DIALOGUE AS A FORM OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION
IN EVERYDAY LIFE

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Abstract

The focal point of the paper is the problem of dialogue. A key aspect of the paper is the praxeological content of dialogue. There is much evidence that dialogue is a special social form, a form of communication between social actors. There is a growing body of literature that recognizes the importance of dialogue for social dynamics: the processes of social reproduction, social construction, intercultural interactions. Everyday life is of much importance as a sphere of dialogue interaction and a mode of social life for people in the realities of which these relationships are formed and manifested. Central to the entire paper is the idea that the form of the dialogue is not specified, but is being developed during interaction and through interaction, it turns out to be a relationship variable, resulting from interaction.

Keywords: dialogue, social form, social dynamics, intersubjectivity, life world

1. Introduction

By the end of the 20th century, the idea of dialogue gained the status of a philosophical paradigm that determines the contours of the social world picture. Processual continuity, situational context, contextuality, communicative interaction, constructability has become the most important principles of describing social reality, treating sociality as a continuously created product of everyday interactions, semantic interpretations, and reinterpretations (social phenomenology, ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism, etc.).

Over the past century, there has been a dramatic transition to the substantive description of one’s own self, mediated by everyday practice and everyday communication with others (fundamental properties of this trend are “life world”, interpersonal communication, language game, tradition, history). The subjectivity of ‘the Other’ (as per I. Kant) loses its meaning, ‘Another’ appears as an object of intentions, expressed by ‘I’ (E. Husserl, H.G. Gadamer, etc.), ontologized (M. Heidegger). ‘I’ is included in existential genesis, weaves the fabric of existential genesis. ‘The Other’ is no longer an object, it is a being that co-exists with me in my being (‘we’). In the future, there is ‘the between space’

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(‘the world’), ‘the objectification of life’ of the subject, the problems of communication and mutual understanding, the search for a common meaning (in their reviews, M. Heidegger, H.G. Gadamer, J. Habermas identified these features). The emphasis on the ‘objectification of life’ of the subject with the need to actualize ‘the inside space’ (the world of a man) and ‘the between space’ (the world of people) result in the deployment of ‘the Other I’, ‘Others’. There is much evidence that ‘between space’ means more than just a new kind of phenomenon, but a new kind of communicative organization between people, societies, cultures, where one relates to the other and each is what he/she is, only relating to the other. In this regard, there are junctions, key points, but there is no centralization.

In the light of recent events in the dialogue theory, it is becoming extremely difficult to ignore the existence of dialogue as co-being of subjects. As it known, M. Heidegger in his ‘being-in-the-world’ consistently analysed the ontology of dialogue [1]. The ontology of Martin Heidegger is the hermeneutics of the facticity. “The concept of ‘facticity’ implies that an entity ‘within-the-world’ has Being – in-the-world in such a way that it can understand itself as bound up in its ‘Dasein’ with the Being of those entities which it encounters within its own world” [J.C. Muhoza, Dasein’s transcendence, interpretation and freedom: an Engagement in dialogue with Martin Heidegger in the concept of Truth, 2010, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11810/4550, accessed 30.07.2017]. Considering dialogue as the most important value of culture, M. Bakhtin saw in it the place of ‘meeting’ of subjectivities, each of which is self-sufficient and self-valuable, but only dialogue attaches the highest value to their co-being. “To be means to communicate in a dialogical way. When the dialogue finishes, everything finishes.” [2]

A dialogical attitude rooted in a real event, realized as co-being, simultaneously disconnects and connects participants in a mutual ‘show’ (see J. Bataille [3]), E. Levinas [4], J. Lacan [5], J. Derrida [6]), N. Lumann [7], J.-L. Nancy [8]). Several reports have shown that the accents inside the subject-subject interaction are changing. The centre of gravity is transferred to the intersections of subjects, destroying the new predetermination, the static nature of subjects of social relations [9]. The new subject is immersed in the “context of events and corporeality” [10], the “topography of the placement” is coming to the fore [8, p. 23]. The event occurring in the event, the dynamic ‘consistency’ is unfolding.

2. Method

One interesting finding is that the idea of dialogue is closely connected with the existing concepts of sociality: ‘methodological individualism’, which treats sociality as a connection of singularities, and ‘ontological empiricism’, which understands social being as co-existence, co-being. It allows us to go into the interpretation of social communication beyond the limits of social contacts (the hidden objectivism of intersubjectivity), beyond the ‘real logic’ of the social actors’ interaction. Clarifying the praxeological content of the dialogue reveals its
role in various sociocultural practices, i.e., social reproduction, social construction, intercultural interactions, etc.

