

Elements of the Semiotic Basis of Cultural Communication in Psychological Trends

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Abstract

According to the contemporary psychological knowledge, the semiotics of communication emerges in various, pluralistic interhuman relations and reflects the symbolic capabilities of the human beings. As for the behavioral schemes, communication has evolved from the objective flow of information to that which shows the course of phenomena «inside» the world. The forms of human communication under examination by the cognitive psychology constitute cognitive schemes, activities steered by the interaction of the brain structures and the environmental factors. Psychoanalysis deals with the symbolizing of human experiences. The humanistic and existential trends in psychology recognize as critical speech acts, conversation, narration and dialogues where personal values are shown. The weakness of the psychological concepts — starting from cybernetic tradition to the narrative one — lies in ignoring the concrete social conditions, culture and social history. The contemporary psychology mainly lacks semiotic tools both of personal forms of diagnosis and the improvement of communication in the cultural environment. The weak side of the examination of inter-human relations in social sciences and humanities (not only in psychology) are the semiotic methods of analyzing and shaping the forms of communication concerning senses of activities and experiences of a human being in the cultural and historical environment. The perspectives and historicisms which emerged after the collapse of the world communist system manifest ideologically decreed a cultural and intercultural dialogue.

THE BARRIER WHICH RESTRAINED A MULTICULTURAL IDEA

In our globalizing world people sometimes have an annoying feeling that when they enter social relations they remain alien or lose a part of identity, and in the worse case even hostility may grow between them. Building the authentic dialogue between nations divided by historical discords and bloodshed still seems to be almost impossible. After the collapse of the world communist system and some power regimes the perspectives and historicisms manifest ideologically decreed a cultural and intercultural dialogue.

Elaborated dialogical methods in cultural environment are needed. The psychology and social sciences have not offered grounded models of interactions among people with different cultural background. Humanistic thinking in line with the spirit of the epoch is under pressure the huge progress of neuroscience.

SEMIOTIC EMPTINESS AFTER THE COMMUNISM AND NAZI POWER REGIME AND THE PROBLEM OF SUBJECTIVITY

In 1948 Józef Czapski in «Kultura» published in Paris by Jerzy Giedroyc wrote that in poor soviet cottages there were only women and children, he was told that the men were «taken away». And when he asked why, mothers and wives answered silently — «for a word» (Czapski, 1948).

For nearly 50th years, any uncensored text, open thinking and talking were forbidden in public places in the Eastern and Central European countries. In the Soviet Union silence prevailed. In Russia the Soviet system began in 1917. After 1989, the democratic system began in Eastern and Central European countries in what was called the semiotic emptiness (Raszkievicz, 2008) — finally, after World War II started by German Nazis in 1939 and finished in 1945 when the Soviet communist system came and ruled for almost 50 years. In 1989 was already after the lost experiences and values belonged to tortured and killed people, after their destroyed properties and fortunes, after closed schools and arrested and murdered students and teachers, after closed or burned libraries, museums, mansions, castles, palaces, churches, after logic, law and moral traditions, after Jews and their culture.

The important and probably the main problem in societies after the post-totalitarian epoch becomes subjectivity which is the acknowledgement of own self-identity and desire to checking your own life occurring in self-identity position (Cichocki, 2009). People do not have the habit of thinking about their own identities while the political transformations are not favour to grow up subjectivity. In European democratic countries the leftists liberals have discarded the economical determinism of orthodox Marxism and Leninist liberating class romanticism, but preserved Marxism and partly Leninist tradition of social criticism. Unfortunately in our times unjust discourse still exists in the handicapped social groups. So called «ex-Marxists» have taken over the emancipation tendency from psychoanalysis, ignoring experience symbolism in psychoanalysis practice. After 1989 they remained the vanguard of the political transformation with approval of the considerable part of ex-anti-communistic opposition.

