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Enculturation and humanization in education: pro et contra

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**ENCULTURATION AND HUMANIZATION IN EDUCATION:
PRO ET CONTRA**

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Abstract

The author substantiates the proposition of productiveness of enculturation as a principle of organization of educational environment. Furthermore, a comparative analysis with humanization as the mainstream of educational transformation is performed.

Key words

education, development, humanization, enculturation, internalization, reference culture

In recent years educational systems in the countries of the former Soviet Union have been undergoing active transformation. Incidentally, the vector of those transformations was determined by the general trends of mental reorientation taking place in the society. As social institutions, secondary schools and higher educational establishments were, consciously or unconsciously, geared to the fulfillment of the social mandate, preeminently with respect to its ideological component. Appeals for the creation of ideology-free educational systems were rather rhetorical, as a social institution is impossible outside a “collectively generated value-semantic grid placed between the individual and the world that mediates one’s relation to the world”¹. Roland Bart argued the dominion of ideology in any culture². Michael Cole showed the dependence of human development on cultural context, as well as contextual dependence of underlying layers of culture on the overlying ones. Hence, he considered that relationship as applied to an educational system: “A teacher gives a lesson whose nature is determined by the educational process where it belongs; an educational process, in its turn, is determined by the type of a school where it occurs; the type of school, in its turn, depends on the local community, and so forth”³.

The overall tenor of the past changes associated with the protest against the Soviet ideology, was related to postulating the value of individuality — humanization was precisely the tag for cutting-edge pedagogical innovation in both higher and secondary educational institutions. A humanistic academic paradigm conceived early in the past century that gained its momentum in American psychology, has become one of the most demanded essentials for the organization of educational process today. Scientific community discussed modalities and conditions for humanization; factors that impede humanization process and ways to negotiate those; forecasts of implementation of humanistic principles in the learning process⁴. Meanwhile, the importance of humanization of education during the period of abolition (perhaps even visible) of totalitarian values, was never challenged in the Russian psychology and pedagogy.

One of the main provisions of humanistic psychology is associated with the need to focus interaction with the student on the process of self-fulfillment. Moreover, that actualization is assured through non-judgmental acceptance

¹ G.K. Kosikov, *Ideologiiia. Konnotacia*, after: R. Bart, *S/Z*, Moscow 1994, p. 280.

² R. Bart, *S/Z*.

³ M. Cole, *Cultural Psychology: a once and future discipline*, London 1996, p. 158.

⁴ For example: Russian monthly scientific journal “Gumanizacia obrazovaniia”.

of a student, non-prescriptive approach, focus on their interests, provision of emotional comfort: “the way students feel at school is most important, above anything else”⁵. Humanization does not allow imposition of values on a student from the outside; it is assumed that one will shape those in the process of development detached from external attitudes of development. Declarations of such requirements towards educational process engender approval of the Russian public, because in the popular awareness they are associated with enhanced degrees of freedom following the much sought-after Western fashion. On the other hand, American experts have relatively early noted the doubtful usefulness and even inefficiency of humanization of education, calling it “a recipe for guaranteed disaster”⁶. Without going into detailed analysis of the ideological component of humanistic approach which predominates in the process of substantive reform of education, we shall only observe that the liberation of humanistic educational model from ideology was only superficial, while semantic attitudes were, in that case, transmitted in a more indirect manner.

There is an alternative approach to the problems of implementing innovation in an educational process which we found important, namely the process of enculturation. Society today is facing an acute problem of a total devaluation of culture, the consequence of which is reduced level of intellectual and creative capabilities of a person who found themselves on the margins of culture. Consequently, the learning process in a reformed educational system should primarily be targeted at resolving the problem of promoting overall culture of a student. Hence the fundamental organisational principle of educational process in higher education should not be humanization, but enculturation. There is a way to consider those principles as complementary, but with substantial reservation: in the presence of certain “points of convergence”, processes of humanization and enculturation move in opposing directions in a number of essential aspects.