An important theoretical basis from which the understanding of dialogue as a special social form that influences social dynamics grows is the turn towards the study of specific interactions of people, in the course and through these interactions, that create their everyday life (their ‘life world’), simultaneously creating forms of their social ties. The literature review has shown that the course of human life and human interactions has a specific historical spatial-temporal dimension, arise and are being fixed in the process of life and, consequently, they can be observed and reconstructed. The appeal to everyday life as a sphere and way of people’s social life makes it possible to clarify these various specific links (social, cultural, individual, etc.) that appear in the realities of everyday life. There is much evidence that the knowledge of these links is an important element of the socio-cultural heritage, the ability to use them allows a person to solve most of the existing practical problems.

3. Results

The results of this study indicate that everyday practice always deals with processes, not frozen states. Everyday life focuses attention on the specifics of people’s common life and their interactions. The existing material of everyday life is not regular and, therefore, the understanding of its features, its description presents a certain complexity for individuals seeking to link and comprehend their actions, and for researchers who describe it. The study requires immersion in the process of constructing individuals from an ordered disparate variety of everyday activities.

Historically, research investigating the factors associated with everyday life is associated with the methodological basis and the phenomenological school of E. Husserl and his followers. E. Husserl formulated “basic principles of the ‘human dimension’ methodology, combining the universally valid beginning of human consciousness with the bodily and intersubjective characteristics of the man” [11]. The problem of intersubjectivity and the concept of the vital world became fundamental for understanding the specifics of the world of everyday life.

According to E. Husserl, the ‘life world’ is a world of people and objects directly surrounding me throughout my life (my family, city, landscape, my beliefs, tastes, deeds, habits, etc.). Any immediate human experience is an experience in the life world and about it. The world of culture, religion, science is outside my life world, but it has its roots in it, it grows out of the vital world.

Considering the intentional situation, Husserl in ‘Reflection V’ of the ‘Cartesian Reflections’ explains how the living body of the ‘other’ and the ‘other self’ is controlling this body by means of an apperception (analogous to apperception) appears inside of my sphere [12]. When I meet another transcendental subject, he is not directly given to me as such. I perceive it ‘outside’ as a kind of psychophysical structure. The only structure which is given to me directly is the bodily (external) side of this psychophysical structure. There is much evidence
that the psychic is opened indirectly through the actions of this structure (speech, actions). During communication, each interlocutor reflects the other (‘the other’ is my own reflection, and at the same time is not my identical copy [12, p. 190]). This process is a mutual objectification, mutual transfer of meaning (that is, “an apperception of one object according to the meaning of the other” [12, p. 220]). (In accordance with the principle of intentionality in the consciousness of the transcendental subject, there are not only acts, but also those objects to which these acts are directed. E Husserl nominates them ‘intentional objects’. They are parts of consciousness, beyond consciousness they do not exist.) Because of communication with the Other person who is residing in my near, perceptual field there is an intersubjective world, “empiricisms of the vital world” [13]. I am not alone. I, as a transcendental ego, am surrounded by Others. I find myself in the community of other specific and peculiar transcendental egos (in the ‘community of monads’). The closest thing to me is my life world.

E. Husserl believed that the phenomenological approach to the study of the ‘life world’ would make it possible to describe ‘intersubjective transcendental sociality’, i.e., the intersubjective world that positions and centres itself around my transcendental ego. I, as a specific transcendental ego, find myself in the community of other specific and peculiar transcendental egos.

A. Schütz, analysing the problem of transcendental intersubjectivity, the transcendental “experience of knowing oneself and ‘the other’”, exploring the conditions for the possibility of intersubjective significance of human experience in the report ‘The problem of transcendental intersubjectivity in Husserl’, which he read in Romean (France) on April 28, 1957, showed that “Husserl’s attempt to explain the constitution of transcendental intersubjectivity in terms of the actions of consciousness of the transcendental ego was not crowned with success” [14].

