"QUO VADIS", PEDAGOGICS: ON THE RATIONAL AND MYSTICAL WAY OF ACQUISING THE HUMAN

“Quo vadis”, pedagógicos: sobre la forma racional y mística de adquisición del ser humano

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ABSTRACT

“Deepening” and “expansion” of man is the essence of differences that lie between Oriental and Western cultures. On the basis of a comparative analysis of the two civilizations – the Oriental and Western cultural types centered around different understanding of human nature, the principle of human-oriented approach in the design and implementation of the education system is revealed: to identify, disclose and realize human potential.

Keywords: Human nature, education, the Oriental and Western cultural types, dialogue, human-oriented approach.

РЕЗЮМЕ

«Углубление» и «расширение» человека – суть отличий восточной и западной культур. На основе сравнительного анализа двух цивилизаций – восточного и западного культурного типов, основанных на различных представлениях о природе человека, раскрывается принцип человекосообразности при проектировании и реализации системы образования: выявить, раскрыть и реализовать потенциал человека.

Ключевые Слова: Природа человека, образование, восточный и западный типы культуры, диалог, принцип человекосообразности.

“It is probably true quite generally that in the history of human thinking the most fruitful developments frequently take place at those points where two different lines of thought meet. (…) hence if they actually meet, that is, if they are at least so much related to each other that a real interaction can take place, then one may hope that new and interesting developments may follow”.

(Werner Heisenberg)

“I’m crying out for a man
Since times, when everyone defies him”.

(Boris Pasternak)
At the end of almost every lecture about creative learning systems one can often hear students’ questions: “If the science of pedagogy knows the systems of developing, problem-based and heuristic learning, why so far they have not found their proper place in the practice of education? “After all, they also solve (and it has been proven!) many human problems, one’s success in life, as well as make it possible to overcome a number of problems of today’s society? Why the percentage of using S. Frene’s systems in France itself is less than 7 %, and developing education is not just gaining scope of use, but on the contrary, the number of schools implementing it is reduced? Why is it only about 3% of tasks in textbooks and handbooks that are creative ones? The rest are designed to test the acquisition of information – strange and no-one’s, which in no way is the knowledge of each particular student. Finally, “Why the transfer, and this is why, the monologue nature of the content of education (meant to transfer sociocultural experience of humanity) does not change, which is not taking into account the learner’s meanings, objectives, mission?

“And nothing has changed”- the society is not ready to accept things having obvious benefits for the person. For the same reason, the commandments of the Sermon on the Mount are being violated. Why that?

It is obvious that the failure of society ‘to hear’ a person’s achievements or those of individual people, to accept their achievements, refer to the concepts of society’s educability and its historical “sensitivity“ or “audibility“. Society’s “audibility“ and its historical memory start with a person and his ability to hear other people and himself.

The XXI century is the century of discovery of the man and the world inside him/her, rather than discovery of the world around him. French scientist Claude Levi-Strauss stated with certainty that the XXI century will either be a humanitarian century, or will never be at all. In theory and practice of pedagogy over the past two decades there have appeared new terms, forming the basis of philosophical thought for a number of key ancient oriental trends. We are talking about the learner’s self-realization, self-change, the student’s mission, predestination, meta-subject nature. Their authorship belongs to the research school of human-oriented education by A.V. Hutorskoy, having developed and implemented a methodological principle of the design and implementation of education: to identify, disclose and realize human potential.

Almost every education system begins with the question “Who is the man?” We are talking about the view on human nature. This is the first methodological level of the education system design, revealing the essence of the question, “Why teach?”

“In only after answering this question, can we go to the level of – “What to teach? The third level is an executive one – “How to teach?”

There are two ancient views on the essence of human nature: a Man is “tabula rasa” and a Man is “the unknown seed plant”. The idea on these two views on human nature has been most vividly formulated by Lebanese writer D.H. Gibran. “They tell me, waking from the sleep: ‘You and the world in which you live are just a grain of sand on the boundless shore of a boundless sea’. And I say to them in a dream: ‘I am the infinite sea, and all worlds are but grains of sand upon my shore’” (Gibran 2008). Here the position of the East and the West as the cultural types diverge dramatically, which specifies two different paths to knowledge – the way outward and inward. The way outside is the path of rationalism, scientism, filling tabula rasa with writings, the
way of communication, spending continuous whole in favor of the discrete. The path inside is the acquisition of the man himself, of meta-subject beginnings.