With the processes of humanization being at the centre of scientific interest, one cannot fail to notice the incommensurate attention devoted to culture as a factor determining the distinguishing features of intellectual and creative development of a person. Undifferentiated notions of “social” and “cultural”, being replaced by a definition of “socio-cultural”, whereby culture is construed

⁵ T. Robert Basset, *Education for the Individual: A Humanistic Introduction*, New York 1978.

⁶ S. Engelmann, D. Carnine, *Theory of Instruction: Principles and Applications*, New York 1982, p. 376.

as developmental environment (despite the fact that it is “not the environment, but means and objective of development”)⁷ are the reason why schools today cannot fully perform the function of enculturation and compensate for the general impoverishment of the developing environment. Given the targeting of information environment on the formation of consumer values and environmental destruction of traditional cultural space, the responsibility of educational institutions for cultural creativity of psychological and pedagogical practices increases.

Various authors comprehend enculturation as the process of familiarizing an individual with culture, assimilation of standards and patterns of behavior congenial to a given culture⁸; assimilation, in the course of personal development, of ethical, aesthetic, moral, philosophical views inherent to a national culture, valuation and meaningful benchmarks and habits and ways of development of creative activity⁹, coalescence with the native culture, establishment of a refined person, an intellectual¹⁰, are regarded as enculturation.

Regarding intellectual, creative and moral development of a person in connection with the nature of assimilation of cultural values has a long scientific tradition. Wilhelm Dilthey, the author of “explanatory psychology”, believed that cultural context only affords a convincing scientific explanation of the specifics of human mental development; cultural phenomena appear in the “objectified psychic life”¹¹, which is then subjectified by each individual in the process of cultural development. Edward Spranger argued that understanding a person outside culture is impossible, as one is “woven into the grand picture of the world of spirit, historical and social in nature...”¹². Herbert Spencer and Wilhelm Wundt believed that culture determined a specific flow of mental processes; therefore, it is particularly illegitimate to compare people using uniform criteria of intellectual development.

Substantiation of the thesis presuming dependence of mental idiosyncrasies of a group on their culture permitted us to extend this pattern onto the

⁷ W.P. Zinchenko, E.B. Morgunov, *Chieloviek razvivaiushchisia: ocherki rossijskoi psichologii*, Moscow 1994, p. 29.

⁸ M.J. Herskovits, *Man and his works: the science of cultural anthropology*, New York 1948.

⁹ G.W. Drach, *Kulturologia*, Rostov na Donu 2004.

¹⁰ A.I. Kravchenko, *Kulturologia*, Moscow 2001.

¹¹ W. Doltey, *Opisatielnaya psichologia*, [in:] *Istoria psichologii: teksty*, Moscow 1992, p. 340.

¹² E. Shpranger, *Dva vida psichologii*, [in:] *Istoria psichologii: teksty*, Moscow 1992, p. 349.

psychology of an individual. National culture constitutes a system where peculiarities of internalization of values are different for each person and characterize the “overall level of culture”, which has an impact on one’s psychological characteristics. Establishment of creative personality cannot be understood as labeling selfhood in its juxtaposition to the universal difference (hence the dissimilitude — originality criterion was used to identify creative process, or self-actualization, in humanistic psychology), while it represents the unity of intra- and inter-psycho processes.

Culture is “the spiritual being of a society and an individual”¹³. Spirituality, semantically related to religious concept of the “The Holy Spirit”, is the foundation of morality and is attained by a person in the process of cultural appropriation of ethical, aesthetic, religious and worldview values. In different national cultures, those values are fundamental, occasioned by historical, geographical and mental peculiarities of people that belong to a given national culture. They perform a safekeeping function, aimed at creating conditions for the productive development of a nation. Neglecting those while uncritically appropriating values of other cultures may cause negative psychological consequences. Universalism of cultural attitudes does not at all mean leveling individual distinctness of each human being existing within culture.