It’s wrong to perceive the constitution of the initially given life world and the objective world in the everyday sense as opposed to me. Such perception is impossible within the framework of the transcendental attitude [14, p. 46-96]. It is common knowledge that E. Husserl uses the phenomenological reduction method first developed by him in ‘Ideas for Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy’ (1913) as a tool to focus the phenomenological view on the transcendental life of consciousness and its noetic-noematic experiences in which objects are constituted as correlates of consciousness. Starting from the analysis of “the experience of the connection between consciousness and the body, forming a natural empirical unity, through which consciousness is placed in the space and time of nature, and which in acts of ‘empathy’ makes possible mutual understanding between animate subjects”, E. Husserl talks about the possibility of forming a “communicative world” [14, p. 66]. However, reliance on the model of individual consciousness inevitably leads to ‘methodological solipsism’. Being formed during communication, the intersubjective world is a world of objects about which the members of the community can say something to each other [12, p. 40-41]. Intersubjectivity, therefore, does not depend on the objective structures of being, but is determined by the interaction of subjects within the framework of the life world. And, consequently, the facts are inseparable from the field of
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communication, which acts simultaneously as a constituent factor, the domain of sense formation, understanding of meaning, its interpretation, etc. ‘The grasping’ of objective space, objective time and together with them an objective world of real phenomena and processes, the awareness of oneself and one's social connections in a person is realized in his own experiences. Transcendental constitutional analysis cannot clarify the relationship of intersubjectivity, which is the basis of all Social science.

In the work ‘The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology’, E. Husserl, in A. Schütz’s opinion, makes “a desperate attempt to avoid the manifestation of solipsism by introducing a secondary epoch leading to the original sphere” [14, p. 38], to escape from the ‘content emptiness’ of the transcendental ego [15]. He translates the conversation about the vital world and its connection with the transcendental ego into the plane of elucidating the “existential meaning of the vital world that he has for the people living in it” [15]. The way to comprehend the ‘vital world’ is ‘a direct [geradehin] aspiration’ to objects, “getting the feel of the object [Hineinleben]” [14, p. 195] in the ‘space-time’ horizon of the world. Because of “simple living” [13, p. 197], the life world opens for us as being “in a fluid moment”, “in the totality of its ontical structures” [13, p. 197]. And now, to understand life in this “ever-present fluid horizon [Horizonthaftigkeit]” [13, p. 202], a total ‘transcendental’ epoch is required; it exalts us above the natural world. As a result, the world is reduced to the transcendental phenomenon of ‘the world’, and the transcendental subjectivity, in the ‘life of consciousness’ of which the world finds its content and its existential significance to the phenomenon of ‘humanity’ [13, p. 206]. These findings bring us to the important conclusion that within the framework of transcendental phenomenology, it is impossible to comprehend life in its own being. However, E. Husserl “showed a way of phenomenological analysis of the social world, clarifying the foundations of Social science” [14, p. 91].

These results further support the idea of M. Weber, the leading sociologist of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, who in attempting to describe the ‘social life’, takes social action as the starting ‘cell’ of social life. Describing social action, M. Weber emphasizes ‘socially-oriented action’. He tries to find in the actions of the individual, apart from individual interest, the ‘substance’ of the social. M. Weber assumes that not every action of an individual is social. Social actions are only those ones which happen with an orientation toward ‘the other,’ and in the group of individuals – in their mutual alignment with one another and with the ‘third’. “When in the rain a lot of people simultaneously open umbrellas,” Weber writes, “there is no social, that is, orientation to the other, because the need causes the action to guard against rain.” [16]

In his conception of social action, everyday life appears as a ‘sphere’ where the semantic strata of experience are collected and stored. The process of mastering the traditions and fixing the norms of M. Weber coincides with the term ‘versatile’ (Veralltäglichung). When the system of social relations and relationships change, people’s activities and actions, their communication and
thinking lose their ‘naturalness’ traits, traditional structures of everyday life break down.

The current study highlights the importance of the research by A. Schütz. In his social phenomenology, A. Schütz synthesized E. Husserl's ‘constitutive’ phenomenology with M. Weber's ‘understanding’ theory of social action. A. Schütz formulated the task of investigating everyday human actions, a system of vital meanings that unite people into a sociocultural community. “He is interested in the world of primordial everyday interpretations, the human world, shining with meaning.” [17] The life world is a sphere of experience of human communication. Therefore, the social does not exist, but ‘means’.

The findings of this study suggest that the situation of everyday life, as A. Schütz defines it, is a real situation of a real ‘here and now’, the situation in which a person lives. This is a typical situation, even though for each one it has a unique, specific, individual, special meaning, that is placed in a common space and time, sharing the same situation (at home, at work, in transport, and so on). People behave and react to the actions of others in their own ways. “These types are mainly formed by others, predecessors or contemporaries”, and “they serve as appropriate means of adaptation to things and people, and they were adopted in that capacity by the group in which a person was born” [17, p. 623].

As A. Schütz rightfully assumes, each individual situation of a person’s life is biographical. It is interpreted because of the available knowledge and sociocultural codes that allow a human-being his/her self-identification, as well as to enter a different cultural environment, to adapt to it. The significance of this situation for a person is also ‘co-determined’ by his/her relationships with Others, ‘the reciprocity of prospects’. As a result, a certain intersubjective community is established, i.e., ‘We’ [12, p. 15]. In these conditions, a type of social bond develops, it is rooted in intersubjectivity, in everyday events and particularities. Consequently, the life world is not only the world in the ‘natural setting of consciousness’, but the sphere of the experience of human communication, the most important characteristic of the social being of a man. These findings enhance our understanding of social reality as the life world, experienced and interpreted in human everyday life [3, p. 34].

