

Historical reflection in the educational process: an axiological approach

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ABSTRACT

The current analysis of teaching problems is dominated by an instrumental and technological approach. However, some works have already traced the idea that historical reflection should also become a major factor in teaching. This is primarily due to the axiological aspects that form our worldview and outlook. Openness as a principle and condition for the development of the world educational system has forced the authors to address the problem of actualization of historical reflection. Historical reflection is the basis of the value orientations of learners' outlook, and the formation of such a reflection is an objective component of the continuous educational process. The authors believe that the problem of historical knowledge and its interpretation has long been a source of the social and moral split of generations, and historicism as the basis of the historical way of thinking loses its objective content. The differentiation of current regulatory value systems distorts axiological meanings, and the social experience of previous generations as the basis of social memory is deprived of the semantic content. Modern Russian educational system in its humanitarian component often substitutes historicism for presenteeism, which in its extreme form acts as a "historical pop". The authors prove the necessity of a historical and informational approach as a neorealist (structuralist) option of historical knowledge as well as regard the axiological component of historical knowledge as the basis for the creation of objective historical knowledge.

KEYWORDS: *historical reflection, axiological approach, educational process, historical knowledge*

Introduction

In the International Dictionary of Psychology, Stuart Sutherland gives an ironic but summarizing definition of consciousness. He writes that consciousness is “a fascinating but elusive phenomenon: it is impossible to specify what it is, what it does, or why it evolved.” (Sutherland, 1990). The maxim, formed a quarter of a century ago, is still relevant. At any rate, the problem of consciousness / mind / intelligence remains acute for the widest range of sciences. This statement was confirmed by Ray Kurzweil in his work *How to Create a Mind: The Secret of Human Thought Revealed*. The central idea of the book is the idea of reverse brain engineering (in other words – artificial intelligence), but as R. Kurzweil rightly argues, consciousness is always characterized by two features: a) “we tend to equate consciousness with our memory of events” and b) intelligence can be defined as “the ability to solve problems with limited resources, in which a key such resource is time” (Kurzweil, 2013: 44; 402).

Eventivity in the discourse of time is in fact what in individual consciousness can be interpreted as a phenomenon, which is presented to the person (individual) as history in the process of teaching (education). Therefore, a historical and informational approach is a kind of cultural strategy, to the extent of which historical memory can be "deployed" in any direction. Currently, this is how individual, group and public consciousness is manipulated.

The basis for the authors' further discussion is the fact that an appeal to historical memory is closely related to the problem of historical alternatives. In this case, we will rely upon the fact that the experience of history and its lessons do not guarantee that if we do not follow mistaken predecessors, we will act correctly, because the quality and completeness of historical memory is largely characterized by the breadth and depth of awareness of historical alternatives. It is in this aspect that the content of historical memory itself can act as a historical consciousness field organized in a certain way (eventivity and its analysis). The value of the analysis of eventivity, represented procedurally, consists in the adequacy of this analysis. However, this value can be "evaluated" only by those subjects that are out of the event itself, thus getting an opportunity to "analyze the analysis".

The objective of this paper is to consider the problem of the formation of historical reflection in the Russian educational system, paying particular attention to its value aspects. Is history valuable for learners? Are they capable of reflection on past social reality? Do they have a readiness for reflection being formed in the teaching process?

Materials and Methods

A remarkable paper by I. Savelyeva and A. Poletayeva *History as Knowledge of the Past* postulates the idea that the connectedness between history and “the construction of past social reality” as “a semantic definition of historical knowledge, formed in the XX century, highlights its temporal characteristics” (Savelyeva and Poletayeva, 2000: 1-29). Given this idea, one cannot emphasize it in the plane of those interests that are introduced in the process of this "construction". We believe that the determining subject of this construction at least in the field of education is the state. It is no coincidence that educational courses of any level, associated with the reconstruction of the past, are based on the idea about the polarity of the West and the East.

This polarity was mentioned by K. Jaspers, who interpreted it as a form of splitting of the spiritual world in general. Jaspers shows that "now although objective historical analysis reveals that the West has played a paramount role in shaping the world, it also discloses an incompleteness and deficiency in the West which render it perennially apposite and fruitful to ask of the Orient: What shall we find there and what became truth, that we have let slip? What is the cost of our paramountcy?" (Jaspers, 1965: 68).