The paradox of culture is that due to its “universal” nature it performs the regulatory function of “bonding”, of ordering the existential and psychological diversity, while at the same time being targeted at the development of individuality, creative uniqueness of each person: “Human diversity has given rise to culture, while culture would enhance that diversity”¹⁴. That understanding is consistent with the concept of sustainability of constraints imposed by culture as “a system of rules, explicit and implicit, established by groups in order to ensure their survival, including attitudes, values, beliefs, standards and models of behavior that are common to a group, but implemented in different ways by each specific community within a group, passed on from generation to generation, relatively stable, yet capable of changing over time”¹⁵.

In culture promotes the establishment of systemic verbal and non-verbal means of expressing one’s relationship to another person and to the world.

¹³W.D. Didenko, *Duchovaia realnost’ i iskusstvo: eststika prieobrazheniia*, Moscow 2005, p. 7.

¹⁴W.P. Zinchenko, *Ochen’ subektyvnie zamietki o psichologicheskoi diagnostike*, Chieloviek 1, 2001, p. 89.

¹⁵D. Macumoto, *Psichologia i kultura*, St. Petersburg 2002, p. 31.

Those means have their own specific features in each culture, their own semi-otic vehicles of transmission of information: its coding, interpretation, understanding, storage, extraction, transmission. It is no coincidence that linguistic context is primarily associated with the concept of the crucial role of culture in human development: “A cultural-historical approach does not know a different ‘medium’ of development but verbal”¹⁶. Being shaped in culture and reflecting its specifics, a language becomes representative of cultural attitudes mediating their conversion to personal values. As language contributes the most to the development of semantic system of a personality in comparison with other systems of signs (while meaning, according to A.N. Leontiev, is the strategic property of personality), it is important to increase the specific share of speech culture in an educational context.

According to the “ontological dialogics” of Vladimir Bibler, culture constitutes a form of existence and interaction of people of different ages, a dialogue between such individuals during which personal development occurs¹⁷. The ability to communicate with the thinkers of the past is facilitated by “the works” (Vladimir Bibler) or, alternatively, cultural artifacts (Michael Cole). Being an open system, the meanings within each culture are turned both inward and outward — to the other: the present and the future cultures. The decrease of developing communication mediated by “works” (reading) is fraught with risk of decline in human culture, in its intellectual and creative performance.

Cultural context was at the heart of concepts relating to human development in cultural-historical psychology. According to Leo Vygotsky, “between the child’s personality and his cultural development, we are equal”¹⁸. A personality is understood as an entity endowed with creative potential and the one implementing it. Culture produces its effect primarily on the system of human relations with the world. Development of an individual in one’s creative originality is stipulated by the nature of enculturation.

The theses advanced by cultural-historical psychology draw upon the tradition of the Russian philosophical thought with respect to understanding the meaning of culture. Vladimir Solovyov, Nikolai Berdyaev, Pavel Florensky and

¹⁶F.T. Mikhailov, Problema metoda kulturno-istoricheskoi psichologii, Kulturno-istoricheskaja psichologia 2, 2005, p. 33.

¹⁷W.S. Bibler, Ot naukoucheniia k logikie kultury: dva filosofskih vviedeniia v dvadcat’ piervyi vek, Moscow 1991.

¹⁸L.S. Wygotskiy, Istoria kulturnogo razvitiia normalnogo i nienormalnogo rebionka, Psichologia lichnosti. Teksty, Moscow 1982, p. 161.

Semyon Frank believed that culture was the only force capable of confronting social and personal destruction. Culture, in their opinion, possesses huge creative potential — a spiritual and moral, salutary, transforming force. By assimilating culture, a person actualizes that potential, while personality is established in the process.

Emphasizing the complexity of defining culture, occasioned by its conceptual amplitude, Semyon Frank understood it as “an array of absolute values created before and being created now by humanity that constitutes spiritual and social being. In the minds of humanity, there lives a series of eternal ideals — truth, goodness, beauty, sanctity — that are propelling one towards scientific, artistic, moral and religious creation”¹⁹. Such understanding of culture is juxtaposed on the one hand with material culture, and civilization and socialization on the other. Then again, it also enables discussing culture as something assimilated by everyone in varying degrees, which determine their creative productivity: “Everything that has to do with culture, being essential for a person, is, in a certain different sense, distinguished by complete uselessness. ‘Practical’ people have no need for any religion, art, morality, or science in their highest meaning”²⁰. Therefore enculturation is not something mandatory, occasioned by the very existence, a regulatory process of socialization, but an individual and selective occurrence.