“The West sought to answer the questions, what the world is, and what place the man takes in this world, but the Orient reproduced the world out of their inner feelings and comprehension of a Man as the only, worthy of attention, self-worth” (Вебер 1994). These differences affect the deep-rooted dialogue of cultures, the ratio of phylogeny and ontogeny, reflect different ways of thinking, ideas about the nature of the person, as well as the meanings and purposes of education.

“Logos” of education

The search for a human among the people has a long history. The humanity passed a long way from the famous Greek philosopher with a lantern in his hand to the words of Boris Pasternak, cited in the epigraph. This path led through many spheres and the worlds of philosophical, psychological and natural science research. However, the lantern of Diogenes illuminated the field of pedagogic research selectively. But only in the last decades, thanks to the era of global world changes, the extensions of external human limits, depersonalization and standardization of the main areas of human activities, the lantern of Greek philosopher Diogenes lit up the world of education fully.

There appeared new terms – “individual trajectory”, “heuristics”, “competence” and a number of others, which have caused “launching” of hundreds of dissertation research, numerous attempts to revise the answers to the three famous questions of didactics: “Why teach?”, “What to teach?” “How to teach?” The majority of these research concerns the level of education contents and training technologies. However, these studies are not very effective without answering the main question of didactics: “Why teach?”

Since the middle of the last century, which proclaimed the era of the problem-based, developing, student-centered learning, several decades have passed. However, with few exceptions, orientation towards the student's personality differed little from the annals of didactics in antiquity. For example, in the Egyptian school, as well as in the family, an example of their elders was the primary method of education. “Obedience – this is the best quality in a human” (Джуринский 2000). And despite physical punishment remaining in the past (“The child carries the ear on his back and you have to beat him, so that he should hear”), I. Gerbart's didactics did not change the content of this view of education. The Egyptian appeal to the student – “Be attentive and listen to my speech; do not forget anything of what I am telling you” (Джуринский 2000) even today could serve as the motto of the exam and is still in tune with an active subjective role of teachers and officials from education, who know what is necessary for an individual, state and society. Bright robe of a “person” does not reflect the student's right to disclosure of their abilities and design of their own educational trajectory. Personal orientation in the education system is not able to identify, disclose and realize the potential of the person who has something “more”, than just an individual person has. That is why in today’s school pupils often have to “sit still, be careful and obey the orders of the teachers” (Хуторской 2001).
Several years ago an important step was made in enhancing the activity beginning in education – the fourth generation educational standards were introduced. However, despite the presence in the text of terms, such as “individual educational trajectory”, “meta-subjectivity” and a number of others, the major problem of their content and implementation has been the undisclosed essence, designated by the terms. In particular, it concerns the meta-subject content of education, the absence of creative direction of educational activities; insufficient elaboration of mechanisms of their introduction into educational practice; non-scientific classification of a number of terms in the form of separation of subject, cognitive, communicative and regulatory universal educational actions apart from the personal ones.

The reason is simple: the system-activity approach of the authors of new educational standards is based on the so-called internalization (conversion or acquisition of the external experience of humankind into the inner experience of the student). The human “is closed”, or is not present in the educational standards. The student, as it has been for many centuries, is seen as “tabula rasa”, required to be filled in with the external, “alien” characters. However, this transfer-monologue does not take account of the student in education himself – his mission, predestination, characteristics. The information transfer is a way to “closing” the personality, and losing such personality “navigation” qualities, as a dialogue and competence approach to one’s activities organization (e.g., goal-setting, reflexivity), while creativity and cognitivism create a problem of motivation for cognition. It orients education for preparing a ‘warehouseman” with an “alien” content of the “storage”, rather than a “builder” of “his own” way.

Mastering the alien external and “correct” information does not change the person, and allows you to see the world through the eyes of a stranger. Monologist education system produces a Monologist Apprentice, seems to be a factory of stereotypes of thinking, communication, behavior (Король 2013).

