

Розділ третій

СВІТЛОТЯДНІ Й ТЕОРЕТИКО-ПІЗНАВАЛЬНІ АСПЕКТИ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ, МЕДІА ТА ІНФОРМАЦІЇ

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ENCOUNTER IN A MULTICULTURAL WORLD

Кристина Найдер-Стефаниак. Противоречия мультикультурного мира. Автор указывает важность столкновения различных культур для жизни. Она отмечает, что надлежащее понимание квинт-эссенции основ столкновения определяется “разницей” понятий и “идентичности”. Она также замечает, что разница не обязательно подразумевает эффект ее восприятия – как мы используем, это зависит от нас. Автор представляет различные виды противоречий и оппозиций и их зависимость от нашего восприятия различий, она также описывает специфические особенности диалога как столкновение, приводящее к совместным действиям, которые в свою очередь необходимы для живой системы оставаться активной.

Ключевые слова: столкновение, различие, идентичность, диалог, синергия, жизнь.

Encounter can only take place in the context of diversity. Contemporary man inhabits a multicultural world in which he encounters diversity during travel, through the media, at work, when moving to another residence in pursuit of work, when establishing a liaison with a life partner from another culture, or in encounters with culturally diverse individuals at school or at work. Contemporary man has no trouble in discerning difference within his life-space. It may be perceived as that which distinguishes or that which antagonises. It can also be perceived as an excuse for disregarding concepts like truth or falsehood. And it may also lead him to the conclusion that difference is enriching.

Difference is important for all thought paradigms, its role is especially prominent among the categories of postmodernism, where it replaces identity. In an effort to remain within modern thought paradigms and counteract post-modernistic antagonisms, theoreticians tend to postulate acceptance for all difference. The effects are disregard for universal values like truth, good and beauty, an all-embracing striving to differ at all costs – even from one’s own self – and life based on incidence. Lost in a world of anonymous diversities, man is unable to develop an identity, nor can he appreciate the identities of others. Consequently, he cannot experience encounter.

In the post-modernistic approach to relations “existence” is a set of elements threatened by totalitarisation and uniformisation. The post-modernistic world outlook with its stress on difference as an autotelic value commands the individual to consistently focus on defending its otherness – in other words, strive not to be like others – nor like itself. The individual should not repeat itself. All that is acceptable here is the appointment to life of the “new”, which has not duration. This “new” is a negative response to what we perceive. Are identity and encounter at all possible in this context? This seeming defence of otherness leads to the rejection of the content carried by otherness. And encounter appears unnecessary, even dangerous. Post-modernistic and modernistic difference possesses an alarming capacity to antagonise.

Another approach to difference is offered by the eco-systemic thought paradigm. The eco-systemic perspective and eco-systemic relations allow us to see that difference is neither monadic nor collectivistic, that it belongs to systemic relations and is necessary for the emergence and endurance of eco-systems and their elements. Here we begin to understand that difference must not necessarily antagonise.

Diversity is the life-blood of eco-systems, it also enables the creative survival of cultures. Why? In posing this question we begin to perceive the value of encounter and realise that encounter is only possible when the

elements that make up difference are aware of their identity. Contemporary humans may make use of difference and encounter only when they have a sense of their identity. Contemporary man can also be a medium which facilitates encounter between cultures.

The kinds of encounters we will be able to enter will depend on how we approach difference – antagonistically, dialectically, complementarily or synergistically.

The antagonistic approach bases on an “either-or” principle, where difference disqualifies one of the elements which differ. Consequently, we either reject that which is alien in favour of that which is “ours” or, drawn to the alien, accept it at the cost of our own otherness. In the dialectic approach difference functions as an antithesis enabling the attainment of synthesis. In the complementary approach difference is viewed as an aggregate of varying perspectives on one issue, and the synergistic approach sees difference as an inspiration to deepen understanding.

The antagonistic approach implies encounters of a competitive or hostile kind. The dialectic approach – ones based on a “common sense of loss”. The complementary variant results in encounters of a supplementary nature. The synergistic paradigm enables encounters based on a bilateral sense of dignity. In the synergistic thought and action model difference does not antagonize, provoke defense of identity, complement or justify the lack of universalistic perspective, but enriches the perception of the world. In synergistic encounters difference inspires us to seek and comprehend universal truths and values and enables us to move beyond its limits without loss of our own identity. Activity ordered by synergistic thinking enriches our own otherness without the threat of uniformisation or conflict.

Conflict is a major phenomenon in today’s reality. We view it with anxiety and feel compelled to avert it, sometimes at all costs. Let us take a closer look at the conflict concept (in the assumption that under “concept” we understand a projection of our perception of reality and a storeroom of knowledge). The term “conflict” derives from the Latin *conflictus*, which can be translated as “collision”, and the verb *confligo* – clash, confront. Generally speaking conflict entails a unique encounter of “inhospitable”, mutually-excluding arguments, interests, opinions or attitudes. In today’s antagonistic thought model, which sees controversy as a fundament of growth, the conflict concept is more important than the dialogue concept, which is considered a means of resolving conflict.

