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Problem of Synthesis of the Main Definitions of Culture

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Axiological, operational and semiotical definitions of culture are exposed to the critical analysis. Stages of evolution of concept of culture and basic changes of its sense are discussed. The author formulates his synthetic definition: the culture is such a side of a human life which deals with creation of ideals. The three-level structure of cultural science is offered.

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There are three main sights at the nature of culture in modern philosophy – axiological, operational and semiotical. In general sense distinction between these three sights is based on identification of culture whether with a special thing (useful subjects, values), whether with specific property (actions and operations), whether with a version of the attitude (reflection, information).

The axiological approach is developed in two variants: 1) there is a uniform culture of mankind, and it can be imagined in the form of a pyramid of universal values (Peirce, Windelband, etc.); 2) there is no universal culture, and there is a set of the incommensurable cultural-historical systems representing original, closed in and equal in rights systems of values (Dilthey, Toynbee, Weber, etc.).

Supporters of the operational approach consider any culture as sociohistorical ensemble of schemes of activity, operations (school of L.S. Vygotskii, E.V. Il'enkov, etc.) – as «a system of

nonbiologically developed mechanisms owing to which activity of people in a society is stimulated, programmed and realized» (E. Markaryan). But when the notion of culture is “evaporated” up to such general concepts, as technological invariant of acts or scheme of activity, then culture theoretically forfeits its spiritual-vital properties.

According to the semiotical approach culture is understood as system of information codes (signs and symbols together with their values and senses) – in these codes human experience is packed; codes broadcast programmes of behaviour, dialogue and activity; with their help the behaviour of present and future generations is programmed and adjusted (Y.A. Lotman, etc.).

The specified approaches, undoubtedly, are lawful. Each of them in own way describes this or that feature of the basis of a real culture. And still the reduction of the basis of culture or only to “thing”, or exclusively to “property”, or to only one “attitude” is excessive simplification and contradicts requirements of philosophical

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dialectics. The gene of culture, as well as any fragment of social life, should be understood comprehensively, namely as unity of a thing, its properties and attitudes. On the other hand, in each of the named unilateral approaches the logic mistake of «too wide definition» is accomplished: the culture is erected or to the sum: 1) everyone, but not a special sort of values; 2) any, but not certain sort of actions and operations; 3) any, but not unique information codes.

All these three named above approaches are forged by convincing examples of existence of “uncivilized” values, “uncivilized” schemes of action and “uncivilized” information codes. Here I, say, have looked at my personal computer and have immediately thought up three “denying” examples: 1) intuitively do not carry to values of culture axiological installation of the “serial” hacker starting in our personal computers viruses-murderers; 2) it is possible to hammer in nails with a help of the system block of the personal computer, but we shall confidently rank such perverted scheme of action as “anticulture”; 3) at failures of the software of the personal computer it is capable to make weight of the crazy information codes which are not having for the user absolutely any «cultural sense». Hence, the logic demands to limit logic volumes of concepts of value, operation and a code when them apply at definition of a phenomenon of culture.

In the domestic literature the definition of culture as «measure of realization of intrinsic forces of the person» (L.N. Kogan) uses demand also. It is easy to notice, that it is exclusively abstract and is not specific. Under it every approach that is opposite to a nature: “artificial”, “activity”, “technics”, “a way of manufacture”, “civilization” and so on. This definition does not consider item the fact of ethnic polyalternativeness and opposition of cultures (really at modern Germans and the Frenchmen so different «measures of realization of intrinsic forces of the person», so far as speak

about striking differences of German culture from French?), neither their sacral beginning, nor their is emotional-sensual fabric. About all “artificial” (metanatural) to speak, that it is culture – means to reduce the term to absurdity and to deprive with its function to be the effective tool of the philosophical-distinguishing analysis.

