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ОНТОЛОГИЯ ДИАЛОГА:
ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ И ЭКЗИСТЕНЦИАЛЬНЫЙ ОПЫТ

ΕΙΔΟΣ

ONTOLOGY OF DIALOGUE:
HISTORICAL AND EXISTENTIAL EXPERIENCE

САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГ

КРОС-КУЛЬТУРНЫЙ И МЕЖРЕЛИГИОЗНЫЙ ДИАЛОГ: ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЕ И СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ АСПЕКТЫ

CROSS-CULTURAL & INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

ON HUMAN SOCIABILITY

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Multiculturalism is one of the characteristics that distinguishes contemporary western societies. In this social context, one could perceive the efforts of the different cultural traditions that coexist within the same society to have theirs respective identities recognized. This dynamic process raises a series of theoretical and practical problems. But the former need to be resolved first before any specific, practical solutions can be proposed.[1]

Education, as it is understood in the British tradition influenced by R.S. Peters, involves the initiation of the young members of a society in public traditions. In this regard, there seems to be a need to re-examine the relationships of the following within a democratic state: 1) the public and private spheres; 2) a person's rights and the common good; and 3) the individual and society, within a democratic State.

This re-examination is necessary so that education could more effectively assume its role in promoting an understanding of common ideals that are essential for the proper functioning of a democratic society. Concretely, the following questions could be posed. To what extent must citizens in a democracy be required to consider as their own the common ideal being posed to them? And, what should these ideals consist in? Do they refer to some abstract political rights or are the common ideals based on a substantive consensus about values and practices that forges a sense of community within a democratic state?

Throughout the history of civilization, different views about the relation between *education* and *society* abound and these could shed some light in finding the adequate responses to these questions.[2] The Greek classics, in

particular, could offer us an interesting perspective. More concretely, reading the classics can help us discern the questions that we need to ask concerning what we are doing not only in education but in our society as a whole.[3] Without doubt, we need to acknowledge that the configuration of our society is the same context for the development of education, in many respects, far removed from the Greek *polis*. For example the prevailing mentality in our time is immersed in liberalism. Thus we find a tension an even an opposition between ethical demands and different forms of political interests.

Nevertheless we could not fail to believe that rational dialogue is possible. By dialogue we are referring to a method of political discourse among persons in a democratic society. In this respect, although it is beyond the scope of this article, it is interesting to point out on one hand Habermas's position regarding the necessary submission to an ideal situation of dialogue[4], and on the other hand, Spaemann's criticism of Habermasrs ideal involving "a discussion free from all dominion", as a utopia of a totalitarian – anarchist character.[5]

1. Perception and Conduct of Persons in Society: two different approaches

Any perspective that we adopt with regard to man and his relations with society would have important consequences for education. Langford, in particular, considers this question in detail in his book on *Education, Persons and Society* and he contrasts two approaches represented by Locke, on one hand, and Gombrich on the other hand. It could be enlightening to discuss his ideas here.[6]

According to Locke[7], each individual constructs his unique way of seeing things from his own personal experience. Nevertheless, Locke emphasises that we cannot forget that our way of seeing the world is directly or indirectly determined by the way the world is; that is, by reality. On the other hand, according to Gombrich[8], seeing the world involves the influence of a social tradition. It therefore implies a certain social relativism. According to him, social tradition provides a way of seeing reality -not reality itself- and in this sense it is a social construction. But then, we could, in response, say that we could only make use of a way of seeing things in the present and only in certain -but not all- circumstances. Thus, while social tradition may have taught us to see things in a particular way, what we really see when we use this method of seeing, is determined by reality.

Aside from having different conceptions of perception, Gombrich and Locke also differed in the way they conceive conduct. Locke sees man as a rational individualist who has the power to choose and decide for himself what to do and how to do it. Thus for Locke, the relationship between seeing and doing is different from that suggested by Gombrich. According to the former, what we see depends on what is given us to be seen. It does not depend on a way of seeing things and what we see is therefore neutral with respect to any possible subsequent action. It is then reasonable to suppose that, two people in the same place and at the same time, will see the world in the same way. But it could not be assumed that they will act in the same way. They will only do so if their desires coincide.