The compromise proposed as a way to cope with conflict entails silencing subjectivity, which requires both conflicting sides to reduce the diversity of their positions in favour of that which is similar – a “suspension” of their respective standpoints and the rights these standpoints imply. Another way to end conflict is for one of the sides to submit to the other. This is similar to the first proposal, the difference being that only one side resigns its individuality and subjectivity.

Conflict, however, can also inspire creative solutions. In order to find and comprehend such solutions we need to descend to a deeper, meta-level of conflict, a level that implies what we think and, in effect, how we estimate and act. On this level we discover the paradigms and metaphors which order thought, and we gain the chance to understand the effects of how we think, act and estimate. On this level we are able to comprehend and accept the diversity of meanings, a diversity which should not be harmonised if we wish to avoid conflict-breeding contradiction. On this level conflict can inspire dialogue, whose effect will be synergy.

Diversity is extremely valuable. On the ontic level it pre-conditions life and opens the door to the creative transgression of that which has been attained within the potentiality of existence. On the human activity level it enables inspiration and the transgression of the boundaries set by the accepted understanding of life. It is a necessary condition of dialogue, which in turn prevents the enclosure of knowledge in rigid definitions and thought patterns. In consequence, diversity helps change the patterns and systems of activity.

Truth-loving Socrates saw dialogue as a path away from being an ignoramus – someone who is imprisoned within theorems and theories which he does not fully understand and to which he has no distance. Socrates believed that the important thing in dialogue was that theorems did not “stand” but “moved” (although, he said, they should not “run around in circles”)¹. The structure of Socratic dialogue prevented such circling and opened the path to truth without leading to conclusions closed in the already discovered and named. The purpose and main value of Socratic dialogue is opening, and not closing, the door to cognition, making people aware of their failing knowledge and not maintaining them in the false belief that they possessed it. Socrates’ interlocutors usually did not feel very comfortable after speaking with him. Socratic dialogue generated a condition which motivated “wisdom lovers” to delve deeper in search of the “whole” and “organically bound parts”, but irritated the ignorant to a degree which made them sentence the philosopher to death. Socratic dialogue differs fundamentally from the dialogue which today is recommended as a means towards consensus. Socratic dialogue opens the path to truth, consensus closes it.

¹ Platon: „Eutyfron, Obrona, Kreton” (*Euthyphro, The Apology, Crito*), transl. by W. Witwicki, Warsaw PWN, 1958, pp. 41, 42

Another form of open dialogue is the one proposed by Martin Buber, who distinguishes a “technical” area of dialogue, an area of “masked monologue” and an area of “direct encounter” which embraces “conversations” and “silent understanding”. The “technical” area contains frequently scientifically sanctioned “it” content construed in an “I – it” relation from an observer’s position. In the “masked monologue” area “you” is brought down to “I”, which in effect makes consideration for diversity impossible, as it lies beyond the thus updated “I”. Creative enrichment of our space is possible in the area of honest, “direct” encounters with the “you”, which enable us to cross the boundaries of our understanding of “it” and the boundaries of the updated possibilities of being “I”.

A necessary factor in creative encounter is “hospitality” towards that which is different. Here hospitality is understood as a certain kind of openness which enables a “melting of horizons”. It cannot be an “absorbing” openness because – depending on the situation – such openness would lead to indoctrination or self-confirmation. Dialogue needs an openness which accepts and attempts to comprehend – but does not succumb to – the other’s otherness. Such openness can effect in the “I – you” encounters described by Martina Buber. Buber rejects dialogue viewed as a form of verbal communication and proposes an approach to existence in which it is a partner of the dialogueing “I”. Buber distinguishes the kinds of areas in which man encounters the world: the “technical” area, the “masked monologue” area and the area of true dialogue. The technical area embraces the existential-objective “I – you attitude which excludes dialogue. Here, man is an observer and distinguishes “it” from other “its”, which he treats instrumentally.. In the masked monologue area “you” is reduced to “I” and the encountered is regarded as an aspect of one’s own self. The true dialogue area is the home of direct “I – you” encounters which are anti-instrumental. For Buber examples of true dialogue are conversation and silent communication. In both cases the interlocutors have to be authentic, in other words they must show themselves to the other side in the entire truthfulness of their existence. Also, in both cases the starting-point of encounter is not aprioric consent with the other side but acceptance of its otherness.