Whether generalizing synthesis of the main modern concepts of culture in which the culture is possible, first, was defined as unity of three aspects of being (in unity of axiological, operational and semiotical components) and, secondly, was understood as unity not everyones, but only the special values, specific schemes of actions and some versions of information codes? The variant of such synthesis has been offered by the author of given article in 1990th (more in detail about attempt of synthesis of three concepts of *Ideele* and *Ideale* [these terms are written here in German] – D.I. Dubrovsky, E.V. Il’enkov and M.A. Lifshits’s models – see: *Pivovarov D.V. Problem of the carrier of an ideal image. Sverdlovsk: Urals University Press, 1986*). The synthetic concept of interrelation of *Culture* and *Ideale* was later concretized by the author (see: *Pivovarov D.V. Philosophy of religion. Moscow: The Academic Project, 2006, section II*).

The concept of culture, in my opinion, more precisely and more «realistic» to define as a side of human life referred to creation of ideals. This definition is much more narrow, than definitions of culture mentioned above. Such specific value appears in it, as *Ideale*; manufacture of ideals and worship is interfaced by it to special forms of activity; at last, *Ideale*, being one of versions of symbols, extremely capaciously packs in itself information codes of comprehensible behaviour. The culture differs from a nature (“not-culture”) that the carrier of culture by all means corresponds with any object (alive or inert, natural or artificial) only via an *Ideale*. I shall explain the hypothesis.

As is known, in etymological sense the latin term *cultura* (a participle of future time from a verb *colere* – to cultivate, esteem) is translated into Russian by words: cultivation, leaving, development, education, formation, reverence. At ancient Greeks and Romans under a *cult* (latin. *cultus*) set of ceremonies of reverence of any state, the god or the person with the purpose of reception from them the help was understood.

The basic stages of evolution of concept of culture, in my opinion, answer logic of the law of denying of denying – to a principle of a helicoid ascension of the initial thesis *A* to the antithesis *Not-A*, and then to dialectic synthesis of *A* and *Not-A*.

1. The INITIAL THESIS. Originally, during an epoch of the Middle Ages, *culture* was meant not as a cult in sense of worship the God or the person, but as a cultivation by a farmer of a field. In those days the term *culture* designated a special and extremely valuable kind of material activity, namely an agricultural practice.

Cultivating ground and throwing grain in it, the grain-grower, similarly to biblical Cain, extracted excessive physical work to a daily bread. All he was attracted to an arable land: tended to ground, with love worshipped to the fertile ground, idolized “ground-mother” feeding him. But sometimes the ground ceased to give birth because of a drought, an exhaustion of the cultivated layer or for other material reasons. Then the worker tore off the look from mother-matter, pointed it into the sky and begged the absolute spiritual forces to help him. The help came sooner or later, and people trusted, that exactly the Sky cured misfortunes of agriculture. The spiritual sense, invisibly and quantitatively, collected in concept of culture as a special kind of physical work.

2. The ANTITHESIS. This opposite – spiritual – sense became obvious. In the maintenance of concept of culture there was a

quantum leap – the reference value of the term culture has undergone to dialectic denying, rotation and to removal that was promoted much by Christian church. Reminding people a parable about malicious farmer Cain and kind shepherd Abel, Christian pastors demanded to worship not to matter, but to spirit. In XVIII–XIX centuries in a number of the European countries (it is probable, first of all in Catholic France and Protestant Germany) extends essentially new perusal of the discussed term.

So, more habitual began to understand culture as a special kind of spiritual activity, namely as worship the God, as spiritual increase of soul, as formation of mind. Cultural – means, brought up, formed, the aristocrat. Persons of physical work, as a rule, not had decent formation, began to carry to the category of uncivilized people. Agricultural perusal of this term (in sense of an agriculture as «damned work») is has left on a background.

