
PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO THE COMPREHENSION OF THE PROBLEM OF JUNIOR STUDENTS' ADAPTATION TO THE CONDITIONS OF EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The article presents an analysis of philosophic theories allowing to consider the adaptation process in junior students to the conditions of education at the university and to define directions of pedagogical activity which provide the optimal progress of this process.

Keywords: personality, freedom, creative work, communication, pedagogical activity

1. Introduction

One of the crucial pedagogical problems occurring in higher education establishments is the problem of students' adaptation to the new conditions of studying. Modern pedagogical science has formed a rather distinct and comprehensive system of adaptation process ideas. There are a lot of research works devoted to the description of the structure of this process, to the comprehension of factors which facilitate the development of this process or impeding its normal progress, of special educational conditions which should be created in order to provide the high-quality process of adaptation.

Meanwhile it should be noted that Philosophy lies in the basis of any pedagogical knowledge. The analysis of a great number of scientific sources and special literature on this problem shows that the philosophical foundations of the adaptation process to new conditions of life activity have not been thoroughly considered.

Philosophers in their works focus their attention basically on the contradictory nature of the human that predetermines the specificity of his/her adaptation to the new conditions of the environment [1-3].

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Alongside with it, some philosophers (V. Frankl, S.I. Gessen, A.G. Myslivchenko) studied the problem of human adaptation in the society from the standpoint of his/her seeking freedom and creative self-expression [4-6].

M. Buber, M.S. Kagan, S.L. Frank [7-10] thought that human's joining the society and adaptation there occurred by means of communication which is viewed by these philosophers as existential communication, dialogue between 'I' and 'You', allowing the human to cognize himself/herself via others and thus to relate himself/herself and his/her behaviour with them.

In spite of the fact that the abovementioned philosophers did not study directly junior students' adaptation process to higher school education conditions the analysis of their works allowed us to accomplish philosophical grounding of this process. It is very important, because the philosophical comprehension of the given problem will allow university teachers to find more effective ways of its solution in practice.

2. Discussion

The given article presents an attempt to develop philosophical grounding of junior students' adaptation to university education conditions. We suppose that philosophical comprehension of this problem will allow to find more effective ways of its solution in practice.

The problem of adaptation takes its roots just in the problem of the human. The problem of the human is one of the fundamental (if not central) in world Philosophy. Lots of thinkers tried to give a definition of human, but whatever these definitions were they do not embrace all its complexity and multiplicity. D. Diderot viewed the human as the greatest value, the only creator of all cultural achievements on the Earth, the rational and intelligent centre of the Universe, as the very point from which everything should originate and to which everything should return [11]. An outstanding thinker, F.M. Dostoevskiy said that "the human is an irrational and, in a paradox way, essentially tragic creature in which two worlds clash, the antipolar bases" [1, p. 57].

Obviously, such definition of the human can be considered true because it implies the idea of the dual nature of the human. On the one hand, the human is a biological living being and, as any animal, is governed by physical and biological laws, on the other hand, the human is a social subject and is determined by social norms. However, in the course of development the human demonstrate an increasing ability to refract in the mind the awareness of his/her own inner possibilities and external social circumstances, becoming the 'author of his/her change'. It is the triple determination of the human that symbolizes the eternal mystery of the humans' existence.

To comprehend the process of adaptation it is important, in our opinion, to consider, first of all, the proportions of the biological and the social in the human as the human exists in the system of all natural forces interaction and is exposed to various kinds of their impact. "Spiritual equilibrium is possible only on condition of physiological and psychological adaptation of the human to the

world of nature, and, as the human is, first and foremost, a social subject, he/she can adapt to nature only by means of society” – A.G. Spirkin says [2, p. 350-351]. The proportion of the biological and the social in the human is not unambiguous. For various cognitive and practical purposes accents may be shifted in this or that direction, but, during ultimate apprehension, according to A.G. Spirkin, these aspects of the human should overlap. In other words, the human is a biosocial entity. The social basis penetrates through the psychological one into the interior of an individual’s biology which, in such modified way, appears the basis of his/her psychological, conscious life-activity. Thus, “the human is an integral unity of biological (organism), psychological and social levels which are formed by the two – the natural and the social, the inherited and the acquired” [2, p. 347]. Furthermore, to comprehend the sources of the human being’s abilities to adaptation it is important to remember that the human is not merely an arithmetic sum of the biological and the social, but their “integral unity leading to the appearance of a new level – the human personality” [2, p. 347].