Ability to copy and transfer over a distance of no-man’s and general information extends the outside limits of the human. However, the extension of the outer limits of the human denies the deepening of a human to his own image, or, as Karl Jaspers wrote, “gives rise to border the self”. “Compression” of time for a person reduces one’s ability to hear ourselves and the others (Zimbardo 2008), which means that it “closes” the way to others and to oneself, alienates people from each other, like dispersal of stars in an expanding universe.

The reason for the transfer of knowledge as the only possible way of education is “A is not equal to B” logic of Aristotle. It envisaged the denial of subject-subject model of teacher and student interaction, equality in communication. In fact, the negation of the very wave nature of consciousness, in which fundamental laws are the laws of dualism, where the electron, as we know, is a particle and a wave at the same time. Way rational anticipates the emergence of post-human and anthropological catastrophe.

The acquisition of “alien” leads to the fact that the post-human thinking and knowledge generated by him results in “prosthetic” communication and information. Post-human is a “man advanced” (homo extendi), due to telecommunication extension. This is the reason for the fact that Aristotle’s view of human as “tabula rasa” has led to the loss of a human in the western educational tradition.
“Tao” of education

A radically different view on the issue of what the essence of a human is allows us to talk about a different system of didactics, the basic principle of which is to identify, reveal and realize human potential.

“Tabula rasa”, when struck by the light of Diogenes’ lantern, with rare exceptions, throws a huge white spot on the place of human in education. One such exception is the research school of human-oriented education by A.V. Hutorskoy. As a result of the research (during the years 1989-2015), they defined the basic methodological principle of human education design and implementation – the principle of human-oriented education: education is a means of identifying and implementing human abilities in relation to themselves and the world around them.

Such an understanding is a continuation of the humanist tradition, which defines a person as “the seed of an unknown plant”. This tradition is based on Socrates’ maieutics, pedagogical views of J.-J. Rousseau, L.N. Tolstoy, P.F. Kapterev, K.N. Wentzel, P.P. Blonsky, Russian cosmist’s philosophies of N.F. Fyodorov, V.S. Solovyov, K.E. Tsiolkovsky, P.A. Florensky, A.L. Chizhevsky, V.I. Vernadsky, as well as other scientists of the XX-XXI centuries.

The position of Leo Tolstoy can be traced in the letter of P. Bharati, where the Indian author wrote, “Ever since I came to this country, now more than four years ago, I could not find one soul who could talk his views of life from within the deepest depth of his being. I have met “great“ men, savants, writers and philosophers in London, New York and Boston. But all of them could only talk about what others think. They seemed to me to be human sacks of bundles of others’ thoughts. They have not a single thought of their own. They deal in others’ thoughts, ideas and sentiments“ (Толстой 2013: 63).

Thus, Nikolai Berdiaev believed that ‘Small minds’ (ratio) stood over the ‘Great minds’ and dismembered the live integrity of being, cooling down their warmth.

Speaking of the Russian character, Lev Karsavin, a famous philosopher of the twentieth century, wrote (1992: 322), “The attraction of a Russian person to the absolute ideal has been repeatedly pointed out ... For the sake of the ideal he is ready to give up everything, to sacrifice everything: having doubted in an ideal or in its close feasibility makes a sample of unprecedented bestiality or mythical indifference to everything”.

Such philosophers as A.S. Khomiakov, I.V. Kireyevsky, K.S. Aksakov, F.M. Dostoevsky, and a whole galaxy of prominent representatives of the “Russian philosophical Renaissance” managed to avoid one-sided rationalism and strove for integral knowledge, the super-rational one.

The halation of this Scientific School extends to the level of higher education, which confirms the fundamental nature and the demand of the human-oriented principle. In particular, the Mission of Chongqing Polytechnic University (China) is as follows: “Expand the innate goodness of a human”, the Mission of the Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno (Belarus) is: “To identify, disclose and realize the potential of the human and the University in the space of intercultural dialogue”. The university, respectively, uses technologies focused on the creation of a student's own educational products.
Each seed of an unknown plant has its own task – cultural, psychological, social, etc., its purpose and its mission. The task of the education system is to help identify them, provide an opportunity to build up their own educational trajectory, which is a trajectory of a person settling into the world around us, filling the objects of this world by one’s own meaning and content. The role of the cultural and historical heritage is the role of a mirror, in which the student sees his own educational product and perceives himself.