The need to consider culture in the axiological context that determines the trend of personal development and its potency is emphasized by modern scholars: “Culture should be regarded [...] as the most important source and the driving force that determines the direction and the form of human development”²¹. Russian scholastic tradition which understands human development as a process determined by culture is occasioned is rooted in the early 20th-century work of Leo Vygotsky, the founder of cultural and historical psychology, for whom “the concepts of culture and spirituality, if not coincided, differed little from one another”²². Later, the “problem of spirituality”, a significant element in the understanding of the phenomenon of creativity was “forgotten for a long time”²³. Development of psychology compellingly demands its re-integration

¹⁹S. Frank, *Nieprochitanoie: stat'i, pis'ma, vospominania*, Moscow 2001, p. 43.

²⁰*Ibidem*, p. 45.

²¹W.P. Zinchenko, E.B. Morgunov, *Chieloviek razvivaiushchisia*, p. 13.

²²*Ibidem*, p. 206.

²³*Ibidem*.

into the explanatory apparatus of culture. Anthropocentric theory of culture puts a person into the spotlight of scientific ideas; a person the one “who must transcend oneself to be oneself”, aspiring to an ideal set in culture, thus “culture means labor, tension, effort, even a burden”²⁴.

The level of development of creative personality depends on the degree of understanding and internalization of cultural values. Vadim Rosin argues that the importance of culture should be considered from the three standpoints: first, how culture influences social life; second, from the point of semiosis — the presence of signs and sign systems that are created in a culture, acquired, used and understood by the human; third, in terms of cultural conditioning of the creative mechanism²⁵.

Development of human creative potential is traditionally associated with enhanced degrees of freedom. That concept lies at the foundation of the humanistic theory of self-actualization. Hence, culture as a system of constraints may impede creative development of the individual only at a first glance. This, in particular, was stated by Umberto Eco: “One needs to bind self with constraints, the only place where one may freely create”²⁶. By performing the controlling function and, therefore, limiting the freedom of an individual, culture in the aggregate of its standards, values, attitudes, simultaneously delivers the stimulus of free choice and triggers free creative human action. Understanding that paradox requires distinguishing between the concepts of “absolute freedom” and “cultural freedom”. The first is freedom in a semantic vacuum, generating arbitrariness and random selection. The second — in the environment defined by a system of moral, ethical, aesthetic, religious coordinates, generating a creative person and responsible choices. Cultural norms do not block the manifestation of creative freedom, but regulate them in accordance with the requisite of preservation and development of a community of people united by that culture. The purpose of culture as a system of attitudes is to enable communication and understanding. Culture determines the languages of human communication and methods of their use. Within cultural groups, differentiated by diverse national, material and social characteristics, people use stable, traditional forms of expression of meanings, but creatively find their specific conceptual and emotional variations. Particular specificity of the use of vehicles

²⁴Ibidem, p. 19.

²⁵V.M. Rogozin, *Lichnost' i jejo izuchenie*, Moscow 2004.

²⁶U. Eco, *Zamietki na poliah „Imieni rozy”*, Imia Rozy, Moscow 1989, p. 439.

of culture is manifested “in both mundane, everyday forms of communication, and creative forms of reproduction of culture (such as research endeavor, art, education, etc.)”²⁷.

Cultural environment provides an opportunity for creative choice through which a person acquires non-random personal meaning and a way of life, gains a chance for an independent, socially significant self-evaluation. According to the concepts of Vladimir Bibler, culture is a form of self-determination “of an individual on the plane of personality, a form of self-determination of life, consciousness, thinking, which is to say a culture is a form of free decision and reconsideration of one’s fate in the realization of historical and universal responsibility”²⁸. Culture makes realization of personal elements in an individual possible, generating one’s responsibility for one’s actions.