The concept of culture has come to Russia from the West already in value of *education*, and it was associated with finding knowledge-as-light, with reverence of spiritual light. That is why, in opinion of many Russian religious thinkers (S. Bulgakov, P. Florensky, etc.), concept of culture must interface not with initial *colere*, but with *cultus* to which the subject of this cult – fire or light – is added (*cult* + *uro* more correctly; latin. *uro* – to burn down with fire). And a peasant in orthodox Russia refers to “christianin”. «Any culture – from a cult », – religious educators like to repeat. Nikolay Roerich has specified communication latin *uro* with a word *ur* (*ur* on a Sanskrit means light, a ray of light, and at Egyptians *Ra* – the god of the Sun and the Sun). And really, unless not the same root *ur* in words *the city Ur* (Abraham is supposed to have lived at Ur), Urartu, Urals Mountains? Roerich suggested to leave from etymology *colere* and to translate a word *culture* in more modern sense – as the sum of words *cult* and *ur*, i. e. as worship light.

However, very few scientists from domestic experts pay attention to a word *ur*, adhering to initial and very wide sense of culture as of cultivation (then one of these two words superfluous, and would be in Russian admissible without special losses to replace the term “culturology” with a word “delovedenie”), or being limited to understanding of culture as anonymous cult (“cultology”, “pocklonoslovie”). But if the culture is all the same a cult, a cult of that or whom? On this account our philosophers and culturologists keep mum is more often, recollecting well-known Wittgenstein’s maxima («about what you can not tell, about that store silence»).

3. SYNTHESIS. On a background of secularization and atheistic aversion of a theme of spirit and soul there is a radical revision of concept of culture in a science of XX century. In set of the put forward concepts of culture the general tendency to unite is looked through and considerably to generalize the last representations about culture as, on the one hand, special spiritual activity, and with another – as specific material activity. As a result to the most influential today became extremely abstract treatment of culture as all sum of forms of human activity in general.

From here, we see allocation of independent kinds of cultures – spiritual cultures and material cultures. The first is defined as the sum of any intellectual operations upon any sort of conceivable objects. The second is treated as set of any schemes of practical actions with any material things. The technocratic abstraction which has eliminated former sights at culture as on special kinds of activity, described above, has won.

It is not necessary to consider the specified abstraction as the casual misunderstanding occurring from malicious intention of certain influential culturologists, borrowed an antichristian position. I consider, that it has arisen

as the natural tendency of synthesis of strong and mutually exclusive alternatives. In this plan it is not a subject to the indignant condemnation, and it is necessary to understand without emotions the objective reasons of its intellectual victory in XX–XXI centuries

However it is necessary to go further, considering two circumstances. First, the known principle says, that any radical action sooner or later will undergo to adequate counteraction; the suppressed qualities anyhow are restored and, in turn, remove developed “state of affairs”. Secondly, in connection with vigorous differentiation of modern culturologic knowledge (in conditions of postmodernist boom) the need for its integration objectively amplifies.

Clearly, that speech goes first of all about necessity to rethink essentially the limiting bases of culturology and about a problem of synthesis of the basic modern definitions of culture. Clearly also, that those experts who do not consider or simply do not understand dialectics of differentiation and integration, will declare by all means, that the problem designated by the author is not so actual and it is not necessary to be engaged in it. Well, let them also not to be engaged in it and to remain at the settled opinion. It is their legitimate right.

But let us return to a theme of a parity among *Ur* and *Ideale*. *Ur* and an ideal, certainly, are not the same, but there is much the general between them. German language seizes distinction between a way of existence of any idea (*Ideelle*) and a character of existence of an ideal – as especially valuable idea, light-carrier factor and representative of sorts (groups) of things (*Ideale*). Hegel understood under *Ideelle*: a) any virtual existence, stay of subjects inside of hidden essence in the form of opportunities; b) insertion and representation of other-being inside of self-being; c) acknowledgement of supersensual properties with which the consciousness allocates

some reality. Under *Ideale* the German thinker meant the perfect display of non-material essence in some material phenomenon seldom meeting in an external world having character of an aesthetic subject (the visible essence, heard essence, the sensual manifestation of idea). On Hegel, *Ideale* is a concentration of a highlighted essence and a transparent window in the thin world usually hidden from a direct look.