"The fight for history" is a real trend in shaping historical consciousness and national identity. This is explained by the fact that no national political elite, standing at the head of the state (and "constructing" consciousness as national identity), cannot (and should not!) abandon the idea of "introducing" a particular system of assessments and perceptions (values) with respect to the social past of the country, which corresponds to its (of the political elite) meaning and objectives, through mass historical consciousness (history education). Thus, the axiological factor becomes crucial for shaping not only and not so much the identity, but for the mentality of the nation.

This trend is growing and continuing in the discourse of the search for methodological foundations of modern history education in Russia. In his speech, academician V.A. Tishkov emphasized that the basic consensus that forms the foundation of national identity should be not so much and not only the confrontation of the East and the West, but also mass historical consciousness. This is because "the unity and stability of any modern society is based on the solidarity of its citizens, and this solidarity is based on people's adoption and preservation of history. This basic consensus, if it can be achieved, is the basis for the formation of national identity" (Tishkov, 2010). It is hard to underestimate the role of actual history education as the main forming "mechanism" of corresponding historical reflection in this process.

Up to a certain time, it was considered very productive to review history education in the discourse of structuralism (meaningful neorealism), the classics of which are Hans Morgenthau, Robert Gilpin and Kenneth Waltz. The six principles of classical realism generated by H. Morgenthau in his classic work *Six Principles of Political Realism* are usually accompanied by methodological papers on international relations. But, in our opinion, at least one of them should be applied to the study of mass historical consciousness. This is the statement that man cannot be driven only by moral principles or a desire for power (Morgenthau 2005: 7-14.). The second principle is formed and presented by R. Gilpin. Its essence consists in the fact that selfishness is an unaltered quality of human nature and the purpose of education is not to destruct it, but to strength this principle through the explication of individual past experience (Gilpin, 1986).

According to K. Waltz, the consideration of any object (the historical process itself for the analyst is the object of application of his or her intelligence) as a system involves the definition of this object as a dialectic of structure and its filling elements. While the majority of "classic" realists tended to explore the elements of the system (historical facts / events), neo-realists consider the structure to be the main subject of study, i.e. those principles (laws), according to which the elements are arranged in the system. Formally, any structure is the choice of constraint tolerances and is characterized by anarchy, the lack of differentiation of elements' functions (historical facts / events) and the distribution of elements (facts / events) in accordance with the interests of the analyst (Waltz, 1979).

Until recently, according to a leading expert in the field of history education E.E. Vyazemskiy, Russian history education was dominated by an academic pedagogical model of historical studies, which generally corresponded to classical realism. He highlighted the following examples of consequences and problems of the academic model:

- high requirements for subject results (factual - auth.);

- low motivation to study history and social science (the distribution of elements in accordance with the interests of the analyst - auth.);
- the lack of incentives in shaping the person-centered important educational trajectory (the lack of differentiation of elements' functions - auth.);
- teachers and educational establishment administration's lack of experience in realizing the relevant meanings.

In his opinion, this model generally corresponded to the state and social order and even public expectations, but did not meet the massive social realities of modern Russia in the global world. As a result, E.E. Vyazemskiy concluded that the development strategy of socio-humanitarian (historical and social) education needs to be substantially adjusted (Vyazemsky, 2014). According to many Russian researchers of history education, such an adjustment is possible within the framework of preventing the historical past of Russia from being falsified. V. Zhukov, articulating the state orientation to "the adjustment of the strategy", writes: "In the early XXI century the struggle for history between liberal and patriotic movements worsened, but only at the end of the first decade it became clear that at the government level patriotism had ceased to be perceived as "the last refuge for scoundrels" (Zhukov, 2010).

