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PHILOSOPHIES OF SOCIAL BEHAVIOR RESEARCH:
META-ANALYTIC REVIEW

Abstract

This essay addresses critical and cohesive research philosophies regarding social theory in an effort to increase awareness thereof social changes as well as considers the features of social behaviour through the prism of various methodological approaches. Using logical and comparative methods, the author analyzes the adequacy of the theoretical and philosophical foundations of the concept of social action for the modern situation. The circumstances that contribute to the structuring of social actions, as well as the relationship of social changes with the foundations of solidarity in different societies with their civilizational specifics, are determined. The author considers the implementation of the concrete fait accompli as the only possible variant under certain conditions from the whole range of potential prospects. Such revision of the theory of social action as well as the analyses of philosophical grounds of research approaches confirm the necessity of indispensable use the civilizational approach in additional to applied existing research tools to studying the local specifics. The research results redirects to non-universalized solutions of any social problems and to diversification in planning of development scenarios for different societies.

Keywords: variant, civilization, interaction, non-linearity, social behaviour, social action, structure, sub-methods, transformation.

Introduction

The main factor that determines the changes in modern social life is the development of techniques and technologies. The new type of development based on accelerating change of the subject environment surrounding the person is established. In turn, the active renewal of second nature in which human takes life proceedings leads to accelerating the transformation of social relations. The asynchrony of such processes, the nonlinearity of their passage, the difficulties in predicting, and the dissimilarity of the results of seemingly identical processes, draw the attention of researchers to the basics of implementing theories to test them and confirm the effectiveness of the methodological tools used for analysis. A prerequisite for the development of science is the regular study of the content of explanatory models to establish the validity of accumulated knowledge, operational reflection and the introduction of theoretical innovations. The resolution of specific problems depends on the underlying assumptions, the semantics of the concepts and the logical-methodological norms of the methodology used. It would seem that the postulate of the poly-variance of the socio-historical process and the existence of the phenomenon of

civilization are proved by the practice of life (the objective existence of diverse forms of social entities) and are established in science (Huntington, 1996). However, it is the subject of active discussions in scientific society in the course of public controversy on the ways of institutional restructuring of the societies that historically emerged and functions on a communitarian basis to make them subsidiarian type, ignoring the immanent properties of self-development and self-adjustment of social systems. Revision of the principles of the image of reality under the influence of new facts always involves an appeal to the philosophical ideas. This equally applies to both the natural sciences and the social sciences. In an attempt to explain the multivariate nature of social behaviour under similar circumstances, the diversity of behavioural stereotypes, we turn to the consideration of social action as such in the light of various methodological approaches.

Objectives

The following meta-theoretical analysis is aimed at establishing the degree of correspondence of the conceptual possibilities of existing theories to the realities of the surrounding world, since the use of inadequate scientific bases of implemented reform programs leads to disruption of the stability of social systems. The problem is related to the activation of information flows in the modern social dynamics and the growing role of the innovation factor, embracing traditions that violate the stability of systems and actualizing the issues of adapting societies to continuous changes in social reality, coupled with the opportunities for managing social development mechanisms, and consists in resolving the contradiction between the growing need for modernization of existing in the state of a sys-

temic crisis of societies and the lack of an adequate explanatory theory along with the certain methodology, which allows to work out the scenarios of not a catastrophic way out of a crisis situation. The object of research are the methodological approaches existing in social science as principal research orientations and ways of determining the object of study. Of particular interest are the heuristic possibilities of such theoretical constructs of both linear and civilizational patterns, regarding the ability of the latter to serve as an adequate research tool in the study of social systems and the interpretation of the changes occurring in them. The paradigmatic validity of a specific methodological approach is considered through the prism of the social behaviour.