People master classes of things and processes through ideals, and *Ideale* carries out a role of the luminary of a special sort. Somewhat *Ideale* is a version of *ur* (light). Then, specifying in language of secular philosophy a definition of concept of culture (as «cult of light»), it is possible to define culture as ideal-creating part of life. The concept “creation of ideals” has many sides. Spiritual, sincere, intellectual and material-practical components are also included into it. This concept assumes the correspondence between faith, emotions and technology in the creed of a person. It focuses the philosopher on vision not so much a culture in general, how on many sets of separate cultures in their historical and actual opposition.

As any sign or a symbol, *Ideale* has a corporal cover and supersensual meaning. Therefore the culture as ideal-creating side of a human life is wrongful for dividing on certain ostensibly separately existing «material culture» and «spiritual culture». Unlike a usual sign, *Ideale* is valuable not only due to its intellectual meaning, but also to its corporal embodiment. Owing to such duality the culture dialectically is and not a sensual reality; that is why it is eternally mysterious for the extraneous observer. To comprehend and go through it more or less its carrier must be able to switch from admiration of a corporal covers of ideals to its supersensual spiritual value. To a foreign person who is getting acquainted his mother’s culture, he sees strange culture in fallen asleep material forms – more

often as certain symbolical bodies, system of idols.

As the distinctive attribute of any culture, ideal-creative process is a process of : a) preservation and change of samples of reproduction of a specific public life esteemed for ideals in its all measurements; b) painful parting with the ideals ceasing life-givingly to influence a gain of culture. Ideals are invented not only in global societies and civilizations, but are made also by separate people, social groups and individuals. Therefore it is lawful to speak not only about culture of a society or people, but also about unique culture of a person, individual man.

Sacralized system of base ideals forms a kernel of religion and economy, and system of culture (almost as in I. Lakatos’s model of scientific-research programme) consists from this «firm kernel» and «a protective belt». The scheme of culture can be drawn also in the form of a pyramid: the basis consists of religious and economic ideals, between which there occur mutual reflections and contradictions; the top gets married such ideals, as the standard of meter, masterpieces of culinary art, norm of recalculation of a rate of exchange of money and so on. The whole culture, from this point of view, does not happen neither cleanly religious, nor cleanly secular, but to some extent contains religious and secular components inside of itself.

The concept of creation of ideals as a complex and long process means the dramatic conflict of culture and anticulture, the contradiction between tendencies of creation of alternative ideals. Knowledge of properties and laws, related to creation of ideals, I hope, will allow to explain more deeply a birth, blossoming and destruction of individual, national and world cultures, to understand the reasons of an attraction and pushing away of coexisting cultures, to trace interaction of sacral basis and a secular

superstructure in system of culture. In a view of the offered approach philosophical representation about «the general education of the person» is important for coordinating to concept «native culture»: the general education is immersing the person in base ideals of native culture and mastering of these ideals by it.

By way of addition to the above-stated I shall state a reason about improvement of structure of the academic cultural science. I suggest to allocate (proceeding from logic «the general – especial – separate») three basic levels of culturology as a scientific and a subject matter.

It is logical to name the first, methodological, section *culturonomu* (in Russian – *культурнономия*; the Greek term *nomos* means *law*). Philosophy of

culture – as the ideological kernel of *culturonomy* – consists from ontology of culture, epistemology of culture and axiology (or praxiology) of culture. The periphery is formed with the major general scientific and specially-scientific methods of research of a phenomenon of culture.

The second section – *culturometria* (in Russian – *культурометрия*). Various measurements of culture (ethnologic, religious, economic, technical, political, psychological and so forth) are compared in it

The third level of cultural science – *culturography* (in Russian – *культурология*). It represents, first, a statement of history of concrete cultures, secondly, the description of modern cultures in their interactions and contradictions.