Results and Discussion

The confrontation between "liberals" and "patriots" for the Russian historical tradition, including history education, is a conventional phenomenon (Terekhov, 2009: 51-61). However, for them history is "an arena" for discussion and implementation of mainly political purposes and meanings with corresponding functions to manipulate individual and group consciousness, while for any citizen (especially for those who study not on an "instructional" basis but on an individual one) history becomes the moral basis of existence, a certain "field" to develop life meanings, values and attitudes (Kudashov et al., 2016: 583-593). The conscious selection of historical alternatives is the "functionality", in the discourse of which an individual's historical knowledge and historical consciousness as well as personal identity is formed. It is this temporality of "history as the present" that is the task of history education. I. Savelyeva and A. Poletayeva present a very substantial argument, which helps to distinguish between the meanings of everyday and theoretical historical reflection. It includes the distinction between the concepts of "the construction of past reality" and "the reconstruction of past reality": "The construction of past reality, which is an integral function of all historical discourses, recognized in a given society as knowledge, needs to be distinguished from the reconstruction of past social reality. The reconstruction is regarded as an attempt to recreate the image of past social reality that existed in this very reality, i.e. among those people who lived in this reality, and for whom it was "real" (Savelyeva and Poletayeva, 2000: 3).

This methodological message shows that everyday historical reflection, the form of which is the construction of past reality (in the form of a school or university history course or a textbook, for example), is designed for education as the transmission of historical knowledge for "all" or "a great many". These "all" or "a great many" will use and even translate this knowledge in the virtually unchanged (with respect to the previously obtained) form to "others" (e.g. children in the family). In this case "historical memory" appears as "a warehouse of facts / events" represented by the author or any other official way. The reconstruction of past reality often

serves as the subjective experience of the older generation. Professional theoretical historical reflection, associated with "the re-creation of the image of past social reality that existed in this very reality", i.e. with knowledge "of the past as the present", is the prerogative of the analyst-researcher, whose subjective experience in the present is practically equal to the subjective experience of the investigated "object of past social reality".

There is no doubt that, saying the above, we abstract from many problematic aspects associated with both everyday and professional historical reflection. However, there is a sufficiently extensive plane that unites these two types of reflection. This extent is the value of both the construction and reconstruction of the social past. The fact is that objectively the social past is united for both the common man (learner) and the scientist-historian ("determinant" - translator - interpreter of historical knowledge). This is true since historical knowledge (in its ordinary and scientific form) in all its diverse manifestations appears a reflection of the past, which, as mentioned above, exist and existed independently of the scientist and the common man, outside of their reflective and released from this reflection historical knowledge.

As far as historical reflection is functionally different for the common man and for the analyst, with regard to K. Waltz's ideas, we can say that the common learner reflects on the "elements" of the historical process and rarely goes beyond this line, while the analyst-scientist, as a history expert, has "already" crossed it. Furthermore, today, the domestic educational system in many ways has become a hostage to the current global situation, and historicism has been didactically replaced by presenteeism, when historical events are treated as belonging to different temporal planes, having their own historical patterns. F. Hartog, emphasizing this statement, argues that because the properties of any narrative are consistency and continuity, they can only apply to the representation of events, but not to events themselves (Hartog, 2004). Teachers and learners are merely the representatives of the historical process, in whose "activities" the present absorbs the past and the future, reducing them to the uniqueness of a single time. The dynamism of the present is associated with the occurrence of separate, unrelated processes of mutation and transformation (Khapayeva, 1999: 311). The reality of a representational approach in the educational process consists in the transformation of history into a certain demonstration, sometimes completely distorting the past (as an analytical state of time) and the future (as an aggregate of consequences determined by the dialectic of the past and the present). "The audience is supplied with the historical material that has been recycled, emasculated, transformed in a certain way. This material has been deprived of the moral principle and meaning, and real historical figures have been replaced by mannequins" (Razumovsky, 2006: 10).

The value of history education, in our opinion, is the return of moral principles and meanings to "the subject of history" through the authenticity of historical events and personalities. The latter is the task of historical studies, the first – of teachers and learners. However, this separation does not contribute to the formation of historical reflection as an integral phenomenon at school or university, or even within the framework of self-tuition. The civilizational scenario of the historical process, which determines the methods of history teaching today, as P. Stearns rightly argues, leads to the fact that "for world history can become a victim of a mindless survey approach in which one factual parade follows another with few seminal events to break the flow and even fewer analytical mechanisms through which reasonably coherent chunks of chronology can be isolated and discussed (Stearns, 1987: 561).