Methods

In our study, we do not set the task of retrospectively retelling the works of M. Weber and T. Parsons (Weber, 1922/1978; Parsons, 1937/1966). However, during the use of our methodological implications and the presentation of our material, we will refer to the model proposed by these scientists. The research was carried out with the involvement of the principle of socio-historical determinism expressing the universal interconnection and interdependence of social phenomena and the idea of the co-evolutionary nature of the social order of each particular society correlating with the tradition of Path Dependence with the incremental nature of social changes and the institutional stability of societies. In the course of the critical analysis of research methods of linear orientation, a comparative comparison of the heuristic and descriptive possibilities of the civilizational approach (from the point of view of the interpretation of the homeostasis of the system, the

preservation of its integrity, the existence of cognitive and behavioral stereotypes) is used in conjunction with the discourse of synergetic (regarding the transition at the points of bifurcation, self-regulation of society and an axiological choice of a certain type of social action) as the basic methods of research, abstract-analytical and comparative methods are applied.

Results and Discussion

Research Philosophies: Postulates, Methods, Sub-Methods

The theoretical basis of the subject of social science is most clearly expressed in the principle of methodological individualism: "All social phenomena, and especially the functioning of all social institutions, should always be must be understood as resulting from the decisions, actions, attitudes, etc. of human individuals" (Popper, 1971, p. 98). This leads to exploring a multiplicity of free individuals as the driving force of the socio-historical process and the consideration of society as a joint activity of people capable of creating the necessary conditions for their existence with their efforts. As society develops, interpersonal communication increasingly became into the view of researchers. They started to study the social structure: the existence of classes, strata and groups, the connection between them. Under these conditions, a new adequate method was required to represent society as social integrity. This role played by the dialectic, which did not eliminate other used methods. Thus, within the dialectic, the monism applied. Therefore, instead of the individual, the society became an object of research. This resulted in the basis of socio-centrism. Representatives of monism believed

that at every level of the social structure can be found the main backbone factor that affects all other conditions (i.e., parts of the system are in subordinate dependence). Moreover, at this level, it was no longer a multiplicity of individuals, but the multitude of social objects: nations (Vico, 1725/2002), cultures (Spengler, 1918/2018), civilizations (Toynbee, 1987), ethnicities and super-ethnicities (Gumilyov, 2015), classes (Marx, 1867; 1884/2013), races (Le Bon, 1902/1974; Gobineau, 1853-55/1983), etc. They stood out for various reasons: the relationship to the means of production (classes), the dominant religion or type of mentality (civilization), the biological characteristics of individuals (race), etc.

Within the scope of these studies, the highest value acquired the binary sub-method of dialectics, which created a new trend in research. The simplified antagonistic opposition of K. Marx is well known. A. Toynbee believed that the cause of death of any civilisation is a conflict between creative minority and the uncreative majority (Toynbee, 1987). S. Huntington represents a future as a clash of Western (Christian) and Eastern (Muslim) civilisations (Huntington, 1996). Thus, the separation of society into two distinct and opposite parts led to the fact that the socio-historical process often simplified to the binary nature and role of the individual discarded. This understanding of the social structure ignored many important actions and events that do not fit that approach.

An imagination about the subject changed while using another sub-method – dynamic. The use of this method allowed considering the development of human society as a past evolving in time. "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under the circumstances chosen by

themselves, but under the circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx, 1852/2005, p. 3). This approach enables to identify accumulated problems, outline the prospects for their solution. It is determined as an integral unity of phenomena and entities.

Moreover, the study of the structure of the socio-historical process shows that it is expedient to distinguish three levels; an action, a combined action-events, a complex of events. Thus, there is movement from the abstract to the concrete. Moreover, the vertical relationship at all levels finds expression in a complex of events. The changes in the structure of action lead to a change of events, and then changing their structure. Such a relationship gives grounds to speak about the impossibility of spontaneity and marginality of social action.

Social Action Structuring
Circumstances

Every social action preceded by social contacts, but unlike them, social action is a rather complex phenomenon. Any social action should include actor, the need for enhancing behaviour, the goal of action, action method, another actor, which directed the action, the result of action. The list of elements that compose an individual social action will be incomplete without considering the external environment of the actor or the situation itself, and in this connection, we should pay attention to the research within situational semantics. Any actor is not in isolation, as it surrounded by the material world and it acts in a specific defined culture and social sphere. That complex of material, social and cultural circumstances creates a situation, which gives expression to the terms and to the means

