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Analysis of Socio-Cultural and Socio-Psychological Nature of the Educational Process

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Abstract

The paper provides an analysis of communication as an integrative notion manifesting the genesis of professional subjectivity. In doing so, subjectivation conditions are pointed out, with the reorientation of cultural artifacts as its principal environment. As a basis of socio-psychological analysis, the subject manifests itself in various forms, and primarily in activity and communication. Simultaneously, there is not any activity both aimed at and resulted in its subject. The subject cannot be an outcome of material transformation or means of activity. It only appears in the course of subjectivation. Communication plays a system-forming role for forming a new socio-cultural object.

Keywords: subject, subjectivation, communication, culture, educational process, professional subjectivity.

1. Formulation of the problem

Understanding of education and educational process is principally based on the idea of importance of culture both for live of the whole society and every individual. Our lives are surrounded by material culture, while the role of its spiritual counterpart is not obvious, though we directly manifest it in many respects. This suggests that the subject itself basically manifests certain self-actualization systems in the social space. To meet this universal factor, we apply socio-cultural approach as basic one for socio-psychological analyzing.

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In order to determine the nature of the educational process, let us consider the features of the interaction between spiritual culture and the society in its socio-psychological aspects.

The notion of spiritual culture elucidates at least three extremely important ideas in the field of social psychology:

1) cultural technologies constitute a consistent mechanism for the formation of a socio-psychological subject;
2) coupled with another subsystem, i.e. material culture, the mentioned mechanism belongs to the global unity and integrity of nature and mankind, to spiritual culture and social relationships;
3) the integration of spiritual and material cultural phenomena into a socio-cultural technology is determined not only by psychological laws but is also described by such socio-economical activity terms as “tool”, “material”, “commodity”, “exchange”, “distribution”, etc.

Spiritual culture thus becomes a specific model of objectivation-subjectivation in those social spheres where the society is reproduced. This means that objectivation-subjectivation is intensified within the framework of social organization, based on division of labour and centred on mankind-nature relationships.

Construction of the model “subject of communication” – “psychological phenomenon” for determining an objective source of subjective activity encounters an evident procedural danger. That is, the source stems mainly from cultural and sign chains, coexisting in spiritual culture of the epoch with other chains, and further fulfilling certain social functions. Though being a tool of human activity, a sign, or at least its form, is not suggestive of any specific psychological relation.

The subject itself cannot be a result of a cultural process. When implementing the socio-cultural approach, it is nothing else that its major premise

Collectively, cultural technologies are offered to individuals both in the broad form of social institutions and specific form of communication needs.

Those technologies imply certain mechanisms of their social existence, applied by people in their behaviour, activity, relations with other people and themselves. They constitute a bank of impersonal social experience. At the same time impersonal cultural experience is subjectivated in the society through particular systems of organized communication. That communication process is therefore appears to be the essence of the educational process.

The analysis of human anthropological nature revealed the sources and the evolution of the idea of education as a form of spiritual culture, underlying cognitive abilities in culture, society. Methods and mechanisms of their applying for spiritual transformation of a person have been considered as well.

Acting as a personal feature holder, an individual is “exchanged” with another one, thus integrating into the society and becoming its member and participant of the spiritual and production process.

People’s natural differences (and the differences of objects respectively) are necessary for grouping them into types different from their natural qualities.

The type, as well as the value, refers to the social relation. That grouping was based on the distinguishing physical qualities, behaviour characteristics, and mode of life, which are subsequently typified and included in the system of human measurements.
Traditional psychology does not look into socio-cultural factors, forming consciousness and unmotivated subject activity. It factors those out of its research methodology, together with historical practice, focusing principally on the empiric methodologies. Social reality is there postulated by socio-historical hypotheses. Historical assumptions, made by L.S. Vygotski and A.N. Leontyev, nevertheless are highly appropriate for validation of that forming and genetic experiment, work only within its limits. Activity approach is limited, due to the fact that regulations and strategies of social determination of activity lie beyond activity psychology. This limitation is bridged in G. P. Shchedrovitsky’s systemic thought-activity (STA) methodology. The ideas of this philosopher and methodologist obviously influenced the intellectuals, including a number of psychologists. However, they have not yet initiated the foundation of STA psychology. This probably accounts for the fact that and individual is presented as purely spiritual and social creature (will function, directed towards the society and culture), that G. P. Shchedrovitsky’s research work pivoted around the development of STA methodology and organizational forms of collective thinking and activity. The corporeity of an individual, his emotional life, “primary nature” and mental conflict between “God and the beast”, body and soul, constituting a significant content of the world psychology, were not in the core of his scientific interests, and neither were the representatives of the traditional activity approach focused on socio-cultural technologies.

