

Humanitarian Culture as Specific Method of World Cognition

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Abstract. The article focuses on the phenomenon of humanitarian culture and its place and role in the general cultural context. On the basis of the analysis of the leading researchers' works, the authors single out social and personal types of culture. In accordance with this classification, it is possible to distinguish socio-humanitarian and individual humanitarian subtypes within each type. The analysis of A. Mole's theory enables one to single out three main consistently following cultural paradigms: humanitarian (culture of the past), mosaic (contemporary culture), personalized and creative (culture of the future). Humanitarian culture has cognitive, axiological and operational components. The main functions of humanitarian culture are the following: educational, informative, axiological and democratic. Hence, humanitarian culture is a derivative from a man's humanitarian activity in its vast context. It is a sphere of spiritual culture and has an anthropocentric focus. Humanitarian culture is now recognized as a specific, distinct type of culture. This type of culture was formed as an opposition to technical-rational culture. Therefore, it is viewed upon as a specific method of world cognition and a basis for the development of culture of the future.

1 Introduction

The concept of humanitarian culture is considered by contemporaries as a traditional classical category, which is deep-rooted in the Russian language. Meanwhile, the first theoretically well-grounded concept of "humanitarian culture" can be found only in the work by Charles Snow "Two cultures" (1959) [1]. The next work, which focuses on the issue of humanitarian culture, is the research paper by A. Moles "Socio-dynamics of culture" (1967).

Russian philosophers and culturologists and a bit later educators ardently supported the development of this research trend. However, modern investigation of the issue of humanitarian culture has a multidisciplinary character. The studies of its contents and structure are presented in the works of M.S. Kagan, E.S. Markarian, A Mole, A.I. Arnoldov, A.S. Zapessotsky, I.M. Oreshnikov, C.P. Snow, E.N. Shiyarov, T.G. Brazhe, L.V. Pavlova, E.I. Shuleva and others.

This attention to the phenomenon of humanitarian culture proves its actuality and importance of its further research. The interest of the researchers for the concept of the humanitarian culture is conditioned by drastic changes in all the spheres of modern life, by the attempts of using a humanistic approach to teaching, which provides people with value guidelines and ensures the safety, cultural continuity and integrity of the society. Despite numerous investigations, the number of which is steadily increasing, the question about the place of

humanitarian culture in the structure of general culture remains unsolved so far and requires deep analysis.

2 Discussion

Analyzing specific features of humanitarian culture M.S. Kagan comes to the conclusion that it is an inherent component of spiritual culture. As M.S. Kagan says: "... it is possible to speak about "two cultures" – technical-rational and humanitarian" [2]. So, M.S. Kagan, defines the humanitarian culture as "an array of ways and results of men's activity, which is oriented existentially and directed at objectification, representation and development of a man's spirituality, unlike other forms of human activity, such as science or economics which have their own logic of existing and development regardless of the fact whether their achievements are friendly or hostile to a man" [2]. There is an obvious spiritual emphasis in this definition.

Humanitarian culture is an alternative to the technogenic value guidelines, which have a subversive inhuman character. According to A.I. Arnoldov, humanitarian culture is addressed to a man; it correlates with a man's needs, with the forms of a man's self-expression [3]. This definition emphasizes the anthropocentric meaning of humanitarian culture, its focus on a man.

E.S. Markaryan investigated the structure of general culture and distinguished the following subsystems: natural-ecological, socio-ecological, socio-regulative. The socio-regulative subsystem of culture, in its turn, is

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subdivided into three spheres: socio-normative, which is immediately directed at the organization of collective life of people; humanitarian, which is directed at the regulation of the livelihood of individuals; and cognitive, which is aimed at orderly search of and perception of knowledge. “The basis for their definition, - as the researcher remarks, - is different objects of regulation” “Thus the objective of humanitarian culture is individuals” [4]. So from the philosopher’s point, the socio-regulative function of the humanitarian sphere is generalized enough.