of action. The terms of the action are those elements of the environment that the actor cannot change, and the means are the elements that the actor has control over. The actor makes social activities and takes into account the existing situation as social actions are conscious by definition. We note that the situation is beyond the scope of social action through the orientation of the subject. In this regard, we must distinguish between the estimated and the motivational orientation of the subject, which means each actor, must assess their environment and with the help of motivation adjusts the purpose and methods to improve social action. However, when one individual is trying to consciously work on another individual, even the absence of the social environment does not relieve them of the need to take into account cultural norms of their previous social experience. The past is an integral part of the present and the future manifested and exists in them in an implicit form. The individual does not so much think himself, as actualizes the experience of past generations, cites their social experience of thinking (Moscovici, 1985). The specifics of the sociocultural environment set the algorithms and the vector of the process of sociocultural dynamics, determines the mentality, the life position and stereotypes of behaviour, ensures the connection of times and the continuity of generations. Moreover, this specificity determines various forms of borrowing and adapting innovations to local conditions, their essential content, their further use in public practice, as well as the motivation for transformation (Poghosyan, 2009).

Social action, unlike reflexive, impulsive actions, never occurs instantaneously, i.e. it fully utilizes time parameter. Moreover, in the minds of the subject of the activity should be strong enough impulse for sustainable activity.

Such incitement to commit acts usually called motivation – a combination of factors, mechanisms and processes to ensure the emergence of motivation to achieve the goals of the subject, in other words, the motivation – is a force that pushes the subject to perform certain actions. Thus, social action mechanism contains the motivation and the action itself. In the context of our study, the priority is the fact that any social action starts with the needs of the subject, gives them a certain direction. The need for social change can be determined as such requirement too. Need relates subject and object of external social environment, enhancing well-defined motifs. Motives for each subject, as well as its concrete social attitudes, give a unique identity to social action. Mechanism of social actions carried out within a specific contact.

Moreover, this contact takes place not only in space and in time, but also terms of value relations. This, in our opinion, explains the socio-cultural uniqueness of various societies and the opposite trend to globalization – the struggle to preserve the uniqueness of national cultures in the conditions of standardizing of lifestyles. Clearly, that while it is making social action, each subject is under the effects of other subjects, i.e. there is an exchange of actions or social interaction. The social interaction means a system of interdependent social actions related to cyclic causal dependence, in which the actions of one subject are both a cause and a consequence of the response of other objects. This means that every social action called prior social action and it is also a cause of subsequent action; it is the system works of deterministic and nondeterministic aspects. As a result, social activities – these are links in an unbroken chain, which called inter-

action. Human interaction with complex open systems takes place in a way that human action itself is not external, but it is included in the system, each time modifying its field of possible statuses. Included in the interaction, people are not dealing with hard objects and properties but with a multiplicity of opportunities. In addition, it is important to note that every time there is a problem of choosing a certain direction of development from many possible ways of evolution of the system. This choice is rather difficult to calculate and it is irreversible. Irreversibility of embodied an informed choice, and the irreversibility of social progress is one of the basic laws of the world socio-historical process. Throughout history, many times, there were lengthy periods of stagnation and difficult zigzags in development, both in the local and regional scale. Different societies because of natural disasters and social catastrophes sometimes thrown far backwards economically, politically and culturally. Nevertheless, for all the complexity, unevenness and dialectical contradictions occurred steady ascent of humankind from the lower forms of social organization to the highest. Although in each case the outcome of the clash of opposing forces of progress and reaction in advance is not a foregone conclusion with the fatal inevitability nevertheless victory of progressive forces, usually proves to be more robust, while the victory of reactionary forces – temporal and transient. This fact gives the irreversibility of social progress. Consequently, the socio-historical process represented as a subordinated, multilevel system of social actions, events, and their combination, which at this stage of the analysis is unchanged and frozen. An examination of the dynamics of such a system in translational motion gives reason to talk about multi-variant process.

