in singing, playing and dancing while their shortcomings are the use of obscene language and begging (M. Hadžijalagić, 1984: 1321-1322).

In contemporary socio-psychological and sociological research the qeustionnaires are used for determining the ethnic stereotypes as well as the ethnic distance towards the Romanies. In an examination done among the students of the final year of the secondary school in Zemun and Titograd (1977) The Romanies are, in the entire sample, ascribed

the following character traits: gift for music 85%, joyful 77%, vigorous 74%, untidy 70%, noisy 70%, dirty 65%, unthoughtful 57%, ready to steal 54%, resourceful 53%, lazy 50%, while somewhat below 50% described them as united, talkative, quarrelsome, turncoats, etc. The least frequent attributes ascribed to the Romanies are: aggressive, chauvinist, thrifty (4% each), good organizers, bloodthirsty, rough, stingy, noncommunicative, unhospitable (only 2% each). About ten years later (1986) the sample comprising the third year students of the secondary school in a Belgrade suburbia gave similar results only with lower values and to a somewhat different order, namely, the first place was still taken by gift for music, but only in 71%, while the attribute "dirty" rose up from the sixth to the second place (with the same 65%) while "lazy" moved up from the tenth to the forth place (59%). The attribute "united" does not appear any longer while more prominent places were taken by the attributes "uncultured in behavor" and "emotional." In the same year, namely, 1986, in the representative sample for the Serbian youth none of the attributes ascribed to the Romanies got more than 50%, that is, joyful 49%, lazy 41%, regressive 32%, united 20%, boastful 18%, peaceful 13%, hospitable 12%, treacherous 9%, pushers 6%. In all these examinations of the young there was a notable presence of both the positive and the negative stereotypes (though more negative ones) though this negative heterostereotype was considerably lower than the authors had expected (B. Kuzmanović, 1992: 121-123).

Srećko Mihailović (1996) has determined that in our country there is a tendency for further decreasing of the ethnic distance towards the Romanies, that 34% of the citizens have a favorable opinion about them unlike 34% having a negative one, that 37% of the citizens have a neutral opinion and that the Serbs place them at the forth place of the peoples close to them just behind the Russians, the Jews and the Macedonians (D. Đorđević - D. Todorović, 1999: 10). Is this preference for two Slavic and two persecuted peoples purely accidental? Or, in other words, are these two peoples just like centuries-old brothers and fellow sufferers showing prominent mutual intercultural potentials especially in view of the increasing distance towards them in the Central and in the east of Europe at the times when more and more frequent incidents limit the democratization processes in the given societies (Đilas, 1998: 164-167; Zamfir - Zamfir, 1993: 7, 156-200; Mirga – Mruz, 1997: 189)?

In the research dealing with the socio-cultural adaptation of the Romanies[1], that was carried out in the fall of 1999, among other places, in the South Banat (Novi Sad) county the questionnaire filled by 80 grown-up examined has led to the most frequent Romanies' autostereotypes - they are music-gifted, hospitable, religiously and nationally tolerant. It is understandable that all these are positive stereotypes, but it is of special importance to see that they reveal the Romanies' affinity for tolerance and interculturalism. However, it is interesting that the heterostereotypes about the Romanies are positive even to an exceptional degree; they insist on the Romanies being music-gifted, vigorous and hospitable. All this is then, with considerably lower values, followed by the attributes

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"noisy", "quarrelsome," "untidy", "regressive," "greedy", "turncoats." Here we should bear in mind a very rich Vojvodina tradition of mutiethnicity and interculturalism as well as the fact that the Romanies very gladly settle down in Novi Sad and its environment.

In the anthology entitled *My Tsigane - Romanies in Vojvodina* (PČESA, 1997) - that we had the honor to be one of the editors of - beside the common negative stereotypes, there may be found outstandingly positive sterotypes about the Romanies such as "a very vital nation, imaginative, clever, indepedent" (p. 6) or "shrewd, wise, joking, unobjectionable, openhearted, communicative and, when necessary, bitter in their talk" (p. 152) or good neighbors with mutual respect (p. 175) or excellent musicians but good farmers as well (p. 209), in addition to the remarks that there is less and less quarreling, fighting, stealing (p. 236) or that there used to be a lot of this but now it "is all gone" (p. 305), etc. However, at exactly this point we should stress two warnings given by Professor Aleksander Bećin. First of all, the Romanies today are a clearly differentiated ethnic group "regarding their language, way of life, property status, dwelling place, degree of integration and assimilation as well as the fact that "it is impermissible to apply any observed attribute or any other finding about the Romanies' life to the whole of their population" (99). Likewise, "it is very possible that, regarding alcoholism, cheating in trade, early smoking by children, fair deceits, smuggling, divorce, thefts and especially prostitution, the Romanies in general do not represent any prominent group comparing to the members of other nationalities" (102).