According to the social approach, the humanitarian culture is treated as a social phenomenon. I.M. Oreshnikov considers the humanitarian culture as a holistic integral characteristic of a man’s spirituality, a way of free realization of a man’s energy in the cultural historical process. Humanitarian culture is manifested in a man’s humanitarian activity and its results. Humanitarian culture ensures creating, keeping and cherishing supreme human values” [5]. Consequently, the humanitarian culture of some social group characterizes the degree of assimilation of human supreme values by the members of this group and its participation in the cultural historical process.

The main functions of the humanitarian culture are as following: humanistic, socio-cognitive, socially transforming, axiological, prescriptive, integrating, communicative, educational, socially successive.

A.S. Zapessotsky considers humanitarian culture as a phenomenon of spiritual life. It is a means of social integration and individualization of the youth. The significance of humanitarian culture and its role in optimization of the processes of social integration and individualization are conditioned by its functions: value guiding, regulatory, identifying and individualizing [6].

3 Analysis of humanitarian culture

To clear up philosophical, sociological and cultural aspects of the humanitarian culture, it is necessary to consider the basic works of A. Mole, devoted to this issue.

A. Moles’ work “Socio-dynamics of culture” (1967) is dedicated to the study of sociological problems of culture (mechanisms of its functioning in a society, contents, methods, forms and ways of cultural communication, social planning and regulation of cultural development, social role of mass media in the society). In this work the author distinguishes personal and social types of culture. Humanitarian culture is treated by the researcher as a historical type of the development of western culture. “The idea of humanitarian culture “, - as A. Mole states - made a great contribution, because since the Renaissance the humanities has been playing a significant role in the development of western world: humanitarian culture was a certain phase of this development, when a new doctrine of knowledge was developed” [7].

Investigating the status of modern culture the author singles out structurally its two main types: humanitarian and mosaic. The title of the second paragraph of Chapter

One “Humanitarian culture and its decline” determines clearly enough the author’s point of view concerning the phenomenon. He presumes that humanitarian concept has become out of date, at least to the degree which is required for the ideal to have roots in real life having the desire and the necessary means nobody can live a true humanitarian culture. Thus humanitarian culture is defined by the author as culture of the past because at the moment its main ideas are not topical any longer. Let’s analyze in detail the ground for the conclusion.

The author believes that humanitarian culture was born in the Renaissance. “The idea of humanitarian culture did a good turn as from the Renaissance humanitarian knowledge had played an important role in the development of the western world: humanitarian culture was a stage of the development at which a clearly formed doctrine of knowledge existed” [7].

Final stage of humanitarian culture formation, in the author’s opinion, took place in the 18-th century and was connected with the activity of encyclopedists. “Encyclopedists summed up “humanitarian culture”. Basing on the representation of the universe as one whole they created an instrument of thinking – such tools of thought which helped the followers to make an industrial revolution. Encyclopedia with its alphabetic classification, with its definition via a chain of more common notions, with its examples and, at last, with its encyclopedic plot relied upon the humanitarian concept of knowledge display” [7].

The core of the humanitarian culture concept lies in the statement that there are some main subjects and topics for meditation contrary to the subjects less important and trifles of everyday life. This doctrine presumed some hierarchy of ideas, postulating existence of universal “common ideas” and “minor ideas”. Thanks to this “perception correlated with a net of knowledge which had a clear structure and was woven out of main, minor and secondary lines”. The lines are a peculiar “net of thought routes with their central points of knowledge”, i.e. key notions and concepts (“cross-notions”). “Perception should project on the knowledge display” (italics) which one can represent as a cobweb net strictly organized correspondingly to some centers [7].

A. Mole’s believes the term “humanitarian” to spring up in the 17 – 18-th centuries. “It was used to describe a learned man, a man of knowledge in different spheres of human activity, a simple man” [7]. Though the author uses the term “humanitarian culture” he never defines it clearly explaining that the notion “culture” itself seems to be “unlocked”. The approach allows him to leave it open for additions and amendments.