Polyvariancy of Social Behavior

Following the logic of the hypotheses proposed by H. Poincare, the social change could go linear and non-linear ways. This turns the science to the study of linear and non-linear paths of development of society, makes necessary to research the social events, actions, institutions and systems of multidimensionality and multi-variant of their developments. In traditional science, the term "variant" means the modification, variation, one of the possible combinations, revealing the process at the level of phenomena, which has the status of reality and finding expression in the observability, detection and causality. Variant presented as objectively existing trend of social development, which is rooted in the material conditions of society, containing the possibility of a certain historical actions. The history of human society itself can be considered as an opportunity to realize the social life, and therefore – as an alternative to non-existence of humanity. Any variety of societies from this point of view considered as variants under this alternative. In such a context a variant appears not just as one of the possible combinations or as an alternative, not as a possibility of any other developments, but – as an essential category, which is based on structured activities and events. The real and the alternative variants are the opposites by definition. The real variant has to understood as an empirically observed and clamp reality. The alternative variant considered a potential reality, non-empirical. Of course, we can do analysis of only a fait accompli, the only possible and accomplished. Thus, the idea of non-linearity and choice making in social activities includes multivariance, a selection of alternative path of evolution and irreversibility (Harrison & Huntington, 2001). However, a simplified understanding of

the materialism and determination of social development essentially leaves no room for subjective factor. The absolutizing of principle of the primacy of social being and considering the social consciousness as secondary and its extrapolation equally both to tenets of historical materialism and to ideologies of classical modernization theory, has the effect of impairing the role of creative consciousness, moral principles, interests and spiritual needs of people. Man appears as a vanishingly small element in a series of numerous abstract categories such as class, the economic base, superstructure, society of post-Modernity, ethnographic material, etc.

With this approach, Weber's pressure-related goal-oriented rationality loses cognitive significance. The nature of rationality lies not only in rationality, but also in that, it is poorly consistent with the meaning of human life. The common meaning of life for all people is their satisfaction with own existence, which they call happiness. Satisfaction with life does not depend on the content of activities and even on its social evaluation. Such satisfaction ignores the rationality factor and is the limit of human activity. Human choice especially actualized in times of great historical transformations. Moreover, it must take into account in the study of social and historical processes. The ontologically designed and historically formatted unique sociocultural component becomes the dominant in the decision making at the bifurcation points (Poghosyan, 2018). The liberal paradigm demonstrates its effectiveness only within modern Western civilization, but not in China, Russia and the Muslim world or in Africa. For example, in wild nature, a group of predators always organizes itself in a rigidly vertical hierarchy, which based on physical power, because that is the essence of individuals of that group. The essence and social

organization of creatively oriented beings of nature (bees or ants) is completely different. Similarly, different types of personality predetermined the creation of different types of post-Soviet countries in 90th, and in the conditions of distortion of cultural and historical realities during periods of bifurcation (with functional disturbances of own system' immanent social institutions) self-organization can takes both linear and pathological forms: the Baltic countries – parliamentary democracies with a non-self-sufficient economy, the Central Asia – the medieval khanates, Ukraine – the criminal oligarchy, Russia – kleptocratic crony capitalism. "Not paying attention to the way culture influences social behavior is usually a mistake" (Triandis, 1994, p. 169). Different type of civilizations creates the certain personality types as well as value orientations, world views and lifestyles (Chen et al., 2016; Chen, Ng, Buchtel, Guan, Deng, & Bond, 2017). Different types of cultures format different cognitive and behavioural stereotypes and creates unique algorithms of solutions of any social problem.

Conclusion

Problematic nature of modern social knowledge dictates the need to perceive it not as the sum of the universal truths, suitable for all occasions, but rather as a creative search for answers to philosophical questions and questions of personal existence. This approach can be implementted the principle of humaneness, by overcoming the psychology of dependence and by assimilation of the modern style of thinking which emanates from recognition of multi-variant social structure and plural cultures of the peoples of the world, the priority of man and his values. It is necessary to abandon generalizing,

unifying and totalizing theories in general, and in particular – from attempts to globalize the universalizing of social behavior on the basis of the explanatory possibilities of the American psychological school in sociology (symbolic interactionism, theories of social exchange, etc.), perfectly designed to analyze and completely describe the psycho-type and cognitive and behavioral stereotypes of representatives of one particular civilizational type, but not effective to description behavior and social choices of representatives of other cultures in different regions of planet. Thus, the logic of our analysis of social behavior, structure of social action, the relation between of social change and the principles of solidarity and confidence of the various types of societies, specific diversity of the studied objects direct the researchers of the modern social transformations to the comparative study of certain unique civilizations and their dynamics.

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