When society has no subjectivity, all principles of management are just a misunderstanding. And where falsehood dominates, moral principles are not held: cognitive, emotional and

social intelligences cause cunning and subterfuge; lying crosses out the likelihood of success, the social dialogue is regulated «pragmatically». The last answer to the badly experienced generations maybe cynicism. The formal democratic system with freedom of choice, liberated from the original ground of old traditions and institutions and without elaborate totalitarian thinking, leads to total egoistic manipulation, appears to be a serious threat in the new game of political forces. In the social sciences conducted in the democratic post-communist countries the qualitative researches become fashionable, however hermeneutics and dialogical approaches may be developed freely in the truth climate and moral uprightness position. The old practices rooted in the past social-political system seduce academic minds to give up emotional maturity and ethical standards.

SEMIOSIS IN THE WORLD

Semiosis appears *in* the world — it is the moment of human existence. After the success of relativity and complementary theories in physics it became evident that naturalistic systems do not exist independently from the observer. Formalistic and empirical objectivism is not the whole property of the knowledge set in human naturalistic and culture-historical existence. However the weakness of the psychological concepts — starting from cybernetic tradition to the narrative one — lies in ignoring the concrete social conditions, culture and social history. The contemporary psychology mainly lacks semiotic tools both of personal forms of diagnosis and the improvement of communication in the cultural environment. The weak side of the examination of interpersonal relations in social sciences and humanities (not only in psychology) are the semiotic methods of analyzing and shaping the forms of communication concerning senses of activities and experiences of a human being in the cultural and historical environment.

THE CYBERNETICS TRADITION IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES

The cybernetics dealt with information sending, however it stuck in the mathematical and technical problems of information sending. The significance of the message was not important because information is not meaning (Bruner, 1990). The domain of sign construction in the real social life was far away from the mechanistic point of view. Emotional expression and axiological intuitions have their meaning and may get the constructed sign form.

LOGICAL COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOUR

Animals communication behaviour occurs in life environment; human communication behaviour occurs in any cultural environment, it means that is the logical communication behaviour. From its nervous base to language structures the efficient exchange of information with people has a logical form. Exchanging information in a logical form is a person to person commu-

nication not matter what the cultural environment differences are. Communication initiating in any cultural environment assumes logical rationality. Adults' communication with children demands a respect to the level of logical structures development; communication with a mentally handicapped person consists in aiding her/his behaviour with logic belonging to a person in contact; communication with animal consists in searching for meaningful signals to adapt animal behaviour to human behaviour.

FROM BEHAVIORISM TO COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Behaviorism bared the psyche and society from many of its essential properties. When, after its orthodox simplifications, behaviorism wanted to be the true psychology, related to human living and acting in the world, it was forced to sponge on the terminology and empirical acquired possessions of psychology, also on the ridiculing introspection and psychoanalysis. When behaviour was studied as an activity scheme, cognitive psychology emerged from cognitive behaviorism.

Cognitive-behavioral psychology binds any reference to the object with psychological processes which have representation in the nervous system. The trend dominated in psychology from 1950 to the end of 20th century, concentrated on whether communication bring adaptation success or defeat.

Cognitive-behavioral psychology does not ask about relation a psychological process to sign and symbol mediation so to culture and history. Homuncules and speculative identities substitute a considerable part of thinking how the knowledge in sign forms is created in mind. The culture variable is only one in a set of various variables determined phenomenological object of behavior, together with sex and race. Nowadays an effort is needed in psychology to come back to the world of culture and social history with its whole variety.

FROM INTELLIGENCE THEORIES TO ACTIVITY THEORIES

Logical (cognitive), emotional and social intelligence in psychological theories are attributed to socialized human behavior raised to the level of activity and life roles. The emotional and social intelligences are studied intensively after the example of adaptation functions of logical (cognitive) intelligence. It seems that neutrality, dispassionality, and non-engagement would be postulated.

Intelligence does not develop outside the environment of signs. Errors and cognitive inclinations indicate deviation from formal models when intellectual activities are the behavior outdistanced from objects, deprived its sign motivation. This is why the young juvenile vendors in Brazil were acting successfully in the practical way, they did not train formal operations during school education; poor and illiterate persons from Central Asia (Luria, 1976), Brazil and Africa (Cole, 1996) were experienced in their activity environment however without formal education and preferences to pure logical processes.