Using the methodology of A. Schütz, J. Habermas follows the sociological tradition of reconstructing social theory suggested by J.G. Mead, E. Durkheim, T. Parsons, H. Garfinkel, K. Marx. Data from several studies suggest that J. Habermas polemizes with K. Pop.er, H.G. Gadamer, N. Luman and others, trying to expand the framework of the traditional social theory through a new type of rationalism and humanism associated with reasonable communication and interaction of people. J. Habermas believes that communicative practice is a new dimension of the social reality, a new paradigm, the basis of a new social theory [18]. During everyday experience of interpersonal relations, different ways of joint activity of people are developing. J. Habermas describes these methods, based on various types of communication links, with the term ‘interaction’, or ‘reciprocity’. Interactions constitute both a society as a sociality and an individual as a social being.
The current study provides additional evidence with the respect to the heritage of J. Habermas. In his ‘Theory of Communicative Action’ [19], J. Habermas examines various models of social action. Social action is of communicative character, i.e., the communicating subjects jointly develop intersubjective meanings (goals, value orientations, etc.), coordinate their actions in accordance with the agreements reached, contributing to the development of processes of social integration and social reproduction. J. Habermas defines this process with the concepts of ‘communicative rationality’ and ‘communicative action’. In his concept, communication acts as a process-constructive, activity-oriented form of interaction directed not only at developing a picture of social reality as such (as it stands for us), but also at creating promising models (a new historical consensus) and at searching for the most effective means of achieving them [18, p. 67].

The contribution of this study has been to confirm that J. Habermas, following J. Mead, sets forward the idea that in the ‘locus of reality’ (the expression of M. Nathanson), interaction is open to the diversity of possible contexts (‘perspectives’). Because of the presence of the object in two or even several different contexts (perspectives), a special phenomenon of emergence develops: the presence in the latter context changes the nature of the presence in the previous one to which the object continues to belong. There is, therefore, a definite need for a moment of emergence arising during the transition to a new perspective.

As far as the semantic context of the sphere of interactions is concerned, types of interactions and human communications, J. Habermas includes in it practically the whole ‘life world’, up to the everyday life experience (Lebenswelt des Alltages), in which communicative practice plays a huge role. He is interested in the process of forming standards of social behaviour, as well as how existing individuals create, regulate, and reproduce the standards they have created in the situation of everyday communication. Taken together, these findings support the idea that the principles of communication depend on the natural properties of everyday life, since interaction takes place under the conditions of a ‘background structure’ (in terms of G. Garfinkel), hidden, implicit knowledge, when a person acts without thinking. The life world forms an intuitively already understood context of the action situation and at the same time it supplies resources for the processes of interpretation and final mutual understanding [15]. Natural communication, thus, turns out to be a ‘mechanism’ for translating the social into the logical, the verbal, i.e., it ensures the interaction of people in their joint life, as well as the functioning of the communicative systems that make social life possible [18, p 80]. Intersubjective communicative practice of everyday life reflects the personal qualities of a person, his/her spiritual needs. Dialogues, free open discussions are forms of creative attitude to life, to the practice of education and the formation of personality. This study has shown that J. Habermas views the dialogue not only as a reflexive study of experience, but also as a means of advancing along the path of development of knowledge and social transformations.
4. Discussion

The study has found that today, we need to describe the dynamics of the interaction of various social actors (regions, cultures, individuals), living and interacting in specific social contexts, whose everyday life and everyday experience are not confined to each other. This theoretical situation (the introduction of everyday, local, concrete) gives rise to the problem of sociocultural interaction, the problem of dialogue. The purpose of the current study was to show that traditional psychological, linguistic, rhetorical dialogue schemes that reduce the complexity of the problem to the forms of direct interaction between individual (two) individuals do not work.

Another important finding of this study is to show that in the first half of the 20th century dialogue is interpreted as ‘co-being’, ‘meeting’ of subjectivities, a mode of interaction that forms the basis of human life and culture (as shown in the works by M. Heidegger, K. Jaspers, G. Marcel, M. Buber, M. Bakhtin, J.-P. Sartre and others). In the second half of the 20th century, the focus of research on the dialogical connection, the subject-subject interaction shifts to the ‘between space’, it is transferred to the intersections of subjects, into the sphere of ‘intertextual’, ‘joint’. In the future, the context in which everyday interactions of various sociocultural actors are carried out, the topic of borders and borderline issues is emerging. Consequently, human beings will have to actualize the need to ‘seek proportionality’ in different views and to learn to hear one another (see K.-A. Apel, etc.).

