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LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION AND PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

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Аннотация:
The author argues that understanding crisis phenomena in an education system, as well as conditions of upgrading this system, is connected with development of a philosophy of education focused on such categories as language and communication. The heuristic and productive nature of theory of communicative action and hermeneutics is shown while comprehending the specific nature of learning environment where a pedagogical interaction between a teacher and students is carried out. Taking into account the ideas of J. Habermas, H. G. Gadamer and L. Wittgenstein, it is shown that education is a process of human development if it is organised as a process of searching for and generating meanings by the students. This educational process model corresponding to essential human need for self-understanding and self-expression.

Introduction. Problem and Purpose

It is common knowledge that school and education as we know them have been institutionalized quite recently, in the 19th century, and the concept of education was developed in the 17th and the 18th centuries by such pedagogues as Jan Amos Komensky, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Johann Friedrich Herbart, etc. The Scientific Revolution of the 17th century also had a great impact on this concept development. This series of breakthrough events strengthened the belief that only scientific minds know the truth or at least the road to it. Within the realm of education, teachers embody scientific minds. They know everything, therefore, they are to enlighten their "ignorant" students and to verify how well the students absorbed the truth. This forms the "subject-object model" of teacher-student interaction, dominated by guidance and control, typical for manufacturing processes, work flows and relations.

However, this model is being criticized now. For instance, Vitaly Slastyonin believes that the current education crisis is caused by the fact that the education system sees students as objects of formative interventions and not as subjects of personal development, self-improvement and reflection [9]. Mass education practices are often based on technocratic principles and scientific logic or "scientific learning", as Vladimir Bibler put it [2]. This education system does not deny or exclude students, but makes them passive listeners and observers. The leading role is assigned to a teacher who transmits knowledge to students, who in turn can only do their best to absorb and digest as much knowledge as possible. All this leads to situations when students merely acquire and reproduce ready-made knowledge (or "dead" knowledge, in Vladimir Zinchenko's terms [11]), while their capacity for creating meanings and values remains quite limited. In this case, education

inevitably becomes a guided, restricted and insulated system.

Generally, we agree that crisis developments in modern education can be overcome through establishing and developing specific didactic conditions aimed at teaching students to search for meanings and values, however, we would like to emphasize that creating such conditions requires understanding of modern philosophical tendencies, since philosophy provides a range of fundamental methodological constructs and suppositions for any science, including education science. We believe two key modern philosophical trends to be instrumental for the methodology of humanitarian research, particularly in the field of education: a shift towards communicative rationality and a shift towards language. We shall consider these two trends in more detail in the following passages.

Results and Discussions

The theory of communicative rationality is primarily associated with the works of Jürgen Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel. Habermas' philosophy was drawn on the critical theories of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, key thinkers of the Frankfurt School. In the late 1940s, they wrote a book *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which was a rather successful attempt to show how humanity moved from its barbaric state through the process of enlightenment to a new kind of barbarism, where it now remains [7]. But what did Horkheimer and Adorno mean by this?

In prehistoric times, a human would be identical to his or her tribe, which in turn would be identical to nature. Mimesis was a universal principle of relationships between humans or between humans and acts of nature. In other words, people identified themselves with nature, since they depended on it and wanted it to be merciful and protective – it was how people established their belonging and connection to the whole nature. Meanwhile, as human civilization was developing, people started detaching themselves from their natural matriarchal and tribal identity. They also started perceiving the mind as an independent and autonomous tool of establishing supremacy over nature. As a result, mimetic relationships between humans and nature were replaced by an aspiration to conquer and subdue nature – i.e., to take by force what was previously regarded as given by mercy.

Therefore, Adorno and Horkheimer understood enlightenment as the progressivism ideology, based on instrumental mind and aimed at freeing people enslaved by nature. Paradoxically, if not ironically, this narrative of enlightenment led to the crisis in modern society. The problem was that such coercive attitude to nature extended to inner human nature and people's perception of other human beings. Total control, manipulations and suppression of feelings and emotions caused painful distress of the mind. People eventually became neurasthenics, being frustrated with the potential exposure of their own nature and at the same time seeing themselves as omnipotent creatures (which has nothing to do with reality). Treating other human beings merely as objects of manipulation was characteristic of various totalitarian ideologies which gave rise to fascism and other similar regimes. This attitude also shaped such unique modern phenomenon as the 'culture industry', with mass media being one of the main elements of this industry.