The society treats an individual as an element of production. The social production comprises the processes of creation of material and spiritual amenities out of natural substances, their exchange, distribution and consumption in accordance with historical level of relations between nature and humankind. Its mechanisms are supra-individual, though include an individual as a constituent. If the activity approach considers subjective and psychological integrity and continuity of an individual in connection with his participation in the joint activity, it is obvious that in the production and economic model this integrity should be dismantled, and the subjective world should be withdrawn. The integration of mental states in the unity of consciousness is in the different surface than the effect of production processes, which functionalize, specialize a human for the final product, “dismantle” the human unity due to technological and barter transactions. Vertical synthesis of mind states in the production model is replaced by the horizontal sequences of socio-cultural technologies of a subject synthesized in the integrity of individual activity with the production subsystem of the subject - the spiritual culture. Systems of social power are the expression of subjectivity of joint activity [2, p. 9], and they put together a special class of subjectivity shaping in the education. Methodology as well as humanitarian imperatives, knowledge require making a distinction between a human and “tools”. Otherwise the game of terms and metaphors will get the taste of dark absurdity. Therefore, it is important to remember that a personality cannot be “produced”, “designed”, “exchanged” and “formed”. This is not about living individualities, but the signs and regulations. Complete “mastery” means the termination of a personality. Meaning neutralizes the producing pattern. Part of individual features is given to a human by nature, and a part – by society, the “own contribution” to the individuality of the personality is that it carries the biological and social in real, unique and meaningful way. Society provides the personality with components of his individuality in the socio-demographic features that are objective, and with patterns of behaviour that are ideal. The latter means that ideal models encourage but never can be embodied in the personality completely. A feminine ideal and a real woman, a typical scientist and a real scientist are the examples of discrepancies between an ideal schema and a human. An ideal has a causative-motivating function, it is being developed by a variety of artistic means, including hyperbole, which is clearly seen in the ancient epic, but presented by the modern writer too, who creates the image through complex processing of material, combining the real and the imaginary, the possible and due. Cultural technologies exist in production as given for the subject. It is harder to find the subject itself. Cultural technologies are presented to individuals both for wide and restricted use. This is - historically specific ways of their social existence, which people use in behaviour, activity, relationship to others and to themselves;
impersonal social experience. This experience is being subjectivated. Within the cultural production the differentiation of cultural technologies from the multi-cultural (“public”) can be seen to very specific structures (of special “psychological” use). Here is the limit of cultural technology focus on an individual, are the “smallest series” for personal use, which are aimed at a particular personality in specific functional states. It is easy to notice that here we move from the pole of culturological subject (which on the psychological side – the object) to the pole of psychological object (which on the culturological side - the subject). The words “intuition”, “illumination”, “nirvana”, “the unconscious”, “ecstasy”, “art” mark out the approaches to the area where trade significations are already in no circulation and there are only “natural” states of mind. What is beyond the description is, of course, nonmarketable and preliterate. For cultural production, this “mind-in-itself” - just raw, zero-cycle of process chain, but for humanitarian culture - a maximum of ineffable sense and human completeness. It is impossible to cross completely the border of production and existence without changing the goals and world outlook. It is sometimes possible only for the common understanding.

The subject under review of socio-psychological analysis is shown in a variety of forms, the most important of which is the activity and communication. At the same time, there is no activity, the purpose and effect of which is the subject of the activity itself. The subject cannot be appeared as the transformation of material or means of activity; it appears in the process of subjectivation. Let us consider from the socio-psychological point of view the possibilities of the concept of communication for the disclosure of the essential aspects of subjectivation in the educational process.

Under the education as a socio-cultural system of personality formation, we understand the complex of fundamental elements reproduction of socio-cultural human education technology - the active subject of his life. A teacher at school and a high school teacher have special communication with students. They, on the one hand, communicate with students directly, where teachers act as delegated representatives of the elder generation, for the organization of cultural dialogue with the younger generation of students. This communication is being broadcasted in time of socio-cultural goals and values of the elder generation to the younger. On the other hand - they are “cultural mediums”, mediators who provide mental communication processes between students and authors of cultural texts. At the same time, on the third hand they are self-sufficient subjects to interpret cultural phenomena and to interpret political events, scientific theories, actions and lives of other people. [1]

D.B. Shtrikova considers that professional mentality is a system of the conscious and unconscious social and psychological installations consisting of stereotypic opinions, judgments, estimates which underlie collective ideas of professional activity and individual ideas of the place in professional activity [3].

A key aspect of subjectivation in the considered communication is that these communication processes are minimized to interpretative ability of a personality [1].