Locke expects the same objects to affect different people in the same way, insofar as they share the same powers and rationality, and therefore they tend to act in the same way, but there is no reason why this should necessarily be so. Gombrich takes for granted that a way of seeing the world implies a particular way of acting in relation to it. Furthermore, a way of seeing is also a way of acting.

2. Human sociability

In contrast to both Locke and Gombrich, Aristotle defines man as a being that is necessarily political. This perspective has been to some extent revived by the so called *Communitarian* authors. More concretely, a person is considered to be by his social, cultural and historical circumstances. Taylor, Sandel and Macintyre – each one using a different aproach- have made the most powerful criticism of the liberal individualism. Taylor points out that the greatest part of contemporary liberal theory is based on an atomistic conception of the individual and on a vision of human conduct reduced almost exclusively to the desire and the freedom of choice. In contrast to this atomistic conception, particularly as presented in the writings of Robert Nozick, Taylor offers a concept of an intersubjective and relational self that emphasises the social, cultural, historical and linguistic dimensions in the constitution of personal identity. And in contrast to the voluntarist approach of human conduct, Taylor highlights the role of critical reflection, personal interpretation and rational evaluation. With similar arguments, Sandel draws our attention to the essential role of the community in the formation of personal identity by showing the inadequacy of the concept of an impersonal, free and igualitarian self that Rawl's *Theory of Justice* suggests, and by pointing out the importance of the cognitive dimensions of thought and deliberation in a theory of human conduct.

Macintyre, on the other hand, defends a teleological conception of human nature and a contextualised vision of human behaviour. According to his teleological conception, moral behaviour involves the exercise of virtues which necessarily involves doing something good, rather than to the more conscious adhesion to rules and principles – deontology. The good can be achieved through what Macintyre calls the "narrative unity" of human life. According to this contextualised approach to human behaviour, no agent can locate, interpret and evaluate actions if it is not within the frontiers of a moral tradition or a moral community. The great defect of the Enlightenment project, in trying to provide a rational basis to morality and politics, has been the rejection of both the teleological conception of human nature and the contextualised vision of human behaviour. Consequently, it left the individuals with no criteria to judge between rival values and with no moral context to give significance and coherence to their actions.

In this respect, Macintyre's point of view is similar to Aristotle. Human beings possess a specific nature which confers on them certain ends; virtues are those superior qualities of character that enable human beings to aim towards the end proper of human beings. However, these virtues are not just simple means to achieve an end .[9]. Virtues, as understood by Aristotle, cannot be exercised outside the political community; we are involved with others in a common project: that of living a good life.[10]

For Macintyre there are three central concepts: *practice, narrative unity of human life* and *tradition*. The first and third elements are social by nature, and together all three provide a rational framework for morality, a framework where the concept of virtue occupies a central position.

Aristotle wrote that man is by nature a being that can communicate and is a political animal. This affirmation is only intelligible if we start from a teleological concept of nature.

> "We may as well ask where language comes from or why we speak. It is obvious that we speak because we learnt how to do so from our parents. Anyone who hears no speech remains dumb, and anyone who never takes part in any form of communication cannot even be said to be able to think, because our thoughts are a kind of inner speech. And yet no one would say that language is a form of external determination which has become internalized".[11]

The fact that the human being needs the help of other men in order to learn to speak is simply a confirmation of the communal nature of man; since that which we can do through our friends is as though we did it ourselves.[12]

Rousseau on the contrary, tried to explain the nature of man by considering all the real historical and social conditions merely abstract dimensions. But, since man's reason is historical, in this radical abstraction of all history, the definition of man as a rational animal is lost. Thus, according to Rousseau, man is by nature a being without language and without society for him, the beginning of the historical existence of man involves to "move away from nature" and the historical process of humanisation is set in motion by contingent factors. It would appear that from the start he considers that man is "free" in a negative sense, that is, in so far as man is not determined by an instinctive integration in his social milieu.

But it is evident from common experience that every organism constitutes a system that interacts with its environment. Every living being occupies the centre of its world. Thus, each individual is an end in himself and his dignity is independent of any function.