And here we face an entirely different methodology of teaching, the essence of which is that the student creates his own knowledge system, fills the world with their own meaning in the dialogue with the achievements of humanity, changing himself at the same time. To do this, he is given the opportunity to learn the object of reality, and not to obtain information about it from the book, and only by creating one’s own subjective primary product, he compares it with the cultural and historical analogue. The knowledge, accumulated by humanity, or rather, the accumulated information, is not rejected by the students, but serve the educational environment to compare “one’s own” with the “alien”. The comparison result will be a generalized product of a learner – the external (created slogan, created algorithm, essays, etc.), and the inner ones reflecting the changes that have taken place with the learner.

Then the evaluation criteria in this coordinate system, which is the pupil as the seed of an unknown plant – should be based not on the degree of pattern matching (“what was given, that I told”), but on the degree of deviation from this pattern. It is the degree of deviation, which is the natural form of one person’s difference from another.

Hence, the construction of their individual educational trajectories by the learners students (student), by comparing “their own” with the “alien”, which is the path of self-cognition, student’s self-change.

In other words, the way to external world is the way to oneself. The philosopher V.V. Ivanov stated about this as follows: “Whatever we did do, we describe ourselves. We think that we describe the outside world, the reality, resulting in models built, theories constructed. But, in the end, it happens that in this way we are trying to understand ourselves (with the help of some tools arranged by us in a certain way): not just an observer, but also monitoring tools are already built into the system – the world view that we create” (Лысенко, Рубец 2015). These words reproduce the essence of an ancient principle of microcosm similarity to macrocosm.

“The Way” to oneself inevitably gives rise to “one’s own” knowledge. Overcoming ourselves, we look at ourselves from the outside, creating personal knowledge. Hence, we come to an important conclusion: the personal meanings, knowledge, as well as student's motivation and creativity are generated thanks to his reference to his essence. Moreover, the learner creates as much personal knowledge, as he changes himself. Openness of the educational environment defines the meaning of student's discoveries made not in search of “new lands”, but by the way of their filling with the learner’s meaning and content. The discovery changes the student: one cannot make a discovery, without having an internal ‘soil’, and being ready to do so. A person cannot generate knowledge about the world and create his product, if he does not change himself.

In other words, to make one’s “own” means to commit an act of self-cognition and self-change. In comparison of “one's own” with the “alien” there happens for the
student not only self-realization, the creation of “his own” product, but also it embodies the “path to oneself” – to one’s moral beginning, in contrast to the “expansion” of the outer limits of the learner through the information – the way “from oneself”.

By the way, tens of thousands of articles and books have been written on the need to develop creative and moral capacities in student education, the unity of the educational process and that of up-bringing. And not just written but also implemented in practice … extensively: if you want to teach the student to think, it means that it is necessary to introduce the subject “Thinking”, if you want to make a student well bred, it is necessary to introduce the subject of “Upbringing”. The main thing is to “give”, “teach”, “transfer”. However, the situation with both upbringing, and “thinking” is getting worse. The reason lies in the loss of a human in education, the absence of his dialogue possibility with the achievements of humanity, which is not possible in the transfer “mode”, determined by the meanings and purposes of traditional education. The concept of tradition itself points out to the stereotype and monologism, exit difficulty beyond one’s limits, fear to touch the “holy of the holies” – the transfer of the right knowledge from the teacher to the student.

The system of education of human-oriented type embraces both Western European, and Oriental educational traditions – “Logos” and “Tao”. Russian philosopher G.S. Pomeranz wrote (2013: 26), that “Russia perceived openness to the God from the Byzantine icons, which were reaching the heart, even without the knowledge of the Greek language; and accepted the western - since the Renaissance - openness to the world and a human, which became home for the Russian intelligentsia. But even before that, Russia accepted from the Chinese - through the medium of the Mongols - the poll tax and mutual responsibility system”.

