

Phenomenology of Multiculturalism

Elena Timoschuk

Humanities department

Vladimir Branch of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration

Vladimir city, Russia

0000-0002-4525-8174

Abstract. *The paper deals with phenomenological foundations of multiculturalism on the basis of the categories of following concepts: multi-layer being, concretization, intentionality, life world, epoché. Structural and functional methods are used for the analysis. As a result, a more subtle theory of multiculturalism is formulated beyond the “melting pot” and “cultural salad” concepts.*

Keywords – *phenomenology, plurality of worlds, intentionality, epoché, guided cultural interaction.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization is a new factor in the modern world, which is characterized by the openness to the information, value and meaning systems instability. Under these conditions, a new model of interaction between the subjects of the world process is being worked out: multiculturalism, cultural assimilation, exclusion. Straightforward cultural expansion and colonialism are over, the choice is between diffusion and separation, marginalization and integration.

The significance of this paper is as follows: Russia needs an adequate model of acculturation, which could work in a civilized way with the problems of cultural pluralism: migration, missionary activities, horizontal and vertical innovations. The modern policy of intercultural communication originates in the western world and needs to be adapted. Cultural differences are not ontic, but they affect social formations no less than the geographical environment, and, unlike the latter, can be harmonized.

Here are critical questions the research addresses: in what way cultural differences are significant for the sustainable global society? Are there technologies of conservative management of identities? How can philosophical phenomenology help in those issues?

The paper will address the moderate practice of multicultural formation using phenomenological tools of multi-layer vision, concretization, intentionality, life world analysis, epoché. This apparatus will help to create a flexible model of cultural adaptation. The objective of the study is to propose a conservative system of cultural policy based on phenomenology. The hypothesis is that phenomenology can serve as a working tool for guided cultural interaction.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Multiculturalism and fusion (“melting pot”, “furnace”, “crucible”) are viewed as two opposing policies. The first represents the idea of the salad bowl (or “pizza effect”, “symphony”, “mosaic”), where cultural agents retain their identity, while the second advocates the removal of

limitations and differences imposed by one’s own tradition and the formation of a unified culture.

The merging of cultures, the melting of ethnic and religious identities into a single Anglo-Protestant national alloy – this ideal arose in the United States as a result of the influx of frontiersman. The implementation of this goal was quite successful as long as the subjects of amalgamation were white immigrants. Representatives of Indian, Latin American, Japanese, Chinese, African civilizations formed separate enclaves, which allowed S. Huntington even in 1993 to talk about the danger of different cultural worlds collision.

Multiculturalism as a policy and social practice was used in Canada, Germany, France, and Great Britain. It has accumulated in some subjects a negative reaction due to the isolation of ethnic communities, potential conflicts, the preservation of language distances, criminality involved.

Phenomenological multiculturalism is positioned as moderate protection of cultural pluralism, raising of the younger generation in a spirit of respectful attitude to foreign cultural systems [10]. Whereas political entities seek to achieve maximum domination, with their practices of Americanization, Arabization, Germanization, Sinicization, Polonization, Russification, Ukrainization, Hellenization, etc., unless they reach the counter-resistance.

Considering cultural policy in Russia, the state expanded its borders to the known geographical limits and frontiers of other strong political entities. Hundreds of monocultural formations were included in the Russian state. The two leading directions of the tsarist policy were assimilation through the adoption of Orthodoxy, as well as the management of cultural diversity through ethnic and religious elites. The USSR constructed the international identity “Soviet man”, uniting the peoples around the socio-economic goal of building a communist society. After the collapse of the USSR, radical cultural construction was replaced by “small clamps” – the unity of historical destiny, the victory over Nazism, the Eurasian economic space, the all-Russian patriotism, need for common economic space. These policies lack totalizing unity of the Soviet identity, yet it appears that present liquid identities are more adequate representations of the metastable world.

III. METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on general scientific methods of theoretical level: comparative, genetic, system, and structural types of analyses. Choosing from general logical methods, the author relies on analysis, synthesis, abstraction, concretization, generalization.

Phenomenology is a philosophical practice of profound overcoming cultural stereotypes, ethno-confessional clichés,

political conventions, based on concepts and technologies of multi-layeredness, concretization, intentionality, life world, epoché.

Since Husserl teachings [3] are very extensive, multifaceted and difficult to understand, interpretation of phenomenology varies from author to author. Extensive speculative reasoning prevails, which not only justifies the name of phenomenology as “philosophy for philosophers,” but also makes of it a product of dubious quality [11]. Many authors indulge in term-creation and consider under the phenomenology some type of individual thought formation, not taking into account the tradition of phenomenological philosophy [6].

