

"HUMAN NATURE": PHENOMENOLOGY VS NATURALISM

"NATUREZA HUMANA": FENOMENOLOGIA VS NATURALISMO

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ABSTRACT: The article systematizes the philosophical knowledge of human nature from the point of view of two traditionally mutually exclusive methodological positions: on the one hand, cognitive science, which seeks to objectify the world and the essence of man in this world; on the other hand, a phenomenological discourse that elevates the subjective experience of human existence to the absolute, and, as a consequence, the ontological essence of man. It is found that the insufficiency of each of the described methodological approaches quite organically led the social theory to their collaboration - the emergence of enactivism. This approach to the definition of human nature turns out to be more complete, since it combines both pictures of the world - phenomenological and scientific. The article also traces the theoretical and logical connection between enactivism and the ideological attitudes of Indian religious teachings. The authors discover this connection by analyzing such aspects of the methodology as ontology, the process of cognition, the way of perceiving reality, etc.

KEYWORDS: Human nature. Cognitive science. Phenomenology. Naturalism. Enactivism.

RESUMO: O artigo sistematiza o conhecimento filosófico da natureza humana do ponto de vista de duas posições metodológicas tradicionalmente mutuamente excludentes: de um lado, as ciências cognitivas, que buscam objetivar o mundo e a essência do homem neste mundo; por outro lado, um discurso fenomenológico que eleva a experiência subjetiva da existência humana ao absoluto e, por consequência, à essência ontológica do homem. Verifica-se que a insuficiência de cada uma das abordagens metodológicas descritas de forma bastante orgânica levou a teoria social à sua colaboração - o surgimento do enativismo. Esta abordagem da definição da natureza humana revela-se mais completa, pois combina as duas imagens do mundo - fenomenológica e científica. O artigo também traça a conexão teórica e lógica entre o enativismo e as atitudes ideológicas dos ensinamentos religiosos indianos. Os autores descobrem essa conexão analisando aspectos da metodologia como a ontologia, o processo de cognição, a maneira de perceber a realidade, etc.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Natureza humana. Ciências cognitivas. Fenomenologia. Naturalismo. Enativismo.

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RESUMEN: *El artículo sistematiza el conocimiento filosófico de la naturaleza humana desde el punto de vista de dos posiciones metodológicas tradicionalmente excluyentes entre sí: por un lado, la ciencia cognitiva, que busca objetivar el mundo y la esencia del hombre en este mundo; por otro lado, un discurso fenomenológico que eleva la experiencia subjetiva de la existencia humana a lo absoluto y, en consecuencia, a la esencia ontológica del hombre. Se encuentra que la insuficiencia de cada uno de los enfoques metodológicos descritos llevó de manera bastante orgánica a la teoría social a su colaboración: la aparición del enactivismo. Este enfoque de la definición de la naturaleza humana resulta más completo, ya que combina ambas imágenes del mundo: fenomenológica y científica. El artículo también traza la conexión teórica y lógica entre el enactivismo y las actitudes ideológicas de las enseñanzas religiosas indias. Los autores descubren esta conexión analizando aspectos de la metodología como la ontología, el proceso de cognición, la forma de percibir la realidad, etc.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Naturaleza humana. Ciencia cognitiva. Fenomenología. Naturalismo. Enactivismo.*

Introduction

The twentieth century has demonstrated a methodological crisis in the knowledge of many areas of human knowledge, including the issue of researching "human nature". Difficulties in defining "human nature" are largely due to the contradictions that arise when comparing the conclusions based on the position of the Thesis on human exclusivity and science. On the one hand, science can indeed say a lot of truth about reality, but its methodology will be absolutely inapplicable to humans in the sense that the scientific externalist approach to cognition cannot say anything about the phenomenal experience of the subject. On the other hand, the exclusion of science in the study of the "inner" person leads to the lack of objectivity of this kind of "research". Obviously, in this case, an interdisciplinary approach is required, which at the moment is represented by cognitive science, which combines epistemology, cognitive psychology, the science of artificial intelligence, psycholinguistics, neuropsychology, and since the 90s of the last century also includes neurocybernetics and neurobiology (MEPKYJIOB, 2009).