Any holistic image should in its historical and information plan cover the entire way, without distinguishing between its temporal constructs of the past, present and future. In a certain sense, this means that the entire time, covered in this way, represents one "continuous present" because the learner extracts a holistic image of "oneself", "fate" or "events" from the chronologically

well-defined moment that separates, rather than unites the past and the future. Moreover, as far as in the teaching process the historical material is reorganized in accordance with the socially given project (a linear structure, a concentric structure, etc.), a creative and project-oriented attitude should but is not attached to the past and the future. That is why history teaching is dominated by the methods of natural sciences, an academic model and a knowledge-based / reproductive approach. Therefore, the development of goals of social and humanitarian education in the world is a constant dichotomy between "statists" and the formation of a cosmopolitan's self-identity. However, from the perspective of modern didactics, neither one nor the other is feasible, at least because its present status itself is uncertain. Accordingly, in modern anthropological pedagogy and philosophy of education, a didactic transition from the academic and reproductive models of history education to the complex multifaceted model is being actively developed (Vyazemskiy, 2014: 9). In such a way classical realism with its recognition of public interest as "an absolute standard" (H. Morgenthau) is transforming into globalist realism, describing historical reality in the discourse of globalization and informatization, riskology and uncertainty (Panchenko, 2008: 323-331).

That is why the social values that determine cognitive work as well as a learner and a teacher with historical information form the basis for shaping the structure of their value-laden categorical targets. The reason is that any historical event will never be deprived of its objective, spatial and temporal characteristics, but it can be accepted or not accepted by society as a very significant fact in order to become a source of historical, social, ethnic, religious or other identity, in its turn. The fundamental principles of identity may include the historical events that are different in scope and significance, which will undoubtedly lead to the conflicts of various historical memory options. This situation provides ample opportunity for the manipulation of individual and collective consciousness. J. Rusen generally suggests considering such a situation as a crisis of social memory, which comes in a collision between historical consciousness and individual experience that does not fit into the framework of usual historical representations, which endangers the existing foundation and principles of identity (Rusen, 2000).

Should and can historical reflection in the context of risk society that is generated by the redundancy of reliable and unreliable historical information be formed as objective? Didactically this question is deprived of the semantic content as far as didactics of history education itself is full of contradictions (Vyazemskiy, 2014: 9). A subjective assessment of the historical and information factor in shaping an indefinite global worldview primarily involves studying not the linearity of historical events but historical imagology, which focuses on analyzing the "mutual perception" of countries, nations, states in terms of their conflict interaction. In this case, the key to historical reflection is not a historical fact (event) but an "imagema", i.e. a national image, a stereotype of perception (interpretation) of the fact (event). Our concept is based on the assumption that each culture in its subjective-reflexive perception is divided into "domestic" (as natural) and "alien" (unnatural). The boundary between them makes it possible to understand the relativity of any assessments and values. The didactic development and interpretation of these statements suggests that the task of historical reflection is a conscious selection on the basis of historical memory, and the task of the learner is to hypothesize about the event (fact), to prove the value of this hypothesis and to draw personal conclusions.

Conclusions

In this case the opposition of "liberals" and "statists" takes on new meaning, as far as the main referent, reflecting on the historical event and its interpretation, is not the state and the teacher but the learner – the subject of activity on studying the historical process, the interpreter of the past and the present, the moderator of the future. R. Kurzweil's definition of intelligence as "the ability to solve problems with limited resources, in which a key such resource is time" could not be more suited to historical reflection as the ability of a reasonable individual (Kurzweil, 2013). In this sense, any history is valuable for the learner. However, the ability to reflect as a deeply individual opportunity is not always realizable due to various reasons, and the readiness for such a reflection should be seen more as a goal of upbringing rather than teaching. Modern didactic architecture of the educational process does not make it possible to fully solve or even raise these issues.

In our opinion, this is due to the excessive politicization of history education, on the one hand, and a very limited amount of time for studying humanitarian disciplines, on the other hand. Therefore, the teacher acts (forced to act) more often as a presenter, not as an analyst, and his or her function as a creator of the relevant history of values is extremely limited to the same idealization. Recognizing the importance of a patriotic component in historical reflection, we believe that it does not acquire the status of an absolute determinant, and the process of history teaching should not be replaced by the process of forming patriots. Currently, the goals of history teaching are obvious and the inadequacy of the means by which teachers realize these goals is clear. However, this is the subject of another work.

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