Nowadays there exist two basic conceptions of personality which determine, in our opinion, different theories and strategies of adaptation: personality as a functional (role) characteristic of the human and personality as an essential (conceptual) characteristic of the human. The first conception is based on the notion of human’s social function, that is, to be more exact, on the notion of social role. In spite of the significance of this aspect of personality consideration it does not allow us to reveal the deep inner world of the human because it records only human behaviour which, according to A.G. Spirkin, does not always and necessarily express the real essence of the human [2, p. 357]. From the viewpoint of this approach adaptation is seen as mere adjustment to the circumstances, and its pedagogical support – as teaching, training of young people.

The second conception gives us a deeper interpretation of the notion of personality which reveals it not on the functional but in the essential plane. “Personality is individual focus and expression of social relationships and functions of people, the subject of cognition and reformation of the world, of rights and duties, ethical, aesthetic and other social norms”, A.G. Spirkin says [2, p. 357-358]. The notion of personality underlines, first of all, integrative socio-psychological features: world outlook, self-esteem, character, dignity, value orientations, way of life principles, moral and aesthetic ideals, social and political beliefs and positions, style of thinking, emotional environment and so on.

Personal qualities of the human are derived from the two points: from self-conscious mind and social way of life. The field of manifestation of personal qualities is presented by the social life of the human. It is impossible to take the human out of the social context and restrain from communication, because “strangling asociality of the personality implies its death” – N.A. Berdyaev rightly notes [1, p. 64]. Personality, according to N.A. Berdyaev, appears to be the highest hierarchical value: “The value of personality is the

highest hierarchical value in the world, the value of a spiritual order” [1, p. 62]. But it does not exist as a value if it does not related to other personalities, to the personality of another individual, to a community of people.

The human seeks to unite with other humans in order to overcome alienation and frustrating loneliness, as E. Fromm thought [3]. The philosopher points out that there are two ways of the human adaptation to the society: “passive adjustment to patterns” and “activity” [3, p. 31]. ‘Passive adjustment’ takes place when a person accepts norms and rules according to the principle ‘I am like others’, does not wish to change anything, even if it is not beyond his/her power to achieve. In this case the person is not free, he/she depends on the society and fully controlled by it. However, ‘activity’ is viewed not as denial of social norms and values, but as their conscious acceptance and arrangement of the person’s activity and relationships with other people on the basis of these norms and values. The main thing is, according to Fromm, that “in the active state the person is free, he/she is the master of the situation, yet, in the passive one, on the contrary, being stimulated somehow or by something, the person is an object of motivation, though he/she might not be aware of it” [3, p. 38].

Such approach to the conception of the human is very important as it leads to the idea that the process of adaptation is connected with freedom. Therefore we find it appropriate to consider the works of philosophers who investigate the phenomenon of freedom. These are the works of V. Frankl, K. Jaspers [12], S.I. Gessen, A.G. Myslivchenko and others.

A person always and everywhere appears to be included into social context – in connection with other people, in the chain of events. Personality is determined by the community in a two-facet sense: on the one hand its behaviour is determined by the society in the whole and, at the same time, on the other hand, it is engaged in self-formation independently and influences the society always affecting it. Thus, not only social determination but also social orientation is characteristic of individual behaviour. “The so called social laws never determine the behaviour of a individual entirely, - V. Frankl noted, - consequently, they do not deprive people of the freedom of will. Moreover, they can influence them only passing through a special zone of individual freedom, it is in this zone that the laws leave the trace in individual behaviour” [4, p. 219]. Freedom, according to Frankl, is “always freedom of choice and acceptance of one’s destiny, choice of position which a person occupies when facing their fate” [4, p. 203]. The philosopher believed that although people are free, they are always surrounded by a number of restraints, “as if push off from these restraints for the implementation of their freedom. Freedom presupposes restraints and is based on them.” [4, p. 203] The restraints are seen by the author as conditions in which the person exists. The person is not free from these conditions but they do not determine him/her entirely. It is people themselves that decide if they will withstand these conditions or will give in and accept their determination. The part of the human which can withstand the conditions was defined by V. Frankl as ‘the spiritual’. In his opinion, it is the spiritual that can be considered free in

the human. Being free the human can take decisions for which he/she bears responsibility.