Methods

The research methodology consists in the historical and philosophical substantiation of the need to combine philosophical theories about "human nature" and the data of empirical science, revealed on the basis of a comparative analysis of ideas about "human nature" within the framework of the phenomenological and naturalistic approaches.

Results and Discussion

Cognitive science emerges in the middle of the 20th century as a contrast to the prevailing behaviorism at the beginning of the last century. The entire development of cognitive science can be roughly divided into three main stages.

The first stage, which is called classical cognitive science or symbolism, equates human thinking with a computer that sequentially processes information given in the form of symbols. However, a person is obviously a more highly organized creature than a computer: for example, the failure of any element of the machine prevents its correct operation, while the disruption of the functioning of any part of the brain can be compensated for by other parts of it.

The second stage in the development of cognitive science is associated with the emergence and development of connectionism, which tried to explain the specifics of human thinking by modeling the work of the brain using artificial neural networks. Connectionism turned out to be in many ways similar to eliminative materialism in the sense that within the framework of both concepts the absence of internal mental representations is asserted.

It is obvious that already at the first stages of its development, cognitive science acts as the other extreme of phenomenology. Symbolism and connectionism base their beliefs largely on scientific data, it is easier for them not to talk about the phenomenal human experience. Thus, they simply reduce consciousness to relatively simple logical operations available to a computer, or ambitiously claim that they can explain everything using the simplest models of the brain. This approach quickly revealed its inconsistency, especially given the accumulated contradictions in philosophy between naturalism and phenomenology. As a result of such a crisis in the 90s of the last century, enactivist theories appear, which are considered by researchers as the third stage in the evolution of cognitive science (MILLER, GEORGE, 2003).

Mutual criticism of phenomenology and naturalism has long noted that there is a shortage of methodological tools in each of these areas. This flaw in naturalism is manifested, for example, in the fact that the externalist approach, which studies a person as an object, inevitably leaves the mental out of the scope of consideration. The mental, in turn, is in no way objectifiable, since it is accessible only to "me", because only "me" it is experienced.

The disadvantage of phenomenology lies in its heuristic limitations. In fact, she is only left with a description of the phenomenal experience of the subject, since she can no longer offer anything else. The construction of an ontology within the framework of phenomenology

will always take consciousness as a point of account, if the phenomenologist generally turns his gaze on the world around him. The reality in which consciousness exists is often simply left without consideration, and the question of how the processes taking place in the brain or in another part of the body affect consciousness, how our thoughts affect the body, remain completely unanswered. Of course, this criticism has its drawbacks, because in phenomenology it is believed that all these questions are just the result of an error, an oversight of the primacy of phenomenal experience. However, the claims of naturalism do matter when you consider the fact that phenomenology has almost no predictive power. Deliberate segregation in relation to natural scientific knowledge acts as a barrier when trying to conduct a scientific discussion with a phenomenologist. Although for fairness it is worth pointing out that already within the framework of this approach, a philosopher appears who is aware of this lack of his own position and often turns to empirical data. Therefore, it was the concept of M. Merleau-Ponty that made possible the integration of phenomenology and naturalism.

L. Tegnelyi notes that in fact the opposition between naturalism and phenomenology should not be regarded as a clash of warring parties (TENGEYI, 2013). This conflict could be presented as a dispute between the deaf and the blind: everyone perceives the world through those senses that are available to them, and therefore everyone describes the same phenomena in their own way. Using their own methodological programs, phenomenology and naturalism describe different aspects of the same reality, of the same person. Therefore, this dispute cannot have an end, since each point of view is correct in its own way. The exit is possible only with the integration of two pictures of the world. Such a non-dualizing philosophy, as we see it, is the concept of enactivism.