> "A person's dignity is grounded in the fact that he is not just one aspect of reality amongst others, but that he is urged by his conscience to deal justly with reality. As a potentially moral being, a person deserves unconditional respect".[13]

It so happens that man does not necessarily remit the whole environment to himself; he may realise that he also is part of the environment for others. Precisely in this relativisation of the actual finite self, of one's own desires, interests and objectives, the person expands and becomes something absolute. Thus a system with a capacity to learn can take into account the relations of the systems surrounding it.

3. The natural tendencies of sociability

In this context, the social virtues are fundamental for the construction and preservation of society. This is why Aristotle insists that justice alone without friendship, would not be enough to maintain the unity of a society. We can therefore look at the social virtues, and include a reference to the natural tendencies on which they are founded.[14] This will make it easier for us to establish what makes up the basic structure of society in anthropological terms. It is important to realise that the virtues constitute a system: they can be analysed separately in terms of their features and effects, but really they are all interrelated.[15]

1. One of the virtues in Aristotelian thought is the virtue of piety. It is the tendency to seek the foundations of one's being, life and knowledge in the expression of the reverence to God, and in honouring our parents, society and country. The Latin term used to designate this is pietas, which is applied to

religious worship, filial love and patriotism. Patriotism, refers to reverence towards one's country, oners home, and it makes us acknowledge our immense debt to others.

Piety is the counterpart of honour. They are two sides of the same coin. They both entail veneration towards one's origin and one's creator. This is the reason why it is difficult to confuse honour with pride.

This virtue, which was more evidently manifested in the past, is feeble today. As a result of man losing a sense of his roots, man does not know who he is. Thus, he easily becomes bewildered. This is the image of the person without roots, a deeply confused being. All this is because piety has been undermined. Rootlessness produces inadequate citizens in society. If I owe nothing to anyone, if I do not acknowledge any origin, then I have become rootless. Similarly the person who has no sense of respect for his country cannot be an ideal citizen. We then need to ask ourselves whether it is possible to base citizenship on friendship alone. A typical vice of this tendency is racism: if we owe everything to our race, then freedom does not exist. We can thus see that these tendencies require virtues that enable man to do better and to be more himself.

2. Similarly, the tendency to respect legitimate authority is highlighted. This demands that we honour and give due respect to people in authority. We owe it to them by virtue of their duly constituted position or authority. The Latin term is observantia. This tendency is the natural basis for what is known as the principle of authority in social and political philosophy.

However, the acceptance of authority does not exclude – but demands – the constructive criticism of those aspects requiring improvement.

3. Included within this framework is the tendency to acknowledge the merit of those who are better than ourselves, to safeguard their reputation or to acknowledge their esteem (honor). To be a citizen, esteem is necessary, for without it, civil society is incomplete. Man naturally aspires for honour and a good reputation. He wants to be respected. He wants that his worthwhile contributions receive the recognition of others. In modern language, one way of referring to this tendency, even though the connotations are somewhat different, would be to talk of leadership. Another way would be to talk of the hero or the genius. This human tendency can be observed in all societies and its demands are satisfied through institutionalised ways of acknowledging or recognising excellence.

This is a natural tendency however, needs certain requisites in order to become a virtue. The aspiration for honour must be based on a genuine effort to become better as persons and on using honourable means. (Honour that is no more than an appearance involves a deception on a very intimate level).

4. There is also the tendency to follow what we are told, or to respect norms of behaviour. Obedientia is the Latin term. Lévi-Strauss calls this "the need for order", which he says is the ultimate foundation for society, and which Hobbes describes as "a desire for security". In fact, it does create security and confidence in the social order.

5. Man also has a tendency to present himself as he is, which is known as veracity (veritas and veracitas). In contemporary thought this is referred to as authenticity. The term can be understood in different ways. For example, in Kierkegaard and in existentialist thought, this is the tendency to tell the truth about oneself and the world, in general.

6. Similarly, man also has a tendency to "give what he is" (in Latin terms this would be called afabilitas and amicitia). In ordinary language, we refer to this as cordiality or cheerfulness. Max Scheler in his Wesen und formen der sympathie writes that this is one basis for society.