To be responsible means to be free, as K. Jaspers thought: "Freedom is overcoming those external factors which submit me to themselves. Freedom appears ... where these external factors become the focus of my existence." [12, p. 167] Freedom does not suppose all-permissiveness, it is restricted by responsibility. Responsibility is such a way of being when people themselves decide what they should be, it is "self-determining being" [12, p. 167].

At the moment of self-determination a person faces the necessity of choosing from a number of opportunities one alternative which will define his/her further life. Studying the phenomenon of the human's inner freedom A.G. Myslivchenko defined the human as "a choosing creature" and emphasized that "the human cannot exist without the choice of alternatives and goal-setting" [6]. Freedom is viewed by this philosopher as an "internal action of an individual" [6, p. 210].

The crucial principles of realizing the essence of a free deed are, first of all, the possibility of independent, non-imposed choice in accordance with the inner beliefs and interests of the individual and, secondly, mobilization of volitional efforts aimed at practical implementation of the choice made. Indeed, free choice is a "choice the content of which is not something external and alien for an individual but corresponds with his/her inner wish" [6, p. 216]. The philosopher believes that freedom is implemented by the individual, first and foremost, as a personal feeling, as a subjective phenomenon consisting in the possibility to make an independent choice. Freedom of choice is transformed into freedom of decision, then into freedom of action, freedom of creativity and self-expression. Choosing between alternative opportunities to act in this or that way, a person thereby performs an internal action, determine the sphere, the field of his/her theoretical and practical activity.

Meanwhile, it is known that free choice and actions of a person can have not only positive but also negative character, connected with the attempts to achieve at any price the goals threatening interests and virtues of others. Therefore, a question of moral assessment of this or that choice arises. "When assessing the choice it is necessary to take into consideration the moral measure of freedom – the degree of responsibility of the individual not only before himself/herself, but also before other people." [6, p. 223]

In our interrelationships with people surrounding us ('external environment') a person often faces the necessity of finding solutions in critical moral-conflict situations. In other words, he/she faces a dilemma: either to choose himself/herself, that is to defend his/her own point of view, assurance of self-righteousness and come into a conflict with the mistakable opinion and actions of other people, or to adjust himself/herself to the opinion and actions of others, to be dissolved in them. It is clear that the first option will be a real manifestation of spiritual freedom, whereas the second one will be a manifestation of time-serving which does suppress the individuality of the person, his/her originality and internal freedom.

Realizing freedom as an ability of avoid all ‘the external’, as an opportunity to say ‘no’ leads to the negative position ‘freedom from’. Meanwhile, the purpose of the human is to seek real self-assertion, ‘freedom for’. “The human is free not owing to negative power to avoid this or that, but owing to positive power to manifest his/her real individuality”, - A.G. Myslivchenko states [6, p. 224]. It is this ‘positive power’ that presents a motive reason of inner freedom of a person, for whom his/her own implementation appears to be an internal necessity.

Certainly, not all people want to be really free, but all want to seem free, preferring the imitation of freedom, dissolving in the mass of people, in the crowd, in order to shift the burden of personal responsibility to others. Therefore we think that one of the most important tasks of higher educational establishments nowadays is to form a person who will be inwardly strong and free.

Extrapolating the ideas of freedom to the plane of students’ adaptation to the conditions of university education problem we see that the adaptation though initially connected with necessity and sometimes even with compulsion, yet does not exclude freedom, but on the contrary, provides it. The necessity is expressed in the fact that a student faces a number of requirements which he/she must fulfil because it may secure his studying at the educational organization. The student can fulfil all the requirements successfully only on condition of high level self-organization and discipline. At first sight it may seem that discipline is also compulsion, but S.I. Gessen noted, and we agree with him, that discipline and freedom do not exclude each other, on the contrary, they are interpenetrating. S.I. Gessen writes the following in this regard: “Devoid of freedom discipline destroys itself... Discipline is possible by way of something different – by way of freedom as the highest principle which is translucent through it.” [5, p. 95]. A disciplined person is free as he/she is self-controlled. Freedom for such a person is not the denial of some norms and laws, rather it is obeying the promptings of conscience, following which allows one not to be in contradiction with oneself. Thus, we see that students’ fulfilment of requirements set for them, on the contrary, makes them really free rather than restricts their freedom. It is the very restraint from which they push off to achieve freedom.