The ideas of cooperation that were in the air were embodied in 1991 in the form of the book "Incarnate Mind", which was written by Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Roche. The authors of the book are convinced that it is impossible to divide areas that would deal only with phenomenal consciousness or only with the work of the brain (VARELA et al., 1991). They try to combine the achievements of cognitive science with the phenomenology of M. Merleau-Ponty and E. Husserl, adding to this some ideas of Indian philosophy and Buddhism. The ideas presented in this book formed the basis of enactivism.

Enactivism, as a concept that tries to explain the relationship between body and mind, subject and object, man and nature, develops in the logic of some ideas of the ecological theory of perception, formulated by J. Gibson and supplemented by W. Nisser. Five ideas outlined by J. Gibson in his book "The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception" played a

decisive role in the formation of enactivism. First, perception is a process, not a reflection or imprint of environmental objects. It is a necessary survival mechanism for any living being. Secondly, perception does not arise in the brain, vision does not "sit" in the visual system (GIBSON, 1979), but there is an interaction between a living being and a perceived object. Thirdly, perception is possible only under the condition that the perceiving subject is active, since information can be obtained only through action. Fourthly, perception is a way of life, since it is the interaction of the perceiving being and the environment. Fifth, the real world as a thing-in-itself and the world given to us through our senses are different. Our idea of being is the result of perception. Ulrich Neisser adds to this that the information coming to us from the outside world is not given in its pure form. He gives the example of a sculptor who gets down to business, already roughly knowing what he wants to get in the end. So, in his opinion, perception also works, superimposing the received information on a ready-made scheme (NEISSER, 1976). A significant difference between the position of J. Gibson and the "father" of enactivism F. Varela is that the former asserts that a person obtains information from the environment, and the latter is sure that any living creature has autopoieticity, which means informational isolation.

In addition, constructivism, represented by Ernst von Glasersfeld, a representative of radical constructivism, Heinz von Foerster, second-order cybernetics, had a huge impact on the formation of enactivism. Domestic researcher E.N. Knyazeva, in this regard, in her book "Enactivism: a new form of constructivism in epistemology" considers enactivism as a new milestone in the development of constructivism. Constructivism asserts that perception is an active process that does not reflect the world, but constructs it. In this case, the cognizing subject, that is, a person, constructs the world in accordance with his goals.

There were many prerequisites for the emergence of enactivism, so we can miss some philosophers and scientists who made a significant contribution to the development of this idea. But of course, the "father" of Enactivism we can call the Chilean biologist and philosopher Francisco Varela, who, together with his colleague and teacher Umberto Maturana, developed the concept of autopoiesis, and also, based on some views of Heinz von Foerster, the concept of the enactivated mind.

Today, there is no single concept of enactivism. Knyazeva E.N. there are at least two main approaches:

- 1) Classical enactivism, developed by F. Varela and based on the idea of autopoiesis;
- 2) Radical enactivism, actively promoted by A. Noë and D. Hutto, who focus on processism and externalism: consciousness is considered in the mind-body-brain link, the

world is also added to this link; if we want to understand someone's mind, then it is necessary to accept the fact that the animal is "enveloped" in the world, therefore it is necessary to study its way of life; consciousness is not within us, but is diffused in the environment, in life itself.

Perhaps the most curious example of an enactivist approach - especially given the temporal detachment of this movement - are the positions of Brahmanism and Buddhism.

In Indian religious teachings, the corporeality and activity of perception is postulated, "the fundamental non-duality of the subject and object of cognition is substantiated" (Князева, 2006), which surprisingly agrees with the latest concepts in cognitive science and modern philosophy. The body in the minds of the Indians is included in the process of cognition, and cognition itself is based on active action, which embeds the cognizing subject into the environment.

In terms of perception, categories such as *pratyaksha*, *vijnana* and *indriyas* are used. *Pratyaksha* can be translated as what is in front of your eyes. And this category designates both the course of perception itself and its result. *Indriyas* are all of our five senses. "Vijnana" is translated from Sanskrit as "discriminating knowledge" and is understood as "the highest cognitive ability associated with distinguishing the real (*sat*) from the unreal (*asat*), as well as determining the place, role and function of each element in the system of the universe.