This tendency leads to the virtue known as friendship. In Aristotle's view the inclination towards having friends and sharing goods is the most important thing in life; but without a common origin and common honour, it is difficult to achieve. Enmity is thus a vice which destroys honour and piety. Moreover, the man who is not able to satisfy the need to form friendships is unhappy.

Friendship, however, must be compatible with other related tendencies such as to obey and to command. Furthermore, friendship does not require that everyone agrees all their opinions about a certain point. Adopting someone else's opinion might in itself be a sign of lack of interest or of indifference. Some people try to be non confrontational or pacific but the end result is that they contribute nothing. The differences in opinions need not foment enmity. Rather they are opportunities to rectify or to give a correction to another.

Furthermore, friendship gives expression to two interrelated human tendencies, without which the deep meaning of friendship would not be understood nor would social relationships be established: gratitudo and vindicatio.

7. The tendency to repay in some way for what we receive from others is gratitudo. It forms a whole network of social relationships of a non-juridical nature that arise out a sincere recognition of the good performed by individuals and groups.

We find that man tends to be grateful. However, gratitude, and the returning of favours or acknowledging what one has received (without an exchange of good things there can be no friendship), is a tendency that can become a vice. If we are ungrateful, that is, we do not remember the favours we have received, then this constitutes an offence against friendship (and against piety). In this

context, if we feel offended because we have received favours, then we are probably too proud. It is most probable that we have a false understanding of the concept of honour.

8. Related to gratitudo we find vindicatio, which is a tendency that seeks to re-establish the order or the property that has been damaged. Vindicatio is the spontaneous tendency upon which the entire edifice of justice and law is built. The existence of this tendency become obvious when offences against friendship and gratitude are committed. It is not easy to understand how vindicatio can be a natural tendency that is potentially virtuous. But vindicatio is not to be confused with revenge. Vindicatio can be expressed as anger. Thus, is anger always wrong? We could say that when we see that something is not right, there are grounds for being indignant. Thus, vindicatio should not be confused with enmity: vindicatio is intended to make a correction. Thus, social stability requires that wrongdoings should not go unpunished.

Consequently, if we separate vindicatio from friendship, then it is not virtuous (just as friendship would not be virtuous without piety and honour). This is obvious if we consider how it is related to forgiveness. Few would deny the tendency to forgive, but forgiveness presupposes that a wrong has been done.

The corresponding vice of friendship is hatred: this feeling emerges as a deviation of vindicatio, and becomes an obsession. It is obvious that someone who hates loses his freedom with respect to evil. When he desires to return evil with evil, then in a sense he becomes a slave to that evil desire, and is prone to commit a cruel act.

9. Man also has a tendency to give of what he has. This is liberalitate in Latin. It is a natural tendency to give, which M. Mauss regards as the ultimate foundation of social relationships (Essai sur le don).

In this regard, indifference towards others is a vice. To be indifferent means that we do not care about others and we do not mind whether they act in one way or another. But tolerance is one thing and indifference is something else. It is clear that everyone is responsible for himself/herself; but this does not mean that other people are of no interest to us.

To raise indifference to the status of a social panacea would result in the destruction of society; it denies man's nature. Both hatred and indifference are profoundly wrong because they are offences against human dignity. It is obvious that these attacks against the dignity of the human being must be rejected, and the damage they cause to others must be avoided. But if this tendency (to give what one has) is virtuous, then it must lead in the direction of promoting human dignity. Here, we reiterate its relation with the idea of honour.

Since all these social virtues are based on natural tendencies, they can be taught with the help of education, primarily within the family, but also - and very effectively- at school. More than the norms, which are in any case indispensable, social virtues constitute the more ideal reference points to indicate the tenor and character of co-existence in society, the natural place for human sociability.

NOTES

[1] Cfr. Naval, C., *Educar ciudadanos. La polémica liberal-comunitarista en educación*. (2ª ed.). Pamplona: EUNSA, 2000.

[2] Cfr. Gutmann, A., *Democratic Education*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987.