At a considerable sample comprising 245 secondary school students from Novi Sad, Zrenjanin, Kikinda and Futog, Sanja Treter Arsenijević in her diploma paper dating 1990 (teacher adviser Professor Kata Marjanović) found out that the most frequent stereotypes that the young people ascribe to the Romanies are: a thief, a lier, a dirty person, a smuggler, an uneducated person, a vagrant, etc. But the Romany they happen to know is not like that! Namely, about 50% of the young people stated that they had a Romany friend. And his or her character is the following: she or he is a good friend 50,4%, funny and joyful 18%, openhearted 10,3%, honest, fair, a good student 8,5%, sociable 7,7%, self-sacrificing 5,1%, while a poor student 4,3%, impetuous 2,6% and lazy, a liar, vulgar, aggressive – only 0,85% (PČESA, 1997: 120-121). Something similar regarding the motives for acceptance of the Romanies - those who have closer relations with the Romanies more frequently state their good characteristics - is written by other authors. Namely, the Romanies' children in the classroom are described as cute, interesting, joyful, non-aggressive, communicative, socialble (Kuzmanović, 1992: 125; Savić, 1990: 33-34).

A frequent stereotype is that the Romanies are dirty and untidy. The action carried out by the Ecological Movement of Novi Sad, together with a few other actors, in the Romany settlement of Bangladesh, in the spring of 1997 seems to deny it. The restored Romanies' settlement that used to be on the city damping has remained clean, tidy, preserved, with garbage containers even three moths after Nikola Aleksić wrote his paper (PČESA, 1997: 290-291). Accordingly, it is not the Romanies who are dirty but the conditions in which they live.

There is no outstanding stereotype stating that the Romanies are poor organizers but rarely would anyone accept that they are good organizers. The Romanies are experienced as a marginal group, a dis-aggregated collective, disorganized by poverty and misery, with the way of life incompatible with the modern or normal way of life. At the same time, they, in fact, function as an autonomous society with an increased degree of the

internal organization (Zamfir – Zamfir, 1993: 37). In that sense their activities such as collection of secondary raw materials and their sale, or various kinds of trade or begging as some sort of purchase, etc. can be more than well planned and organized.

If the Romanies are lazy and bad workers, it seems at least strange that such "non-workers" do the most difficult and dirtiest jobs that no one else wants to do and that the Romanies' children from the earliest age actively participate in doing some jobs (Maluckov, 1979: 16-17; PČESA, 1997: 99).

A similar or even worse fate would be that of the sterotype referring to the omnipresence of the Romanies' misery and poverty. There is a wide-spread belief that the Romanies' trades do not bring about large income since they are observed as petty traders and craftsmen or small framers or seasonal agricultural and construction workers or secondary raw material collectors or players (*Poljoprivredni kalendar*, N. Sad, 1997: 37). However, in "some villages around Pančevo some Romany families are among the wealthiest and most respected" (PČESA, 1997: 101). "The Romanies of Futog trade a lot with food and other articles and thus provide for all the Novi Sad green markets. Some of them are very rich or maybe even the wealthiest citizens of Futog. They have amassed a great fortune by trading with goods from Macedonia and by getting supplies for all the sea coast of the former Yugoslavia. The wealth of the Futog Romanies is confirmed by their luxurious and large houses as well as their business offices" (p. 194; see also 199-202). As for the buildings, one should see the gast-arbeiter and mostly Romanies' villages of Draginje in Mačva and Urovica in the Negotinska krajina county. The Romanies' wedding party to which the young couple was taken by the helicopter shocked the Romanian public. However, this is a rich minority while the majority is exceptionally poor comparing to the rest of the population with a very little hope that it will ever get out of the misery (Zamfir – Zamfir, 1993: 7-8).

Our definition of the ethnic stereotypes as forms of symbolic or cultural segregation requires the questioning of the relationship between, one hand, the Romany culture, and, on the other hand, the Oriental, our traditional and West European culture. In this paper, however, it can only be viewed in a brief outline.