The very idea of a dialogue between one’s own and the alien takes us to Western doctrine of communication. The interactive nature of a human makes the methodology “core” of human education system. “A human – is an equation of myself and the Other”, as M. Bakhtin wrote (1979: 126). “We can know ourselves as much as we learn who we are not” – one of the main thoughts of Xenology, the science of the “Alien”. A human compares himself with another person, and our understanding of how we evaluate the others affects human behavior.

“Oriental” nature of pedagogical innovations of the Scientific School mentioned above is based on the reference to the concept of self, inner nature of a human – the source of his mission and self-change. There is quite a lot of evidence of the internal integrity priority to the outside – discrete in the annals of the Orientalist thought.

“My destiny lies in me, not in heaven.” This Taoist proverb and a quote from “Guan Zi”, is given by J. Needham (Needham 1962). “Search the wisdom beyond oneself is the height of stupidity” (Toyo Eytē, “The Book of sayings” (Kyu dzo si)). “There is nothing impossible. If a person will show the determination, he can move heaven and earth at will”, or “I do not know the way to defeat others, but the way to defeat myself” (Yamamoto 2005: 74). “A human can conquer even the sky. If his will is focused and his spirit is active, no fate and no omens have power over him” (Цзижу 1997).

Obviously, there is nothing surprising in the fact that the basic principles of student-centered learning, put forth by A.V. Hutorskoy (Хуторской 2005), have a completely clear contents of the culture of ancient societies.
The recognition of the uniqueness of the individual and self-worth of each student resembles an original man who has his own predestined and genetically founded “program” of education, realized in the form of its individual trajectory in relation to general education. This postulate reflects one of the oldest ideas of human culture – everyone has their predestination and their mission.

Thus, according to the Indians, every person is placed on the earth by the Creator to fulfill his destinations. And parents-Indians respect the freedom of choice for their children. “Everything on the earth has its purpose, every disease has a drug that cures it, and every person has his destination” (Высказывания индейских вождей и старейшин). From the standpoint of this Scientific School, the mission of a human is self-cognition and self-realization in relation to oneself and the world. The “unknown plant seed” has its own growth trajectory.

In the culture of the ancient peoples predestination is combined with non-interference in the lives of the Others. This implies two other important principles of personality-oriented education: 1) the acknowledgment by each student and teacher of the uniqueness and individual intrinsic value of any other person; 2) each student, recognizing the uniqueness of the other person, must be able to interact with him on humanitarian grounds.

Here are some examples. A researcher of Indian culture Brant states that one common characteristic cultural trait of the Indians is their noninterference. “In Pikogan community, for example, I noticed quite early, that people do not impose you their way of thinking.” Another interesting fact is how a person in the community tells another person about the upcoming event. “Rarely, if ever, it can be observed that people create tension or break the harmony, trying to force anyone to make a decision” (Spielmann 1998).

Let us compare with what we know from other cultures – the Far Eastern one.

“It is quite normal for China, Japan, and in general, for all the Oriental area, just to sit back and never discuss your inner life. So it is in Tibet. Thus, I recently talked to a Tibetan. Pilgrims never discuss among themselves their spiritual experiences ... It is believed that your inner life should be, sort of, coherent, unbroken” (Высказывания индейских вождей и старейшин).

A deep sense of respect and openness to the other is reflected in the Navajo proverb:

“I was on the edge of the earth.
I was on the edge of the water.
I was on the edge of the sky.
I was on the edge of the mountains.
I could not find anyone who would not be my friend.”

“Respect means listening, until everyone is heard and understood, only then it is possible to achieve “Balance and Harmony” make the objectives of Indian spirituality” (Spielmann 1998).

The reason for the respect of the Other is an appeal not “horizontally” to the identity of the Other, which is in Western culture, but thanks to the aspirations into the “depth” – to meta-subject origin. “There is one simple thing: when you walk around,
you rotate around your own axis. Roughly speaking, the rotation around your axis is the movement opposite to motion vector around the circle. That is, going around in circles, you retreat inside yourself. You are such a funnel, which is turning inwards. This is the immanent depth of life”, – writes V.V. Malyavin, Russian Sinologist. “(...) Wisdom the other way around,” Go ahead – go backwards. A Chinese Taoist maxim goes: “He who comes forwards is a simple man; but he who goes vice versa (reversing) is a wise man” (История успеха Владимира Малывина).