[3] Cfr. Salkever, S.G., *Finding the mean. Theory and Practice in Aristotelian Political Philosophy*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990.

[4] Cfr. J. Habermas, *Conciencia moral y acción comunicativa*. Barcelona: Ediciones 62, 1985.

[5] Cfr. R. Spaemann, *Crítica de las utopías políticas*. Pamplona: EUNSA, 1980. P. 223-247 ("La utopía del buen gobernante").

[6] Cfr. Langford, G., *Education, Persons and Society. A Philosophical Enquiry*. Hong Kong: MacMillan, 1985. (Chap. 2: "Philosophical Foundation").

[7] Cfr. J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, abridged and ed. by J.W. Yolton, J.M. Dent. London, 1977; and *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, ed. J.W. Gough, Basil Blackwell. Oxford, 1956. Also J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ed. by Oskar Piest. Indianapolis-New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc, 1957 (1863).

[8] Cfr. E. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*. Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1959.

[9] "For what constitutes the good for man is a complete human life lived at its best, and the exercise of the virtues is a necessary and central part of such life, not a mere preparatory exercise to achieve such a life. We thus cannot characterize the good for man adequately without already having made reference to the virtues" (A. Macintyre, *After Virtue*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981. P. 140).

[10] Cfr. Mulhall, S. & Swift, A., *Liberals & Communitarians*. P. 80-82.

[11] R. Spaemann, *Basic Moral Concepts*. London and New York: Routledge, 1989. P. 62–63.

[12] Cfr. Aristóteles, *Eth. Nic.*, 1112b 25.

[13] R. Spaemann, *Basic Moral Concepts*. London and New York: Routledge, 1989. P. 73.

[14] Cfr. el artículo de Choza, J., *Etica y Política: Un enfoque antropológico*, Etica y Política en la sociedad democrática. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1981. P. 17-74; and L. Polo, *Quién es el hombre?*. Cap. VII ("Las virtudes sociales").

[15] In Classical thought, the most systematic studies on the social virtues are to be found in book IV of Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* and questions 101 to 119 of St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* II-II.

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КУЛЬТУРНЫЕ РЕВОЛЮЦИИ В ИСТОРИИ РОССИИ, ИЛИ «КУДА Ж НАМ ПЛЫТЬ?»

Владимир ЖИДКОВ

«Национальный характер... есть последствие исторической жизни и только уже в сложившемся виде может служить для объяснения ее особенностей. Таким образом, прежде чем объяснить историю русской культуры народным характером, нужно объяснить сам русский народный характер историей культуры. <...> Наиболее выдающейся чертой русского народного склада оказалась полная неопределенность и отсутствие резко выраженного собственного национального обличья».

П.Н. Милюков. Очерки по истории русской культуры. В 3 т.т. Т. 2. Вера. Творчество. Образование. М., 1994. С. 14.

«Каковы лингвистически отмеченные русские качества? Это, прежде всего, удаль, широта и прямота; сметка и смекалка; гостеприимство (хлебосольство), (за)душевность и щедрость; но также беспечность, бесхозяйственность, расхлябанность, лень и барство и даже хамство, свинство, дикость и варварство... Как видим, сочетание достаточно противоречивое..., однако в этом объединении есть определенная логика. Во-первых, большинство из этих качеств «эндемично»... , крайне трудно поддаются переводу на иностранные языки <...> Во-вторых, почти все эти качества обозначают некоторые крайние проявления (как положительные, так и отрицательные)... Можно также сказать, что лингвистическим инвариантом всех ... «русских» качеств является отсутствие ограничителей или сдерживающих тенденций... Русские охотно признают у себя разные недостатки, важно только, чтобы это были «выдающиеся» недостатки, связанные так или иначе с идеей чрезмерности».

Е.В. Рахилина. Когнитивный анализ предметных имен: семантика и сочетаемость. М., 2000, с. 96-97.

За тысячелетнюю историю России народ ее пережил немало войн, революций и других катаклизмов. Объяснить эту историю только с позиций марксистского тезиса – «бытие определяет сознание» – решительно невозможно. Потому что революции начинаются в головах у людей, а затем они пытаются воплощать свой замысел в жизнь. Чаще