If we view the “I – you” encounters which Buber calls true dialogue through an eco-systemic prism, we will conclude that, while remaining ourselves – in other words, a relatively isolated system¹ - we can take from the otherness of that which we encounter the inspiration to move on to a meta-level of reflection. There, we will be able to perceive and comprehend the conditioning of our truths and the truths which differ from ours and, in effect, learn to distance ourselves from our own convictions, construe our self-perception and our perception of the world with greater awareness, and discover truths which result neither from our knowledge system nor the systems we encounter through *logos*, but from the encounter situations in which we participate. Dialogue as a living, spirit-imbued language prevents the enclosure of thought in words, which have lost their symbolic depth and no longer inspire us to seek understanding.

Contemporary hermeneutics assumes that the subject always introduces a sensible project into our understanding of the world. In *Being and Time* Martin Heidegger says: "All interpretation which is to provide understanding must have a previous understanding of that which is to be interpreted"². Hans Georg Gadamer wrote: "Like real life, history convinces us only when it appeals to our earlier-conceived judgement about things, people and times." Understanding something of meaning always assumes such preconception. Heidegger described this condition as a hermeneutic circle; we comprehend only that which we already know, we can read only what we have put into the text³ and "only that can be understood which is burdened by anticipation – we will never understand what we have to understand if we will stare at it as at something that is incomprehensible"⁴. In the contest of the hermeneutists’ statements one may risk the claim that in our effort to understand we create a unique kind of dialogue between the sense project brought into the comprehension situation and the experienced reality we strive to comprehend. The figure of dialogue explains the possibility of leaving the hermeneutic circle by means of the synergy enabled by dialogue.

Gadamer wrote: "Who has no horizons, does not see sufficiently far and therefore overestimates that which lies near him. Having a horizon, on the other hand, means freedom from restriction to that which is closest, and the possibility of looking beyond it. Who has a horizon is able to pass adequate judgment regarding the nearness, distance, greatness and smallness of the sense of all things within this horizon".⁵ This horizon is “rather something we enter and which walks together with us. Horizons change during movement. (...) When our historical awareness transports us into historical horizons, this is no journey into the unknown, into worlds totally unconnected with our own, because these horizons form one, huge, internally-moved horizon which oversteps the

¹ „Relatively isolated system” – a term introduced by Roman Ingarden in his reflections on the ethical subject in work: „O odpowiedzialności i jej podstawach ontycznych” (*On Responsibility and Its Ontic Foundations*).

² M. Heidegger: „Bycie i czas” (*Being and Time*), transl. by B. Baran, PWN, Warsaw 1993, p. 216.

³ H. Gadamer: „Rozum, słowo, dzieje (*Reason, Word, History*)”, transl. by M. Łukasiewicz and K. Michalski, PIW, Warsaw 2000, pp. 31-32.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 79.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 287

Rozділ третій. Світоглядні й теоретико-пізнавальні аспекти комунікації, медіа та інформації

boundaries of the contemporary to embrace the historical depth of our self-awareness. In fact, this is one, single horizon which embraces all that is contained within historical awareness"¹. In the hermeneutic understanding horizons melt with each other. A similar effect is achieved in dialogue. The eco-systemic relation provides an understanding of the synergy effect which appears when, in our quest for truth, we reach out for the accounts of quests by other wisdom-lovers. Theoreticians, if they can not appreciate the dialogue dimension in encounters between "horizons", can only "follow the footsteps". Once we understand the value of dialogue, it is able to enrich both ourselves and the world.

Difference does not automatically imply the effect of its perception, it is up to us what use we make of it. Likewise with encounter. Its form and effect lie with us. Today's technology enables a multitude of encounters. We can strike up contact without changing our actual location, we can also change our location and transport ourselves to places distant in space and time. Our daily environment can also be very diversified. Are we prepared to enter encounters which result in synergy? Encounters which are necessary not only for natural and economic "eco-systems" but also cultural ones?

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Krystyna Najder-Stefaniak. Encounter in a multicultural world. *The author points to the importance of encounter for the lives of cultures. She notes that the proper understanding of the quintessence of encounter bases on the notions "difference" and "identity". She also remark that difference does not necessarily imply the effect of its perception – how we utilise it depends on ourselves. Likewise encounter. The author presents various kinds of encounters and their dependence on our perception of difference, she also describes the specifics of dialogue as an encounter leading to synergy, which in turn is necessary for a living system to remain alive. There, we will be able to perceive and comprehend the conditioning of our truths and the truths which differ from ours and, in effect, learn to distance ourselves from our own convictions, construe our self-perception and our perception of the world with greater awareness, and discover truths which result neither from our knowledge system nor the systems we encounter through logos, but from the encounter situations in which we participate. Dialogue as a living, spirit-imbued language prevents the enclosure of thought in words, which have lost their symbolic depth and no longer inspire us to seek understanding.*

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