A DIALECTICAL APPROACH FOR ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONCEPTIONS ANALYSIS

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Abstract

In this paper, I intend to delineate a philosophical approach assigned to the project that is being carried out by a group of Hebei Normal University’s researchers in the Centre for Peruvian Studies. The matter under discussion is the role that anthropological conceptions play in the manner people think and behave. Such conceptions are understood as particular interpretations of what is to be a human being. None of these conceptions are thought to come naturally but imposed by the interests of some economic and political elite. Thus, I propose a dialectical and critical method for comprehending some interpretations of human phenomena through the analysis of what Peruvian think about themselves (as an everyday comprehension) through their own accounts (texts of several types and genre), in order to uncover the imposed definitions or images of human being that are configuring and founding their identity and behaviour. The outcome expected from this ongoing research is a critical analysis of the unexamined conceptions of the human being imposed in the Peruvian society, this analysis means a contribution to forging the ways for liberation out of the exclusiveness and projected expectations associated to the hegemonic conception of globalized human being.
1. INTRODUCTION

The research that we are carrying out within the Centre for Peruvian Studies offers a critical and philosophical approach to the way Peruvians understand their own self, that is, their own answer to the phenomenological question: “Who am I? This research is done widely by means of analysing their society, history, literature and philosophical essays. It is assumed that the study of the culture (understood as the main body of ideals) and the self (through narrative identity) lead to the Peruvian and Latin American most relevant anthropological concepts and the praxis related to them; in short, our objective was, therefore, to determine what is to be (or believed to be) a human being in Latin American society nowadays and, in particular, in Peru. Moreover, it focuses on what is to be done to reach and preserve one’s self according to their morals and social rules of behaviour and human relations, to fully become a human being.

The philosophical foundation of the research is thus that a particular conception of what is to be a human being determines what individuals feel and think about themselves. But, furthermore, once that conception is accepted through rhetoric discourses and techniques, it imposes itself on society disseminating ideals and stereotypes that pervade individuals’ behaviour.

2. DEVELOPMENT

The title of this Congress (“Learning to be human”) could not match better with this paper and my proposal: The question is what is the definition of human being that is assumed or supposed, because from that definition depends on what our society and world will become to be. Furthermore, is there an only way to be human? Is there more than one? Which one are we to follow? Let’s revise some ideas from
contemporary philosophy to get a more accurate insight on this matter.

If the ontological approach with the supposition of a constant human nature has led us to some of the most dangerous and inflexible currents of thoughts on human being, setting free the ghosts of racism and marginalization, if not genocide, learned the lesson, we looked for plurality and diversity. Most of the XX century’s philosophies, especially after the great wars, continue the critical thought of Nietzsche about the substance, or what G. Vattimo called the “weak thought” (Il pensiero débole, 1983). In this line of research worked the so-called School of Frankfurt (Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, 1947) and similarly the French philosophy of the 60s (Derridá, De la Gramatologie, 1967; Foucault, L’archeologie du savoir, 1969; Paul Ricoeur, The symbolism of evil, 1967; even Bourdieu): the destruction of the metaphysic concepts as Heidegger proposed in his Kant and the problem of Metaphysics (1929).

From this tradition, we understand that is not possible to enclose the being into our language capabilities, for two alternative reasons: whether because the being overwhelms our faculty of language (Heidegger/Wittgenstein) or because the being itself as a substance is only a concept of our mind created for domination (Nietzsche/Foucault).

I started my intellectual journey following the krausist philosophy (from XIX century) as I have studied it in Krause and Spanish krausist (Sistema de la filosofia. Metafisica. Primera parte. Análisis, translated by J. Sanz del Rio, 1960). I intend to combine the dialectical method of krausism with the tradition mentioned above. This dialectical method looks for a contradiction between terms that get balanced at a superior level in which, however, both terms are contained (contrary to that dialectic of Hegel in which the synthesis deletes both thesis and antithesis looking for unity and uniqueness). The idea of humanity, posed as an ideal, is, for Krausism, the thesis; and the human being in his daily existence is the antithesis. The synthesis we can name it as the ideal-real or what the humans think of themselves, in other words, it is the inner space in which we tell ourselves what we are and want to be and it is
materialised in the culture. In Krausism, there are, then, three possible levels to study a human conception: the idea, the existence and the combination of both, that is, an ideal that move people to act. However, if for Krausist, the idea of humanity was really in truth the essence of humanity, for my proposal, I would rather take it just as one of the possible interpretations of the complex phenomena that we refer to as human being, combining thus the implications of phenomenological - hermeneutic tradition and that of critical and dialectical thinking.