Jürgen Habermas followed the critical route taken by Adorno and Horkheimer and identified interpersonal communication as another domain affected by the expansion of instrumental mind. In his philosophical discourse, Habermas introduced the concept of an instrumental action, which he defined as an action performed by a subject to enter the world and achieve set goals through certain means. An instrumental action differs from other types of actions by its purely pragmatic and utilitarian character. In other words, in the case of an instrumental action, subjects choose and evaluate their goals and means of attaining them in terms of maximizing the benefits. When it comes to performing instrumental actions, a rational and reasonable person is an individual who can clearly distinguish his or her benefits. Therefore, Habermas argues that one essential characteristic of our modern life is the fact that people focus their communication on obtaining profits, and use money and power as extralinguistic tools for exerting pressure on each other. This results in communication failures and so-called reluctant consent, which does not count as true consent, since it is not based on shared beliefs. Nowadays, the number of reluctant consent cases tends to grow. From Habermas's point of view, it increases the urgency of finding solutions for such situations and emphasizes the importance of studying the mechanisms of human understanding and mutual understanding.

Habermas sees the way out of this situation not in denying the mind, but in cultivating its communicative capacity. From his point of view, the communicative action concept provides the answer to the question about the conditions for people's mutual understanding, as well as the key to understanding the specifics of social and humanitarian studies.

So, what is a communicative action?

Firstly, a communicative action implies an interaction between at least two subjects aimed at reaching

mutual understanding with respect to a certain situation.

Secondly, a communicative action is an action through which subjects lay so-called claims for the recognition of their significance – i.e., they claim that their statements are true (that is, they reflect the objective reality), correct (that is, they are legitimate and acceptable from the social and cultural perspective), and genuine (that is, they express subjects' sincere intentions).

Thirdly, a communicative action is an action which leaves the above-mentioned claims open for discussion – i.e., creates an opportunity to justify or criticize these claims using rational arguments.

Finally, a communicative action is an interaction between the subjects, who justify or criticize the claims for the recognition of significance using the lifeworld structures – a set of intersubjectively recognized values, traditions, interpretation methods, and all other things which help to prevent the risk of disagreement and form a common context for mutual understanding [5].

To sum everything up, generally, a communicative action is distinguished by its inherent rationality, which is understood as argumentation practice. Only by following this practice subjects can for the first time meet the conditions for reaching mutual understanding about something with other communication process participants.

As has already been said, another specific characteristic of modern philosophy and culture is its so-called shift towards language. In fact, since the ancient times, philosophy has not made any distinction between the act of cognition and the act of denomination. In Apel's terms, philosophy has been governed by the 'instrumental concept of language', which interprets language as a tool for expressing and representing thoughts [1: 237-253]. Indeed, by proclaiming Aristotle's question "What is Being?" (meaning a 'substance') to be truly philosophical, ancient philosophy said – also in the words of Aristotle – that 'the essence of being exists only for those things which are given definitions', and to give a definition means to distinguish one species from all others by *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica*. One who knows the definitions, knows the meanings of thins – this statement has become the leitmotif of ancient Greek, medieval and modern European thought. From this statement it follows that if we know the definitions, we can overcome such annoying language barrier as homonymy, thereby establishing an intimate and indissoluble bond between a specific name of a thing and the essence of this thing. It means that contemplation prevails over language, turning it into a controllable tool or transparent environment.

At the same time, it should be noted that this instrumentalist interpretation of language results from a specific theoretical human approach to the surrounding world, while modern philosophical perceptions of language are driven by moving from theoretical to pragmatic worldview. This shift can be vividly illustrated by hermeneutic and analytic philosophy. In his book *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger develops an idea that human theoretical worldview (or detached contemplation of the surrounding world) is not initial or primary in nature, since the initial state of human being is 'Being-in-the-world', and all the things that surround people are used by them as practical tools rather than the objects of passive contemplation or observation. This brings Heidegger to a conclusion that theoretical attitude of consciousness is secondary, driven by what he called anxiety and pragmatism. The same anxious and pragmatist approach to the use of language determines its function. Heidegger illustrates his idea with a vivid example: when we say "the hammer is heavy", we explain that "this hammer is too heavy for the job" and that we want to get another hammer, rather than use this phrase as a theoretical definition, asserting that the hammer has the "objective property of weighing"[6: 20].

Heidegger's thoughts gave rise to Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutical ideas on the language environment of understanding. According to Gadamer, a person as a subject of understanding or perception belongs to a particular social, cultural and historical tradition which actively influence the character of human cognition. Indeed, language is one of the main tools for establishing and transferring social and cultural norms and traditions, and as such it marks the borders and horizons of human mind. As a rule, however, the impact of society and culture on cognition remains latent, since we use language spontaneously and instinctively. Gadamer argued that any act of understanding is based on prejudice or pre-judgment. He believed any presuppositions specified and transmitted by language to be 'beyond' and 'prior' to the rationality of discursive cognition [4: 317]. Therefore, hermeneutical consciousness should, from the outset, be sensitive to the foreignness of the 'Other', but it will be able to reveal this foreignness only after it becomes aware of its own pre-judgmental nature.