If it has been determined in a Frommian way that "to be, not to have" is at the basis of the Romanies' philosophical view of the world (R. Đurić, 1987), then it actually means that the Romany culture functions as an oriental and not Western culture. Following the same line of thought, many differences between the Romany and the Western cultures can be derived from it (Mirga - Mruz, 1997). Svenka Savić (1990) has found out in an interesting way that this principle, as a cultural background, is subconsciously embedded in the Romanies' children understanding of the world. It seems that in the Romany culture in the system of making dirt (ritual cleanliness) the basic opposition is internal-external (clean-dirty, moral-immoral, cultural-natural, male-female, children-adults, the upper part of the body-the lower part of the body). By using the oppositon between the internal and the external body, cleanliness and dirt, the knowledge of the Romanies' culture can be much more extended (Mirga - Mruz, 1997; 84, 88-92, 153, 173-174). It is, for example, much easier to understand why one of the greatest insults in the Romany culture is to show to somebody one's naked back.

In our traditional culture -meaning, in our beliefs, sayings, jokes, customs - the Romanies take an important position. They are as "dark beings" representatives of the ancestors in the underworld cult; they are fortunate visitors and, in general, they bring "a

good morning luck"; the disease is "pushed" to the Gypsies; besides, they perform many roles that are connected with our pagan rites such as those of rain-makers or singers of traditional songs on the eve of St. Lazar, etc. Such cultural aspects are the cradle of the stereotypes since they reflect the deeply-rooted popular beliefs and, at the same time, the contribute to the formation of many differences and distances often in the mythological way (Zečević, 1973; Bandić, 1980; Vukanović, 1983; Karanović, 1995; PČESA, 1997; *Ciganski svet*). They are, therefore, representatives of the other-wordly demonic world opposed to our one; they are representatives of un-toil as an eternal God's punishment as well as of toil as a way of winning eternal salvation. The sinners *versus* the righteous ones, the dirty ones *versus* the clean ones, the deceitful and the cheaters *versus* the honest ones, that is the role they have to play.

The Romanies are the people at the margins of the European society, more precisely, they are the European peripheral society. Still, the fact is that this exceptionally tribal, nomadic and exiled society was always inside, not outside the European one or, more accurately, it was at a multitude of the margins of the local, legal and spiritual space. In the fifteenth century Europe the Romanies were not persecuted since they were subdued to the former ruling principle of the European society's tolerant mercy. The constitution of the indentured society at the time of the original accumulation of capital required collective condemnation of the vagrant community, its gathering economy and, all in all, of the wandering society of the poor that did not fit into the civil society. Intolerance and persecution including the progroms, were serving the purpose of affirming the order and the labor as social values (Mirga – Mruz, 1997; Asseo, 1974; Kalember, 1984).

The postmodern times are those of differences. The question is, though, whether this is also the time of dialogue and tolerance in a mutiethnic and intercultural society that we should all tend to regardless of how unsurpassable the obstacles leading to it may seem. The above-presented understanding of the ethnic stereotypes about the Romanies as forms of spiritual segregation makes us at least one step closer to what we are striving for.

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U SUSRETU SA ETNIČKIM STEREOTIPIJAMA O ROMIMA

Miloš Marjanović

Autor polazi od hipoteze da su pozitivni i negativni stereotipi i predrasude u samom jezgru etnocentrizma. Njegova centralna ideja je da su etničke stereotipije oblik simboličke ili kulturne segregacije. Njihovo bolje razumevanje je jedna od nužnih pretpostavki multietničkog i interkulturalnog društva. Romi su "evropske parije" i "naši crnci" i prema njima postoji čitavo mnoštvo vrlo različitih stereotipa i jakih predrasuda, u istorijskom kontinuitetu i širokom rasponu, od krajnje negativnih do krajnje pozitivnih. Autor razmatra neke od najkarakterističnijih, u dijahronijskoj i sinhronijskoj perspektivi. Njihovo istraživanje na interesantan način rasvetljava odnose između Njih i Nas. Neka skorašnja istraživanja pokazuju da se Romima najčešće pripisuju: smisao za muziku, temperamentnost, gostoljubivost (pozitivni heterostereotipi) i da su bučni, svadljivi, prljavi, lenji (negativni heterostereotipi). Pozitivni romski autostereotipi su: smisao za muziku, gostoljubivost, religijska i nacionalna tolerantnost. Takva tolerancija je izuzetno značajna za multikulturalizam.

Mnogi stereotipi nisu dovoljno iskustveno zasnovani. Nema negativnih stereotipa prema Romima koje lično poznajem. Jedna ekološka akcija u novosadskom arealu je pokazala da nisu prljavi Romi nego uslovi u kojima žive. Svi Romi nisu siromašni – postoje bogati Romi, neki od njih su najbogatiji u naselju, ali većina njih više osiromašuje nego drugi (slučaj Rumunije).

Ključne reči: *etnocentrizam, etničke stereotipije o Romima, romski autostereotipi*