As we see the main task of higher educational establishments in forming an inwardly free person, it is important to note one peculiarity of freedom: it can be achieved only by means of creative activity. The connection of freedom and creation was stressed by such philosophers as N.A. Berdyaev, S.I. Gessen, V.D. Gubin, E.N. Nekrasova, Osho [13] and others.

Creative work is activity aimed at the creation of something new that has not existed in the world before. “Creative work implies an element of freedom, only due to which it is possible to create something new, something that has not existed before... Freedom is creative energy, the possibility of creating something new”, N.A. Berdyaev considered [1, p. 120-122]. S.I. Gessen was of the same opinion and thought that “freedom is the creation of the new that has not existed in the world before” [5, p. 97]. The philosopher expressed an idea

which is very important for us: the person is free only when solving some difficult life problem in his/her own way, the way nobody has solved it before. The more individual the person's deed is, the freer he/she is. Thus, any free action, being the result of creation, can become a model for other people and is not a replication of some other model. With regard to the process of students' adaptation to university education conditions it can mean that a student is able to address the important problem of adaptation to the new conditions in a creative manner. For example, he/she may not only adjust to the offered conditions, but also is able to change these conditions in a desirable way. Improving the conditions he/she is engaged in the process of self-improvement. "Seeking self-improvement is a defining sign of spiritual life, it indicates the creative predestination of the human", - V.D. Gubin and E.N. Nekrasova consider [11]. The improvement, according to these authors, relates to the inner being of the human and proves the human's striving for maximum improvement of the state of mind. It is the moral task of every person. This task can be solved only individually, in a creative way.

Speaking of the problem of creation, it is impossible to overlook the conception of the Indian philosopher Osho. This conception regards creation as an inward power, inherently given to every individual, but, for some reasons, not released in all people. "Each person is born with the creative potential, but very few people continue to be creative" – the philosopher notes [13, p. 117-118]. There are a lot of reasons for it, but one of them, in the author's opinion, is in the forced character of education and upbringing. From the very childhood a person is forced to follow the repeated models, to adjust passively to the circumstances without manifesting creation. A person is constantly driven into some limits, his/her freedom is suppressed and the creation potential which is inherent in him/her is not allowed to develop. Such approach makes us reflect on education. If it is "compulsory due to necessity, it should be free from the viewpoint of the goal", - to this conclusion S.I. Gessen came analysing freedom education [5, p. 92]. We are also convinced that only free from the viewpoint of the goal education can give the opportunity to educate a person capable to adapt to changing conditions not at the level of passive adjustment, but in a creative way. Actually, creative people change themselves easily and find effective ways of changing the surroundings.

Alongside with the conceptions of freedom and creation, for a deeper comprehension of the essence of junior students' adaptation to the university education conditions process we find it expedient to consider conceptions of communication, because it is only in the process of communication that a person can join the community of the peers. For first-year students in the beginning this community is presented by the academic group in which they are enrolled.

The adaptation of first-year students to the new conditions of education begins with the adaptation in the academic group. The new student group is formed in a higher educational establishment in connection with the new generation entering the system of higher education. In spite of the fact that the reasons of this group formation lie beyond it and beyond the individuals

constituting it, but in broader social sphere, in course of time such group may become a real community. It is possible only on condition that the individuals constituting the group will start interacting intensively.

Interaction as existential communication, the dialogue between 'I' and 'You', was studied by L. Feuerbach, K. Jaspers, J.-A. Sartre, M. Buber, S.L. Frank, M.S. Kagan and others.

"An individual, - L. Feuerbach wrote, - as something isolated does not contain the human essence in it. The human essence is apparent only in communication" [8, p. 24]. Communication is "a universal condition of the being of humans", - K. Jaspers considered [8, p. 40]. The philosopher viewed communication, or 'existential communication', as the relationships appearing between two individuals who become connected with each other, but should save their differences, who are approaching each other coming out of seclusion, but are aware of this seclusion only due to the fact that they begin to communicate. A human, according to K. Jaspers, cannot be a human without communicating and cannot begin to communicate without being secluded. Consequently, it means that a person becomes a human in the real sense of this word only when he/she is oriented not to himself/herself, but to the Other. The Other gives the person an opportunity to understand oneself. "The Other knows the secret: the secret of what I am", - J.-A. Sartre underlined [14]. The idea of the human's cognizing his/her own 'I' through the Other, that is through 'You', runs all through the work of M. Buber 'I and You'. In his opinion, 'I' can say nothing about itself without relating itself with the Other. "The human becomes I through You" [7, p. 311].