Provisions of hermeneutic philosophy are similar to Ludwig Wittgenstein's analytic stance towards philosophy. This Austrian philosopher stated that our routine use of language is naturally connected with a comprehensive system of human activities, and all the meanings of the words used by people depend on the social and cultural activity within which they are used. The same word, being a part of different social and cultural contexts, is accompanied by different mental representations. Thus, Wittgenstein concluded that the

meaning of a word is its use, and introduced the concept of 'language-games' to explain the unity of language and the social and cultural contexts in which language is used. According to Wittgenstein, language-games regulate our thinking, because mental representations which go along with every spoken word directly depend on a particular social and cultural context within which the word is spoken [10: 83].

In general, it can be said that one of the main consequences of modern philosophy's shift towards language and communicative rationality was the spread of pluralism and dialogism principles in modern culture.

Arts and humanities researchers have long stated that the modern world is governed by pluralism, defined as a diversity of languages, cultures and the ways of thinking. During the second half of the 20th century, this statement was also extended to natural sciences. For instance, Elena Mamchur, a science philosopher at the Russian Academy of Sciences, even modern physics, despite being quite indifferent to any mindset changes, tends to move from the idea of uniformity to the idea of diversity. Many experts say that the ontology of modern physics is a multitude of models, hierarchically-structured but not unified, rather than a set of uniform properties and rules, constantly identified and studied by classical physics [8]. Moreover, scientific concepts and terms, just as common words and expressions, obtain and change their meanings according to specific contexts, which are determined by the rules, norms and traditions of a particular scientific discipline or research team. And since these norms, traditions and the usage rules are inseparable from the meanings behind these concepts, and the traditions themselves are heterogeneous to some extent, the uniform understanding of certain meanings is achieved through debates, disputes and discussions.

The same can be said about modern culture being oriented towards dialogue. This orientation can be traced both in humanities and natural sciences. With reference to literary studies, Mikhail Bakhtin, one of the founders of the philosophy of dialogism, wrote that a text is not an object, it is a fluctuating field of meanings, which emerges from the author-reader collision. Therefore, the text includes not only the elements intentionally created by the author, but also the elements added by the reader during his or her dialogue with the author. In the field of natural science, synergetics is an illustrative example of such dialogist approach. Ilya Prigogine, considered one of the founders of complexity science, in his landmark book *Order out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature*, argued that the reality which surrounds us is a self-organizing system, capable of self-construction and self-structuring. So, it is important for subjects of cognition to take into account the tendencies of this system development in order to act accordingly and produce resonance effects. Therefore, synergetic principles enable to interpret the process of cognition from the dialogism perspective – they require researchers to provide a path for the studied system self-development, consistent with both its nature and the type of research.

Conclusion

Summing everything up, we can say that the shift of modern philosophy towards communicative rationality and language is critical for understanding the methodology of humanities in general and education science in particular. As you know, natural sciences use the observation method, when researchers do their best to minimize or eliminate their influence on the studied object or process. We can say that natural science cognition follows the pattern of detached external examination, while social scientists and other humanity scholars deal with people who speak certain languages and actively engage in communication, therefore, these researchers cannot use the same patterns and methods. For example, as impartial observers humanity scholars can describe, explain or even predict the sound or noise that will correspond with the acoustic form of some pronounced phrase, but in order to grasp the meaning of this phrase they will have to participate (in real life or virtually) in the same communication process, where this phrase was or is used. That said, in order to clarify the meaning of a given expression social and humanity researchers first need to reconstruct the rational grounds for the communication agent to use this expression, which he or she could use as arguments for proving a particular point, if necessary. Moreover, researchers can understand this rationalization only if they take it seriously – that is after evaluating its validity. All this leads us to a conclusion that in social sciences and humanities cognition is based on real life communication experience, while researchers themselves become active communication agents, and this performative position is one of the most distinguishing aspects of academic disciplines that study human society.

