

The theory of hybridity – the theory of culture

Especially in the 19th and 20th century hybrid identities were accused to contaminate national pureness. Hybrids were seen as a danger for the natural differences of human races. A look into the history book and this social understanding of national pureness can be fixed in several cultural areas: For example the time of National Socialism in Germany or the authority of the Europeans domineering over the Aborigines in Australia. The reproduction between the cultural races was prohibited in order to kill the inferior cultural minority in the particular territory. The term *hybrid* descends from sciences and describes a cross between different species of plants or animals, which provides a new species. Transferred to the cultural context this “new species” sets an end to exact cultural definition. Not only in the past hybridisation provides a fear of losing the cultural identity and changes the common understanding of culture.

In these days the term *hybrid* is a fixed expression describing human beings with a multicultural identity and self- understanding. It calls a cultural phenomenon of globalisation and pluralistic society. For example people with a migration background are counted to this cultural phenomenon as they are members of two or three nationalities and share several cultural knowledge. Homi K. Bhaba understands hybridisation as the fundament of modern society: That is the central idea of his book “The location of culture”. The author notices an emergence of new cultural forms from the period of multiculturalism. Bhaba’s work exploits and engenders moments of ambivalence that structures social authority. The Indian professor demands to rethink the question of identity, social classification and national affiliation. Therefore he provides the *theory of hybridity*.

In the following I explain the argument of Homi K. Bhaba and afterwards I discuss his thesis and think this theory further.

The author argues that since the time of colonialism - the time of transformation between the western civilisation and foreign societies- human subjects cannot be reduced on ethnic positions or homogenous concepts of identity. In fact cultural interaction and exchange provides interspaces, in which people create their identity in individual way. Between fixed cultural identification the interspaces are growing and providing a fluently undefined area. And the modern human being moves in those interspaces. In his book Bhaba mentions the exhibition “Sites of Genealogy” of the artist Renée Greens, who uses the stairs of a museum as a metaphor for interspaces.

I think this is a good image for understanding the theory of hybridity: The different floors are the cultural identification poles and the stairs are the link in between. People move in this undefined space and do not belong to a level and do not stay on one certain floor. Moreover they cannot leave their floor without encountering with another culture.

Furthermore I explain this theory with a historical fact and my personal experience with the phenomenon of hybridity in the South of India: Since the time of British colonialism Indians especially in the South of India live in a hybrid culture, they move at the stairs. On the one floor there is the traditional Indian culture like wearing the suit of Sari or being Hinduism but on the other hand the heritage of British culture, the European standard, influences the original Indian tradition: For example English replaces Hindi as the main language and drinking tea in the afternoon is a British habit. Therefore the Indians daily realize a hybrid culture mixed by British and traditional Indian elements.

In summary Bhaba's argument emphasizes that communication and interaction between the single cultures provides interspaces we should be aware of. This phenomenon is a fixed element of the modern world of globalisation.

In my essay about the theory of hybridity I would like to take the thought of the author and to continue thinking. I have to mention that my considerations concern the European culture as I am not able to judge over the cultural consciousness of people living in the non-western parts of world.

First of all, I do not agree with declaring the time of colonialism as the origin of hybridisation. I think communication and interaction between subjects are the basic elements of hybridisation and therefore the phenomenon has accompanied the complete human evolution. There is no cultural pureness neither than a national or religious one: every individual contacts and interacts with other persons, therefore its cultural identity is formed in a personal way and is not able to be reduced on a stereotyped term of culture. The historical period of colonialism or imperialism is the time western civilization got into contact with cultures far away and the people mixed the impressions with the familiar habits.

But I think there has never been a pure culture before. Every human is an eclectic choosing and forming the values and habits in its personal social life. So there is no defined homogenous western or Indian culture, both are hybrid cultures as they contain subcultures and interspaces. I argument human beings stay in between the identification poles, at the stairs. The consequence of expanding the theory of hybridisation over the whole period of human being is to fix every individual as a hybrid joining several cultural areas, living in several in-between spaces and sharing different cultural knowledge.

As explanation for my statement I give a simple explanation: Me and my mother are both "full-blood" German, but we do not share exactly the same space of knowledge and do not belong to the same subcultures. Therefore I have another consciousness of self-awareness and corporality than my mother or my mum has different culture of communication than I. Accordingly we both are defined by the cultural stereotyped term of "German" but in fact we form our personality in different subcultural spaces. We share cultural similarities like the language but we have differences, too.

Therefore the “umbrella term” – the stereotyped and national assignments do not identify a person and its cultural belonging. There is no “German” as the concerned group of people living in the territorial area is a multicultural nation and the German culture is like every culture a hybrid one. It is formed by a big space of subcultures and every individual compose its personal culture by choosing certain subcultures. “German” does only constitute the place where a person lives but not the place where a person exists. The term “German” is only the umbrella covering different personalities and characters.

In the 21th century, the floral time of globalisation, the participations of the worldwide web, the passengers of the worldwide flight network or the audience of the daily news from all over the world notice the growing cultural hybridisation in their personal life. People experience cultural differences and notice similarities like never before. They transfer foreign cultural elements in their space of knowledge and feel the divergence of hybridity. But it is fatal as only the obvious cultural areas like the national or religious ones are noticed as cultural phenomena. In fact those “umbrella cultural terms” are constituted by subcultures and are hybrids. Therefore the *theory of hybridity* is not a modern phenomenon. The stereotyped terms describe only the obvious difference and do not pay attention to the hybridity of subcultures in each culture. Therefore using stereotype terms may helpful for communication and orientation in the complexity of the modern world but these cultural definitions are charged with fixed features and pictures of the people beyond: They deny the individuality and hybridity.

However, I have to admit that abandoning stereotyped terms and cultural identification pols causes a complex theoretical issue I cannot deal with. Without describing things, persons and situations with words and terms people are not able to communicate and to orientate. No social life would be able to exist and therefore no human being would be able to exist. But using terms in order to describe features or looks provides stereotypes and does not allow person to exist in an individual way and to be a cultural hybrid.

To solve this problem I think it necessary to be aware of the stereotyping function of cultural terms. People should have a look beyond the words and prejudices in order to get to know the multicultural person beyond. This is important as in these days the cultural offer is open and accessible like never before and hybridity is a common phenomenon.