SOME DATA OF DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Natural semiosis emerges the cognitive possibilities in man's development in social environment. In month 9-10 of child life, understanding of other persons as intentional beings emerges (Tomasello, 2002). During this time the second degree circular reactions in new situations are formed, which according to Piaget (1966) are the proper intentional intellectual activity. Also it is the origin period of walking, expressing first words and consolidating habits of eating and cleanness. In the third year of life operations on iconic symbols begin, with rules of communication and cooperation. The comparison of children development in normal families conditions with the children from protective-educational institutions reveals two critical periods in development — namely in month 10 and 30 (Raszkiewicz, 1984).

The developmental jumps are not possible without social influence. The overlapping of the cultural-historical line and natural line of development shows that man is through and through a social and cultural being. A baby is entirely dependent on social environment. The psychological and psychoanalytical data indicate clearly that from the first days of life a baby engages in conversations with protectors and pass to symbolic culture (Gouin-Décarie, 1968; Spitz, 1957; Spitz and Cobliner, 1968).

THE REFERENCE TO THE CULTURAL TREND IN COGNITIVE-SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Culture activities development overlaps the evolution of natural capacities of man (Wygotski, 1989). In line of the contemporary developmental studies the essential difference between man and animal states intentional object of representation (Tomasello, 2002). It is necessary to emphasize that the intentionality is the characteristic of communication activities engaged in producing the cultural objects; the intentional reference to objects correlates with using of the complex cognitive instruments and moreover with the emotional relations with social objects. We can say that the cultural level of activities consists of meanings designating by communication repertoire, i.e. what occurs in discourses and texts as an activity function. And also natural emotional expressions are transformed in expressions culturally constructed in activity conditions: their sentimental, intimate, impulsive and sensory aspects. In the other words, in the culture environment communication materializes through the mediation of means of logical organization of information, world knowledge with system of cognitive, practical and artistic activities, and structures of constructed symbolic interpretation of emotional relations.

COMMUNICATION AND REFLECTION

Psychologists have found that reflexivity grows up in social activity and experience context. A speech act in social context bears a reflexivity. My hypothesis is that the reflection which provides to outcomes which have general and abstract importance is universal reflection, self-consciousness of the typical man on the culture stage which produces the common identity.

Searching what joins and divide people is not cosmopolitan but anthropological — it is the result of the mediation species history by social history. On the other hand the reflection in contexts of culture institutions and historical events which shows real, existential identity differentiation is axiological reflection: the specific cultural self-consciousness. Therefore social communication in sign contexts is a reflective process producing axiological identity.

IN THE DIRECTION OF THE INTER-CULTURE DIALOG

The foundations of dialogue philosophy were created by the small thinkers' group in the completely other historical context, in time which went out long before now. They were the answer to the totalitarian regimes in Europe, the II world war and Holocaust (Buber, 1992) — the basic principles but too general to be in position to recall the desirable changes in the real social conditions. Therefore when some wish to formulate a social program, reaches for the well tested information and cognitive theories.

Nowadays in communication theories two approaches dominate: objective and interpretative (Griffin, 2001). The positivistic philosophy and individualistic theories are the conceptual background of the first; the second refers to hermeneutics. In psychology the objective approach has grown up from behaviorism; the narrative trend has appeared in the period of last 20 years. The humanistic and existential trends in psychology recognize as essential speech acts, conversation, narration and dialogues where personal values are shown, however from Maslow's theory they are not free from sometimes strong inclination to biology and evolution. It is well-known that the objective approach is just as needed as the interpretative one (Bateson, 1996). The matter is not in the encounter of non-personal statistics with emotionality and figurativeness, but in describing sign and symbolic means of communication which would come to psychology producing the offer for those who tend to the better communication among different nations.

This article proves that the specific level of dialogue among people of different nations and cultures are the communication activities and symbolic expressions constructed in environmental structures, the signs and symbols carrying the meanings which determine the values forming self-identity in social groups in culture-historical environment. The social and cultural turn in the psychological researches hitherto do not bring detailed scientific description of particular processes in communicative activities and experiences in self-identity and personality development. The intention to improve the dialogue position requires the description of categories of sign effects of intellectual, emotional and self-identity processes, strictly speaking the mental semiosis in cultural-historical environment.

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