If we are to go further, we need to ask how can we get to know which one is the thesis, that is, the idea of human being that gather a group of people providing them with their own identity; and also we could ask how that idea or conception of being human become possible and even whose interest is behind it. These questions, whatever the answer is, are to start from examining what people (in my case study, Latin American People) tell themselves about their identity, that is, we need to start from the opinion or doxa, which in **Krausism** is equal to the synthesis between the idea and the existence (in time and space); the opinions are to let us go up through **discourse analysis** (T. van Dijk, *Critical discourse analysis, Text and context, 1977*) and the **narrative identity** (Paul Ricoeur, *Temp et recit, 1984*) to the conception that is **intended to be imitated by analogy**. These conceptions, such as the White-Western man or the Indian or the Chinese, can show us their differences and tell us through what **persuasive arguments** (T. Perelman, *Traité de l’argumentation: la nouvelle rhétorique, 1958*) they are adopted by their social - ethnic groups. We could encounter contradictions such us people imitating or reproducing analogically a conception that can not be fulfilled on their effective and material existence, creating great but unsatisfactory expectations. But, also, cases in which they reproduce a discourse that is a no man’s land, a universal and thus, nowadays, globalizing discourse: the one that belongs to the deceived man, conception that hides such big interests from those institutions and social elites that are supporting it. I mean “interest” in the widest sense possible.

Therefore, looking at the rich variety of images of what is to be a human, **the final objective is the liberation** from the substantial and unilateral concept of human
being as human nature, and also a liberation from imposed and unexamined conceptions of humanity granting thus the access to the possibility of embracing a personal way of life with a critical and emancipatory attitude towards the material existence presupposed on those conceptions. As in Socrative teachings, comprehension already is itself liberation. A goal much in relation with Prof. Dussel’s philosophy of liberation (La filosofía de la liberación, 1977) which claims with Levinas (and now also with the dialectic of krausism) the possibility of communicating with others (other people, other groups, other countries…) without assimilating them to ourselves and eliminating them in the process; on the contrary, letting them be who they are, and thus enrich our exchanges in the same proportion in which they keep their idiosyncrasy.

3. CONCLUSION

What we expect to find out through the hypothesis that leads our project is that in a society as complex as Peruvian society, one of the anthropological conceptions is, however, overlapping the rest in many different manners. Only the one that is supported by the institutions and economic power is the hegemonic conception of what is to be a human being, with the establishment of its expectations and frontiers, that is, what is excluded from human behaviour (inhumanity) and who is not to be considered at the same level (in terms of development), and with the same prerogatives (discrimination and marginalization of different kinds).

And, thus, after the arguments posed, arise the really radical question: is it not possible that plural conceptions of the human being can forge together an equal, unique and united society? This paper argues that theoretically it is possible a harmonic constellation of multiple ways of being and behave if all of them share a common project for their society, as defended by social and philosophical Krausism; however, historically, it is not without doubt that we could admit that this happened before, for when diversity and variety of human conceptions encounter, the one dominant tends to overlaps the rest of them, for example, the human conceptions of Indians, Africans, Chinese, etc., from around the world, alienated by the conception
of the White-Western men at the times of colonization, and nowadays in their era of globalization.

Nevertheless, if this approach claims some fruitful outcomes is not only to confirm these evidences but to point out a method for liberation, the liberation not as a destruction or an elimination, but in the way of an acknowledgement of the plural fashions of being human, and, thus, liberation for the humanity from our own stupidity of believing that we must be, think and do all the same, as the ontological philosophy wanted, presupposing also a human nature exclusively defined by Western criteria. In spite of that, nowadays, we live in an era (that has been called post-truth) in which the ontological thought has been cast aside, making space for the plurality, more in accordance with the material existence; therefore, appears to be sensible to propose a hermeneutic of the human being as a unique, indistinctly phenomena but perceived in multiple interpretations led by existential conditions, where the only possible criteria are to be drawn out from each precise conception and culture; as in Wittgenstein’s “games of language”, we have to deal with the plurality, where the game of games, that is, the dreamed universal conception, or nature, of human being can not overcome the Russell’s paradox (named the set of all sets that do not contain themselves as members), for the game of games should be simply another game but them can not be the game that rules other games. However, at least, if nothing else, this position gives us the chance to acknowledge and respect the plurality and, at the same time (connecting in this with Krausism and the infinite possibilities that is contemplated by the idea of humanity), it lets us to understand that whatever is the human nature can only be thought within the multiple ways of being human alongside the earth.
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