Meta-subject content of education is one of the main innovations of pedagogical scientific school. A variety of subjects – “meals” does not give the student an idea of a united “cuisine”, although the integrity of the student perceptions is a necessary and logical result of his cognition of the world.

Concept of a number, a sign, a letter, a sound, a word; golden section in architecture and arts; key processes – the origin, birth, movement, development; categories of space, time, peace, human, etc. – all these are examples of meta-subject content of education, which, belonging to a particular science or academic subject, displays a person beyond himself to some fundamental basics. During the process of training the meta-subject nature embodies in student’s activities as a special content of education. Stereotypically, meta-subject activities can be considered the ones that refer to universal general study activities: e.g., goal-setting, planning, information retrieval, monitoring and evaluation. However, metasubject student activities is not identical to general educational activities. General educational activities refer to the teaching, but meta-subject – this is what lies at the basis of a subject or multiple subjects, located behind them, but is inseparably related to the subjects (Хуторской 2012: 36 – 48).

Where is pedagogy “going” today?

“Deepening” and “Expansion” of a human is the essence of differences between Western and Oriental cultures. In a unique era of humanity, anticipating the appearance of Christianity – the Hellenistic era – many historians did not converge in their opinion: what happened more – Westernization of the Orient or orientalization of the West. Thus, E. Bickerman, P. Leveque argue that Western mythology acquired some features of the oriental one, but not vice versa.

In the middle of the last century, their views on a possible fusion the Oriental and Western cultures voiced J. Dewey, S. Radhakrishnan, J. Santayana. All three of them spoke negatively. “You're talking about the “synthesis” of Oriental and Western philosophies. But this could be achieved only by emptying both systems” (Степанянц 2015: 150). “The dialogue of Western and Oriental cultures is not so unthinkable, as it is really not feasible due to the indigenous civilization origins heterogeneity; only business and almost the positional relationships are possible at comprehension and preservation of their heterogeneity and fatally unavoidable antinomy” (Анкеев 1998: 177).

The writer Hermann Hesse believed in “the wisdom of the Orient and the West (...) not hostile and fighting forces, but the poles “between which life swings” ” (Гессе 1982: 217). In the Doctrine of human education the path outwards does not deny the way inwards, and it is even impossible without the other.
In the Doctrine of human education the path outwards does not deny the way inwards, and it is even impossible without the other. This is not just the dialogue of cultures, dialogue between the two hemispheres of the human. It is a dialogue of cognition and communication. All of the world history – is the logic of cognition and logic of communication confrontation, as noted by S.S. Neretina and P.A. Ogurtsov (Межуев 2011).

True communication is possible with the restoration of the dialogic nature of a human, his return to the world, starting with the return of the student to education. The ability to hear yourself, “leaving oneself” means the ability to hear the others, as well as settling a student into the world means the acquisition of the student’s self.

Human-oriented principle, implemented in the theory and practice of education, describes the formation of a new historical stage of education. However, not all contemporaries feel and see this milestone. Why?

The history of the world is the story of an “alien”. Human history is the history of “one's own”, the history of changes within the human. “World history is the sum of what could have been avoided,” – said Bertrand Russell. To paraphrase this expression, we can say that history is the sum of the changes that might have occurred in a person at certain conditions, but they did not happen.

From the point of view of the French sociologist G. Tarde, the reason for the intensity of the global changes is the imitation as a repetition by some people of the behavior of the others (Tarde 1993). From G. Tarde’s theory it follows, that the more people will be around imitating each other, those who are unable to take the point of view of the interlocutor, and thus able to take a look at themselves from aside, the less people will “hear” themselves and the others, so the society will be worse “audible” and “learning”. But it will be harder for scientific community to ignore the demand of the individual and society, which is proved in the theory and practice of pedagogy – the need for finding student in education. Historical “forgetfulness” rests in the education system, where there is no person.

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