It is an established practice of national philosophical and psychological thought to explain the impact of culture on personal and creative development by the circumstance that it prescribes a system of spiritual values. That spiritual plumb line affects semantic attitudes, personal meanings and, through them — the development of personality in the completeness of creative possibilities. Using the concept of “spiritual potential” in his research on creativity, Vladimir Shadrikov emphasized that culture plays a crucial role in the said development, through art, science and religion. As individual spiritual forces develop, one’s psychological qualities change as well — “in a spiritually developed human, every mental function is intelligent and moral”²⁹.

While emphasizing the creative role of cultural development, an important circumstance should be noted: culture is heterogeneous, its structure consists of nuclear, the most stable and psychically creative formation — the “reference culture”, as well as numerous subcultures and inorganic cultures (arising from different mental, geographical, historical environments). The character of internalization of values belonging to one or another cultural stratum will determine mental creativity of human development. It should hence be understood that the educational environment of secondary and higher education institutions, as a system dependent on culture (according to the semiotic terminology —

²⁷F.T. Mihaylov, *Kultura kak porozhdaiushchie chelovieka otnoshenie*, [in:] *Teoreticheskaja kulturologia*, Moscow 2005, p. 127.

²⁸A.V. Ahutin, *Ontologicheskaja dialogika kultury V.S. Biberla*, [in:] *Teoreticheskaja kulturologia*, Moscow 2005, p. 35.

²⁹V.D. Shadrikov, *Proishozhdenie cheloviechnosti*, Moscow 1999, p. 198.

a “secondary semiotic system”), may reflect ontological values of culture: ethical, aesthetic, philosophical, religious ones, which holistically transmit the semantics of reference culture, while educational space would thus perform the function of enculturation to the fullest extent. On the other hand, educational environment of higher and secondary schools may transmit eclectic values: subcultures (popular, for example), inorganic (humanist in their Protestant version), etc. In such a case, the process of enculturation cannot be accomplished. Transmission of cultural values is carried out in a systematic way, involving every component of an educational environment: semantic (the image of the teacher, axiological content of didactic material, characteristics of material space, etc.), pragmatic (type of reciprocal assistance between the teacher and the student) and syntactical (integrated transmission of ontological components of reference culture: ethics, aesthetics, philosophy and religion — not only in dedicated classes, but in every form of organization of educational process).

Given that the inorganic nature of humanistic concepts in their modern version is against the national values of Russian Orthodox culture, let us highlight some points of convergence and suggest a boundary settlement.

There is no doubt that the works of the theorists of modern humanistic thought, such as Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Natalie Rogers, Gordon Allport, Henry Murphy, Harold Kelly, Erich Fromm and others, with all the diversity of content in their approaches, are united in their deep interest in creative uniqueness and singularity of human personality. Acknowledgement of priority of the creative side of a person is an important idea of humanistic psychology. The concept is proximate to the notion of “reference” in classic national thought. In his writings, Vasily Zenkovsky, who advocated Christian approach towards issues of training and education that was in line with the national culture, quoted “the development of individuality in its creative depth”³⁰, as a basic principle of Orthodox pedagogy.

Abraham Maslow defined self-actualization as the full use of talents, abilities, capacities of a personality as a process of self-implementation of human potential. At the same time, he imagined a self-actualized individual not as an ordinary person with certain additions, but as an ordinary person from whom nothing had been taken away. The scholar believed that a “man in the street” is a kind of human being with silenced and suppressed abilities³¹. In the national

³⁰ V.V. Zen'kovskiy, *Pedagogika*, Klin 2002, p. 48.

³¹ A.G. Maslow, *Dalnie priediely cheloviechieskoy psichiki*, St. Petersburg 2007.

cultural tradition, a person created in the image and likeness of God is originally a creator, which is to say a potentially creative individual. That concept, which combines the theories under consideration, is productive from the perspective of development of creative potential in each student.