The study has shown that the multifaceted framework, diversity and ultimately the uncertainty of the subject, the undefined event, destroy the former one-dimensional ontological concepts of sociality, creating a space for open, dynamic systems, ontologizing variability, becoming not linear (as it was in the 19th century), but polyvariant (social heterology, sociality as variability). Modernity is not just a ‘polyphonic’ tumult. Different ‘voices’ (in the situation where discordance is not disagreement) are trying to acquire ‘harmony’, to build the logic of consistency, unity. The study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of the fact that dialogical communication turns into polylogical communication. This brings to the logic conclusion that the preference for dialogue as a form is meaningless. The form is born in a specific situation, text, context, with the participation of specific subjects, considering their multi-valued framework and correlation with specific sociality, plurality of meanings, as well as interpretations. A key strength of the present study was to show that the dynamics of social life is ‘grasped’, a dynamic form is being sought. The subjects are inside. The current study provides additional evidence with respect to philosophical interpretations of modernity. Firstly, dialogue interaction is meaning, and not being. Secondly, hard ‘dia-’ (‘dua-’), theological idea is becoming obsolete, it is replaced by the idea of polysubjectivity.

This paper discuss the reasons for the idea that dialogue is an important methodological tool for researching and describing a changing social world, a model for constructing a dynamic link [5, p. 107]. The idea of dialogue allows to
speak about the processual aspect of the social form itself, to present the social form as mobile, possessing internal dynamics. The present study was designed to show that dialogue is not a ready-made form imposed from outside on human interactions, the form of dialogue is developing during every day human interactions, appears as a definite result of these interactions, turns out to be a bond of dependent, derivative variable [20].

One of the most significant findings to emerge from the study is to show that the analysis of the dialogue form allows to see other forms that fix the dynamics of sociality, the forms of its open, polyvariant formation, the forms of compatibility, corresponding to the dynamic multidimensionality of the existence of people (cultures, social systems), i.e., forms of their co-being. An implication of the study is that behind dia-/dua- logic, the polylogical system is developing, and for two-subject relations modernity offers polysubject relations [20-22]. The principal theoretical implication of the study is that the polylogical system is going beyond just the self, overcoming autonomy, but understanding the impossibility of self-realization of the self without the other. This is the first minimum condition of this logic and the means of acquiring it.

5. Conclusions

The following conclusions may be drawn from the study. Dialogue is a special form of social communication and interaction. Its character is determined by the degree of structural complexity of the interaction subjects, and it can act and be understood not as a linear dependence, but as a polyphonic process, discrete and continual, realized with the help not only of language, but of various other means of human activity.

The results of the research support the idea that the dialogical system rests on several aspects. Firstly, the principle of interdependence of subjects, which confirms the need for communication, the impossibility of self-realization of subjects without interaction and communication. Secondly, the principle of co-change of subjects during dialogical interaction, on the understanding of the dialogical form because of a certain co-configuration, co-change of the social actors themselves. The current study highlights the idea that in modernity subjects change, and so do the forms of their connection. Another important implication is that the form does not prevail, but shows itself during creation. Thirdly, the principle of constructiveness: the construction or renewal, harmonization of social ties in the interaction of social actors, as well as the construction of a new form of communication for a new level of interaction.

There is much evidence that dialogue and monologue, as integral components of the structure of social ties, despite their differences are in continuous interpenetration and interchange, they weave and unite, resist, and polemize, muting each other. The modern theory of social intersubjectivity overcomes the radical dualism of the forms and structures of the polemical rationality of human speech, thought and activity. Our greatest finding is that, in reality, in the conditions of everyday life, the communication intersubjectivity of
the dialogue turns out to be significant for the ‘instrumental-strategic’ (J. Habermas) sphere of economic interests (as it is realized, for example, in the business ethics). Interestingly, ‘the symbolic power of monologues’ [M. J. Semek, Two models of intersufficiency, 28.02.2016, http://spinoza.in/theory/dve-modeli-mezhsub-ektnosti.html] in the field of public controversy is equally important as an essential source of political power and its legitimization.

The study has raised important questions about the logical development of dialogue forms. The logical development of various forms of dialogue in the 20th century is the form of polysubjectivity, which fixes the complexity, the multilevel social link and the social actors themselves. The theme of the dialogue has once again showed its depth, revealed a different meaning, opened a different perspective.

References

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