At the same time, phenomenology has a rather concrete program, which is close to social and cultural practice, represented by the teachings of R. Ingarden [4], A. Schütz [9], P. Berger and T. Luckmann [1]. They have loaded phenomenology with quite clear tasks – to explain the essence of a thing and its social reflection, to remove antinomies between the natural and the social, to introduce a rational principle into the irrational and metaphysical.

Let us turn to the key categories of phenomenology: multi-layeredness, concretization, intentionality, life world, epoché. Polish phenomenologist Roman Ingarden has developed an ontological system **plurality of ontic layers**, which helps to formulate a new communication model for social agents [4]. In the ontology of R. Ingarden, in addition to the real being of things, the ideal being of mathematical constructs and the absolute being of theology, there is an intentional world of sociocultural objects generated by projectiveness of consciousness and the need for self-expression and identification (artistic heroes, social expectations, ethnic ideas, religious beliefs, media products).

Real objects (mountain, river, planet) may cease to exist due to the influence of other real objects, but their existential stability is high. Intentional objects have the least existential inertia: they can disappear without any external influence if they are simply forgotten. The toughest ideological clashes of the Olmecs and Aztecs, Assyrians and Arameans are now remembered by a very few people, since new world views and conflicts are constantly being generated and there is always a hybridization of the old and the new, the local and the global going underway.

The existence of sociocultural objects depends not on one consciousness, but on the agreement of several agents. Intentional objects support their existence **intersubjectively** at the expense of communicative consent, which stores the integrity parameters of intentional objects. Due to sign systems, intentional objects become public, available for review, evaluation and change. R. Ingarden has also developed a theory of concretization, where he described how the abstract transforms into the concrete [7]. Concretization is closely connected with the multi-layeredness of being and intentionality of the objects, which owe their essence and existence to the individual consciousness.

Religious monuments, legal norms, works of art are not only physical objects. Their physical parameters (stability, essence, existence) do not coincide with cultural ones. Physical objects may be lost, but social memory keeps their cultural properties.

R. Ingarden introduced the concept of **concretization** for the procedural development of indeterminacy places in the text. The concretization of a sociocultural object is a way of establishing links between the text and the reading patterns caused by it. The closest correlate of instantiation is actualization, the act of translating possibility into reality, in which other possibilities remain unrealized. R. Ingarden pointed to the semantic affinity of the term to the more well-known “actualization”, but he preferred his own version [5].

The **life worlds** are small and large social groups that share value-semantic structures of their target collective consciousness and generate their solidary predicates. Thus, participants in the political process are united in their belief in their views on the ideal structure of society. Members of professional groups (doctors, sailors, communications workers, entrepreneurs, etc.), share a common destiny in activity, payment, and protection of their corporate interests. The religious group cooperates around the common structures of faith, moral principles. In a traditional, relatively simple society, the individual usually belongs to the integrative value-semantic worlds, which comprise professional, political, religious, moral, aesthetic and other views.

Life worlds are transformed along with their social carriers. Thus, the life world of the merchants, reflected on the Kustodiev B.M. canvases, with its aesthetic and ethical norms, went into oblivion under the influence of the culture of the revolutionary life of the proletariat. The culture of peasant settlements in old Russia was supplanted by the culture of early Soviet communal dormitories, which was replaced by the customs of late USSR individual urban households.

Conflicts of concretization are possible on the borders of the vital worlds. Thus, the conflict of concretization of constitutional rights and freedoms can be seen on the example of discussing a draft law on insulting religious feelings. Supporters of this bill see it as a guarantor of the sanctity of the sacred, while opponents believe that it removes religion from the sphere of public criticism, which is bad for religion itself. Constitutional rights and freedoms have individual intentional parameters and their identity is established intersubjectively.

The emergence, maintenance and formatting of vital worlds are associated with another sociocultural phenomenon – a growing individualization in society. It is the process of separating oneself from the general biological properties. Due to the growing individuation in modern society, it is becoming increasingly difficult to support primary cooperative structures — the institutions of marriage and the family. The evidence of multiculturalism in the original social institution is diversification of its forms: guest, open, trial marriage, cohabitation, single-parent families, polyamory.