Cultural interpretation (understanding) is the creation and evaluation of the communication partner (the character-subject) in terms of ethical, aesthetic, world outlook positions of the appraiser (the author-subject). Communication is indirect - with the creator of text-document. Although the text and its creator exist, of course, regardless of the appraiser, the attitude of understanding is dyadic and dialogic (this aspect is not grasped in the “classical” science, for which an explanation is in the nature of completed events).

An interpreter cannot move beyond his socio-evaluative task, but may know the theory of his interpretation (which helps him e.g. as a musician very indirectly). Social, economic, cultural facts are the foundation of evaluating with prejudice in favour of the subject, which is aimed at the development of its culture. As spiritual human faculties, “responsible” for the processes of learning a set of individual and cultural experience, embodied in the cultural phenomena, D.N. Uskova considers the interpretive ability of a personality. An interpreter proved to be the subject of interpretive ability [4].

V.A. Shkuratov wrote: “The historical psychology can provide the interpreter assistance in two ways: 1) to draw attention to certain cultural structures, and 2) to show the rules of his own communication with the invisible companion. To select the starting position, you need considerable preliminary work. The companion should be prepared for a dialogue” [5, p. 140].

In socio-psychological terms it is important to show that the object as a part of culture leads an active life in society. The existing monument is due to reading that is being subjectivated. Subjectivation here acts as the
creation of communication meaning with its support - interpretive ability of a personality. Cultural artifact is marked as a place to communicate about its content. Subjectivation marker notes the frame of communication meaningfulness.

Culture in education constantly reproduces the cycle: creation of a cultural object (in the processes of objectivation) and re-interpretation of a cultural object (in the process of subjectivation).

This kind of objectivation-subjectivation as it is a “reading error” of cultural text in experience transmission from generation to generation (this is the essence of the secondary interpretation - if the primary interpretation is complete, all the secondary interpretations are wrong). In socio-psychological terms as their own patterns of subjectivation should be considered:

1. All out-of-subject living conditions of an individual, including activity schemes given to an individual in subjectivated objects or objectivated subjects (whether a book or a person teaches life. It is important that both are the elements of activities orientation).
2. Own life process of an individual, including the assimilation of social schemes in a modified, individual form.
3. Social activity of an individual contains the instances of subjective control and distribution.

Socio-psychological mechanism of cultural phenomena exercise in a very simplified form can be represented as follows. There is a common natural and cultural environment of an individual, containing in an objectivated form his needs, abilities, cognitive skills, etc. This environment is presented as a social model of needs satisfaction, a structure of skills and abilities application. Ideally, a personality should desobjectivate all social elements and should enter into all social relations, due to which the relevant rules have been made. But no social model can be desobjectivated by an individual in the sphere of subjective relations exactly according to instructions. This is explained by poly-semantics of signs and plasticity of interpretive ability and active nature of its subjectivity. “Everyday variations” in the desobjectivation of cultural objects-norms have reproductive, quantitative character, i.e. reproduce social pattern within its definition [5].

Creative life activity associated with subject activity makes qualitative changes in the culture and psychic of an individual, producing its own new object. Creating a unique interpretation of cultural phenomena and reproducing it in the organization of interaction with other people an individual creates his own phenomenon of subjectivity.

Leading role in the generation of a new subject plays the uniqueness and peculiarity of the object (cultural genesis of subjectivity), which is marked as a valuable social phenomenon (social genesis of subjectivity). In this case, however, it is necessary to meet certain conditions.

The first condition of this innovative event is that there is an individual who interprets culture in his own way and reproduces his own interpretation in new situations (interpretive ability is being appeared and a personality is being realized as the subject of interpretation).

The second condition involves the creation of personal social control instance at the micro-and macro-social levels, which result in a new interpretation in accordance with the socio-cultural norms.

The third condition - the subject during the development of important socio-cultural innovation becomes a constitutive element in the reproduction of the created and enters into the instance to control this.

In the social form a new in nature - socio-cultural object is being created, the personality recognizes himself as the bearer and creator thereof. Formation of a new socio-cultural facility in the course of formation generates a new subject; a new subject is being objectivated due to the object.

The process of subjectivation is possible only in dialogue, in dialogic communication it reproduces itself. The joint action of activity technologies and communication systems in organized reflexive communication processes creates subjectivity as a mental phenomenon and as a socio-cultural reality.

Thus, communication in education is the backbone for the needs of formation of a new socio-cultural object. In the course of communication in education a new subject is generated – at first this subject of communication as to cultural artifacts of professional work. It is being objectivated due to the object. In the educational process objectivation-subjectivation takes the form of psycho- and socio-cultural communication cycle in the logic of the reproduction of subjective sphere of personality. The main problem is the need to ensure the reproducibility of
professional subject genesis, since it affects the functioning of both culture and society. A key role in this problem solving plays the educational process, which ensures the unity and integrity of the culture and society.

References