It is the category of *vijnana* that shows consciousness in development, which echoes the main thesis of the dynamic approach in cognitive science, which reads "mind in motion" (mind in motion). Buddha does not agree that *vijnana* is immutable consciousness, he claims that consciousness can begin as one thing, and end as something completely different, therefore it cannot completely coincide with itself in different periods of time. Consciousness has a certain organization, but at the same time is in a state of constant change, that is, it exists in the form of a stream (*sotha*, *santana*) of *dharmas*, norms of existence.

Another important point in common between ancient Indian teachings and cognitive science is that perception is not a passive process, but is closely related to action. The activity of the *indriyas* (sense organs) is the cause of the activity of perception, which ultimately goes to the activity of the mind (*manas*). *Manas* comes from the verb "man" which means "to think" and means "the mind that feels." For clarity, we will give an example of the perception of a cake. A person's eyes perceive its shape and color, the nose hears the smell of vanillin and chocolate, the tongue feels sweetness from sugar and sourness from pieces of cherry in cream, but it is *Manas* that unites all this into a single image. Moreover, he not only synthesizes data from the senses, but also connects them with body movement.

It is also worth noting that in a number of Indian teachings and at the initial stages of the formation of Buddhism, there is a view of the subject and object of knowledge as a whole, which is relevant for enactivism. "Freedom of choice in Buddhism will be freedom without the subject of freedom, just as consciousness will be consciousness without the one who is aware, perception will be perception without the perceiver, and action will be action without the agent. The individual in Buddhism is thus not opposed to the world as a subject to an object. The factors of his being are not divided into internal and external" (Лысенко et al., 1994).

We observe a similar vision of the world in Kashmir Shaivism. Within the framework of this direction, it is postulated "the non-duality of the vision of the world and the process of its cognition - the non-duality of creativity and destruction, animate and inanimate, bliss and suffering, lack of freedom and liberation, diversity and unity, external and internal" (Князева, 2014). In cognition for Kashmir Shaivism there are no objects external to the subject, and the instrument of cognition itself is equal to its result.

All of the above ideas are revived in one way or another within the framework of the activated approach. So F. Varela shows the fundamental inseparability of the knowing mind and the world that surrounds it. They exist as a single system. The external penetrates into the "I", while the internal pours out and spreads in nature or society.

Summary

Thus, the concept of enactivism, although it is the result of the development of Western European thought, is nevertheless closer to the Indian teachings. Summing up, let us go through the main ideas of Indian teachings, which are reflected in the modern concept of enactivism.

First, the relationship between the subject and the object of cognition, man and nature, which is a condition for the possibility of cognition. Although, for the sake of fairness, it is worth mentioning that similar ones were observed in Plato, who used the epithet "luminous" in relation to the eye, and in Goethe, who writes in his "Teachings on Color": "If our eyes were not sunny - / Who would admire the sun?" (Месяц, 2012).

Secondly, in the process of cognition, a person "touches" things and grasps them in his consciousness. Perception requires direct human contact with the environment.

Thirdly, the idea of active consciousness that exists in constant interaction with the surrounding world can be viewed as a simpler and naive version of J. von Uxskyl's concept

“Umwelt”, that is, the world that is created by the organism itself in the process of co-evolution.

Conclusions

On the issue of defining human nature, despite the centuries-old history of the development of this problem, today there is no consensus of opinion. However, the interdisciplinarity inherent in the logic of the development of modern socio-humanitarian research today has led to the formation of theories that combine an integrated approach. Theories, which were traditionally at opposite poles, in modern science reveal not only the possibility of considering the phenomenon from different angles that complement each other, but also common problem points that allow for promising scientific research. In the question of determining the nature of man, in our opinion, such a theory can be called enactivism.

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