Although certain tenets of humanistic theory display undoubted proximity with the concepts of traditional Orthodox developmental psychology, substantial differences are nevertheless obvious. Perceptions of beingness of creative consciousness are organic for both approaches under consideration. Nevertheless, the claim of humanistic psychology that creative process is associated with “renouncing fear”³² and is inherently therapeutic, is inconsistent with the concepts of traditional cultural-historical psychology.

According to Orthodox (reference to national culture) thought, beingness as a creative egress of consciousness beyond the “Self” may be occasioned by two causes: the attainment of the Holy Spirit, or submission to the will of the evil one (charm); in other words, there is the creativity of good and the creativity of evil. Freedom that a personality exercises in an act of creation, was granted to each person at birth. “Freedom is the most valuable and the most basic to one”, but “it does not have the most valuable thing in freedom — its internal communications with what is good, with the truth — one’s freedom is the freedom for either good or evil”³³. The path to acquisition of freedom as the truth is difficult, yet all of human life, Orthodox tradition states, must be subordinated towards that objective — the attainment of creative freedom as the highest moral value. In the views of the thinkers of the Golden Age of Russian philosophy, such as Pavel Florensky, Semyon Frank, Vasily Zenkovsky, Nikolai Berdyaev, Nikolai Lossky and others, the idea that creativity is not sparked from the moral heights of the Divine Spirit, is disastrous both for the artist and society in general.

Carl Rogers believed that creative actualization of personality included growth and implementation of basic human potential. He envisioned people as development-oriented creatures, making progress and concerned with existential options. The scholar argued that the innermost essence of human nature is focused on moving ahead towards a particular purpose, while being constructive, realistic and positive. Rogers held that all humanity has a natural tendency to move towards independence, social responsibility, creativity and maturity³⁴.

³²Ibidem, p. 78.

³³V.V. Zen’kovskiy, *Pedagogika*, p. 53.

³⁴K. Rodzhers, *Kliient — centrirovannaia terapiia*, Moscow 1997.

That optimistic view of human nature and development of human society was not shared by Russian Orthodox thinkers, who believed that a person defiled by the original sin finds themselves in a situation where they continually need to overpower that natural (inherent) sinfulness. Development of the morals will was the principal job for an educator, as was the need to prepare a person “to the inner life, work at oneself, mastering the gift of freedom. That road is endless [...]. The main thing is continuous travel on the road to perfection”³⁵.

The approaches of humanistic psychology and national tradition towards the issue of the impact of authoritarian environment on human development are substantially integrated.

Arguing that creativity is potentially present in every human being from birth, Abraham Maslow admitted that most people lose that quality as a result of negative “domestication” in an authoritarian environment, to which formal education makes a great contribution.

The destruction of positive creativity by the authoritarian environment while cultivating obedience contrary to the need of education “in freedom” is the object of concern of the Orthodox thinkers: “There is no way to bring up the good by eliminating freedom in a child, while relying on obedience only”³⁶. Violation of human consciousness, its “breaking” or, even worse, the desire to “constantly bend (it) [...] leads almost inevitably to the degradation of inner strength and self-initiative”³⁷.

Thus, the main differences between the humanistic view of human psychological development and the concepts of reference in philosophical and psychological national (reference) thought are reduced to the role of moral and spiritual component. Its deficiency in today’s society with its evolving ideals of consumption requires a revision of axiological priorities of education in the secondary school environment and the inclusion of enculturation as a foremost priority.

³⁵ V.V. Zen’kovskiy, *Pedagogika*, p. 56.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 54.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 94.

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ENKULTURACJA I HUMANIZACJA W EDUKACJI: ZA I PRZECIWIW

Streszczenie

Wektor zmian ideowych podstawowych zasad systemu kształcenia powinien być zorientowany na wzmacnianie procesów enkulturacji, czyli przyswajania wartości kultury narodowej. Sugerowane w ramach artykułu humanistyczne podejście zawiera w sobie fundamentalne różnice konceptualne względem kultury odniesienia.

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