Let us elaborate on these points by saying that one of the specific features of communicative action is its inherent rationality, therefore, one of the key indicators of education efficiency will be establishing conditions for the comprehensive perception of knowledge, for discussions and joint validation of arguments, as well as for the comparison and contrast of different views and hypotheses. Such education process which implies deep understanding of other people's ideas and requires critical approach to both your own and others' assumptions can be organized through dialogue. Researchers say that students get genuinely involved into work only if they

understand the learning tasks and accept them – i.e. find them somehow corresponding to their inner feelings and emotions, serving in this case as certain 'reference points' (in Sergei Rubinstein's terms). Finding such inner 'reference points', in its turn, is determined by a choice of problems which cannot be solved with only one solutions or only one correct answer. Solving such problems requires different conceptual positions, each of them being a specific descriptive or explanatory construct, which serves as a sense-generating focal point, but does not provide you with a complete ready-made picture. This is the only way to create a common space for an effective student-teacher dialogue, which ensures their communication and mutual understanding through co-existence. Such space is highly productive by its nature: it provides platform for continuous movement, development and communication of thoughts, which are not reduced to what we already know and comprehend, but are constantly measured against our personal experience, thus making it more deep and profound. It is important to note that a dialogue usually does not bring any preliminary results. Within a dialogue, both a student and a teacher are engaged into joint creative activities, which to some extent lead to the 'expansion of self'[3].

However, the reality is that in educational institutions (a school or a university) strategic actions are often substituted for communicative actions, when teachers use their authority as an extralinguistic tool of exerting pressure on students. This results in communication failures and reluctant consent among communication participants, which does not count as true consent, since it is not based on shared beliefs and values. A dialogue, on the contrary, is a process of teacher-student interaction, which helps them both reveal a 'person within a person' to themselves and other people. Transcendental or a priori conditions or presuppositions of discourse, as Habermas' colleague Karl-Otto Apel called them, could be useful for establishing such a dialogue. These presuppositions establish the argumentation rules which on the one hand cannot be substantiated through deduction, and on the other hand cannot be denied, because without them communicative actions will become pointless. Habermas lists the following rules as the examples of such presuppositions: "Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse; everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever; everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatever into the discourse; everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires, and needs" [5]. It should be emphasized once again that such rules are those a priori provisions for communication that are to be accepted by any subject before entering a discussion. Any attempt to challenge or question these presuppositions leads the subject to a 'performative contradiction' – i.e., to the contradiction between semantic and pragmatic components of the speech act. Indeed, if an agent (e.g., a teacher) questions the presupposition that everyone is allowed to problematize any assertion whatever, it will lead to self-contradiction, because casting doubt on this presupposition means getting involved in problematization in accordance with this very presupposition. Similarly, a person who challenges the rule that allows everyone to introduce any assertion into the discourse contradicts himself or herself, because challenging this rule is an act of assertion, which means obeying the challenged rule.

Thus, since argumentation rules are necessarily significant for every communication participant, including those who criticize them, they bring us back to the principle of equality of all the dialogue participants formulated above – above all, equality between a teacher and a student. Here we are not talking about the equality based on knowledge, experience, etc., but about the fact that all people have the right to explore the surrounding world, the right to cherish their own inner world and make statements based on it.

In this regard, it will be important to mention one more thing. If rationality inherent in communication implies the existence of certain transcendental rules, which should be obeyed by the subject to achieve mutual understanding with other communication participants for the first time, then by following these rules the subject accepts the existence of the community affected by these rules. In addition, any statement made by the subject of a communicative action may be criticized not only by those who already constitute a part of the community, but also by those who may join it in the future. In this regard, the subject of a communicative action should perceive and comprehend him- or herself as a member of the real and, at the same time, ideal community, which is inherently unlimited. Being applied to education, it means that the teacher organizes and monitors the reflection by the students of their own understanding meanings among other understandings. When students are apprehending their own understanding of meanings among other understandings, they simultaneously thematize their position as it is, see it 'from the side', when other people articulate their attitudes to it, and, finally, observe other positions and reflect on them. Developing a reflexive position is characterized by shifting from the point of understanding one's own meanings to understanding other interpretations of meaning and refining one's understanding of meaning, among other understandings. We believe that the experience of reflexive positioning can become the foundation for improving oneself as the subject of search and understanding of meaning. In order to increase the chances of this happening, the students need to organize their own reflection on their position of understanding among the others.

Finally, let us discuss one more issue. Both hermeneutics and the theory of communicative rationality emphasize that language is not just a means for expressing thoughts, but the environment which reflects the life of the nation, as well as the specific features of its culture and outlook. At the same time, since people use their native languages automatically, the cultural and historical traditions sedimented in the language implicitly affect human mind, which can create certain difficulties in understanding the Other. The point is that one should be aware of the danger of seeing and hearing only oneself and what is prompted to be seen and heard by one's experience. In this regard, personality development becomes crucial as part of educational practice aimed at developing sensitivity to the pre-judgmental nature of language.

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