Relationships between 'I' and 'You', according to M. Buber, are constructed on the basis of dialogue. The most important in the human existence is to address, to appeal to the Other and respond to the Other's appeal. The meaning of human existence comes to light only when a human appeals to the Other and the Other responds him/her. For Buber life, reality, world are the system of interpersonal relationships. The centre of these relationships is love, which is complete orientation, focusing one's life and will on the Other, the feeling of irresistible need in the Other, volitional and moral concentration of one's being on the Other, who is seen as responding to this need and care. For the philosopher the dialogue is radical experience of the Other's 'otherness', perceiving the Other as 'one's own other', recognizing the Other.

The recognition of the Other's 'otherness' was also deliberated by the existentialist G. Marcel, who was convinced that it is possible to break the circle of loneliness only in case when an individual perceives the Other as his/her own otherness and when he/she tries to penetrate into the Other on this basis [15]. This idea is exclusively important. It helps us to understand that communication gives the human an opportunity to go beyond his/her own limits, which is to transcend.

The confirmation of the given idea can be found also in the works of S.L. Frank who asserted that "particular I is impossible if it is unrelated to You" [9, p. 121], but, despite this, there is no mystical unity between them. Everyone

remains oneself. 'I' is a 'separate', 'isolated' 'I' not due to its self-sufficiency, its self-assertiveness, but due to its separation, isolation from the 'other I', from 'You' – due to its opposition to 'You' and, consequently, its connection with 'You' in this very opposition [10, p. 345]. The difference and distinguishing between 'I' and 'You', according to S.L. Frank, is originated from the unity which “disintegrating into the duality 'I' and 'You' at the same time remains as the unity of 'We'” [10, p. 346]. 'We' is not the plural of 'I', but 'We' is some broadening of 'I', the expansion of it beyond its primary and, as it were, natural limits. “For me the awareness of 'We' is the awareness that I exist somehow beyond the bounds of myself”, - the philosopher notes [10, p. 117].

The analysis of the mentioned works allows us to make a conclusion that the essential characteristic and constituent of the human world is what is happening between a human and another human. In this encounter the human becomes a personality. As the human life is, in essence, a dialogue, an appeal and a counter-appeal, a question and an answer, the human becomes the human not by means of virtue or some kind of attitude to himself/herself, but only in relation to the Other.

Communication as the process of working out new information which is common for communicating people and produces their commonness was deliberated by M.S. Kagan. According to his point of view, communication facilitates better understanding oneself and the other. In the process of communication common information space is created. The information circulates between the partners and does not flow away, but only increases, expands, enriches itself. It happens because the communicants are equally active. In other words, in communication we observe not an exchange of ideas or things, but “... turning the state of each partner into their common possession” [8, p. 150]. Moreover, the very fact of the other person's awareness perceived by the personality can become a stimulus for its self-development, and this is connected with special free adaptation.

The idea that the premise for communication is an individual originality of the partners is relevant for our investigation. Human communication is based on this deep dialectics of the partners' difference and their urge towards unity, but this urge must not lead to the deletion of these differences, but only to the 'unity of multiplicity'. “Communication of two people, - according to vivid expression of M. Dufrenne, - is not the relation of two monads closed in themselves, between which there is some presupposed harmony: it is rather two crossing glances, two freedoms pushing off from each other, two partners starting a dialogue” [8, p. 161].

The analysis of these conceptions gives us an opportunity to make a conclusion that the goal of communication consists in achieving commonness of the actor-subjects by means of their free joint efforts alongside with preserving the unique individuality of each partner. If the student group really becomes such a spiritual community in which individual peculiarities of each participant is preserved, the adaptation will take place in this group without any obstructions. In such group a student will learn how to work out constructive

adaptation strategies and then to use the acquired experience in other groups which exist at the university. These may be various students' societies: intellectual and creative.

3. Conclusion

The comprehension of the problem of junior students' adaptation to the conditions of education at the university from the viewpoint of philosophical conceptions allows us to specify definite directions of pedagogic activity: forming a personality with inner freedom, capable of making a moral choice and bear responsibility for it; organizing interpersonal cooperation and creative activity with the purpose of development and revelation of each student's personality inner potential. It is these tasks that the state and society set before the system of higher education.

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