E. Husserl has developed an important philosophical tool – phenomenological reduction (**epoché**) of the mental procedure for registration and removal from the layers of psychological experience [2]. This is a multi-step act of putting aside the brackets: 1) usual experience, 2) psychological attitudes, 3) theoretical assumptions. The phenomenological reduction is the operation of removing the attributes of objects from acts of consciousness, freeing the image of a thing in consciousness from other characteristics that have been transferred, not necessarily peculiar to a thing. Transferred to cultural practice, the epoché means the conscious position of the speaker and the acting cultural agent, recognizing the conventionality and the functionality of their own and other people's cultural identities.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the reasons of the instability of social institutions is dissatisfaction with static identities, openness to the dynamics of life. Phenomenology does not call for destabilization of identity. It recognizes conditional functional value due to the fact that different factors contribute to the sedimentation and institutionalization of society. Stability, meaning, individuation – these are the phenomenological ideals of human existence. The phenomenology of multiculturalism offers training in concepts and technologies of multi-layeredness, concretization, intentionality, life world, epoché.

Phenomenology does not contradict the concept of a cultured personality with tolerant attitude to cultural diversity. Neither does it conflict with the prevention of extremism. It supports such priorities of state policy in the field of education and upbringing as the reproduction of a highly moral personality with a sense of respect for their culture, tolerance for other cultures, and an orientation towards cooperation with the Other [11].

Socio-cultural phenomenology may help in strengthening the theoretical level of the formation of ideas about cultural diversity. The existing school subjects in the Russian Federation “The Foundations of the Spiritual and Moral Culture of the Peoples of Russia” and “The Foundations of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics” fill the gap in the basic information about cultural diversity. However, this is not enough to create empathy for other cultural systems. Living together cannot only be informative, without communication and empathy. The multicultural world is based on respect and conscious creation of a new quality of life.

V.B. Sokol's concept of the “phenomenological melos” proposes to achieve a spiritual rapprochement of people through the intentionally-musical origin of human experience, which opens up access to a common empathy. A world of people of different cultures (participation or

sankirtana) based on music as a unity of breathing and voice intentions, allows us even unknowingly master a single intersubjective life world [8].

V. CONCLUSIONS

Thus, none of the policies of multicultural diversity has proven flawless. The melting pot does not work, because there are substances that react toxically in the alloy. Cultural salad leads to the loss of a single controllability of the collective subject. Phenomenology proposes to simultaneously maintain cultural consensus and go beyond identities. The synergistic effect of the interaction of different cultures must be controlled from within the consciousness of the subject himself, who ought to be sufficiently educated and cultured to select creatively the models and processes of interaction. This process can be described as a guided cultural interaction.

The phenomenology of multiculturalism is the formation of an inner moral position that is alien to cultural raiding and consumer assimilation. The moral philosophy of phenomenology is as follows: a conscious choice, cooperation for the sake of global sustainability, without damaging local traditions, with respect for the Other. Phenomenology of culture stresses the preservation of self-identity and cultural identity with the adoption of cultural innovations that are necessary for sustainable development.

REFERENCES

- [1] Berger, P., Luckmann, T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality*. New York, Anchor Books.
- [2] Husserl, E. (1991). *Husserliana: Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*. Dordrecht, Springer.
- [3] *Husserliana* (1950-2014). Dordrecht, Springer.
- [4] Ingarden, R. (1964). *Time and Modes of Being*. Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Publisher.
- [5] Ingarden R., Fizer J., Chipp H. (1970). Letters pro and con. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 28 (4): 541–543.
- [6] Kutyrev, V.A. (2011). Velichi(na)e i kovarstvo fenomenologicheskoy idei Guserlia [Grander and devilry of Husserl's phenomenological ideas]. *Philosophy and culture*, 5: 18–24. (In Russ.)
- [7] Rudnick, H. (1982). The concretization of meaning: Roman Ingarden. *Semiotica*, 41: 247–255. DOI: 10.1515/semi.1982.41.1-4.247
- [8] Sokol, V.B. (2015). *Intencional'nyj razum i muzykal'noe myshlenie: fenomenologicheskaja deskripcija* [Intentional Mind and Musical Thinking: A Phenomenological Description]: Doctor of Philosophy thesis. Tyumen: Tyumen State University.
- [9] Schutz, A. (1967). *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Evanston, Northwestern University Press.
- [10] Timoshchuk, E.A. (2009). Obrazovatel'nye tehnologii v svete fenomenologii R. Ingardena [Educational technologies in the light of R. Ingarden's phenomenology]. *Modern problems of artistic culture and education (regional aspect)*: Materials of the international scientific-practical conference, ed. by R.A. Kurenkova. Vladimir, VF RAGS: 22–29. (In Russ.)
- [11] Timoshchuk, E.A. (2018). Phenomenological approach in the context of modern educational trends. *Alma mater*, 3: 29–32.