The analysis of the work proves that the author actually identifies two notions: “humanitarian culture” and “humanitarian education”. In the past humanitarian education, in A. Mole’s opinion, included “knowledge of a foreign language, writing, basic knowledge of geometry, principles of logics, syllogism, Pythagorean theorem, skills to substitute the definition by the defined, basic knowledge of the Universe and also at a higher level – knowledge of classic languages, etiquette, etc.” [7].

Humanitarian education is aimed at “giving him (a learned man) a clue, teaching him some skills which will help him to analyze and evaluate events comparing and confronting them with each other and finding a place for them in the arsenal of his mentality” [7]. As a matter of fact, education is aimed at managing tools of mentality on the basis and the method of humanitarian sciences.

The analysis of “humanitarian culture” as a phenomenon leads the researcher to the conclusion that its concept has grown old. It is caused, in A. Mole’s opinion, by the old-fashioned topicality of the basic principles suggested by “the encyclopedists – the level of knowledge depends on its quantity” [7] and the definition of philology as the main method in human formation.

Basing on the postulates, the author comes to the conclusion that we witness the decline of humanitarian culture. Undoubtedly, it is possible to agree with the author’s logics in many items though some postulates seem disputable enough.

In our opinion, the aim of humanitarian culture, formulated by A. Mole and cited above, is quite actual today. Contemporary information flow is so huge and dynamic that human consciousness due to its biological qualities cannot cope with it sometimes. Whereas, the ability to orient oneself in it today is the term of a professional and personal success of an individual. The ability to find, revalue, analyze and compare information determines the level of independence of mentality, allows to form a system of views on the surrounding world and to define one’s place in it. Possibly, one would use a philological method, the other one an encyclopedic method. There are many ways to achieve the aim. We presume that the mentioned above methods have not become old-fashioned, but they should not be used as dominant and obligatory for any candidate aspiring to be a man-of-letters. The image of an educated person has changed, and each person basing on his or her individuality may define his or her own method of orientation in the surrounding world.

Besides opposing humanitarian and mosaic cultures as cultures of the past and of today the researcher does not take into consideration some rather important circumstances, in our opinion. Humanitarian culture of the past was a culture available to the minority, i.e. the most educated and well-to-do citizens. Culture of the past was elite, unavailable for the masses. Mosaic culture, as a contemporary one, is connected with mass media. Thanks to its peculiarities, the mosaic culture is democratic and open to the masses.

Can the fact be basic for the conclusion that humanitarian culture is the phenomenon of the past? We do not think so. We believe that these types of culture function parallel in the society. Besides, they interfere with each other, supplement each other because humanitarian culture is not a part of the whole mosaic but it has some technique to collect separate cells into whole pictures of the world. Contradicting his own statements the researcher remarks: “humanitarian culture should enter more and more the world of mosaic culture” [7]. He also singles out two possible ways of further cultural development:

1) non-systematic accumulation of all “cultural elements”,

2) systematic, selective attitude, selection from “a heap of knowledge”.

Actually the question is about two different ways of the development and two stages of cultural development: accumulation of information and its selection. These two stages are closely connected in practice. Moreover, mosaic culture corresponds more to the first stage, humanitarian one – to the second stage. Although, if the author states that humanitarian culture is already in the past, then what phenomenon we come across? A. Mole says it is a personalized and creative culture. The author believes it to be culture of the future.

Thus the author singles out three main consistently following cultural paradigms: humanitarian (culture of the past), mosaic (contemporary culture), personalized and creative (culture of the future) (fig. 1).

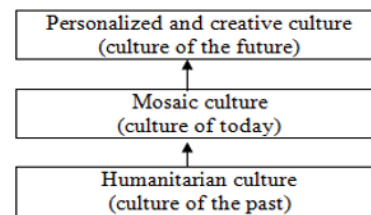


Fig. 1. Historical periods of cultural development (according to A. Mole).

Let us analyze in detail the contents of the personalized and creative culture. In A. Mole’s opinion, “An individual creates his own culture on a small island which is his private possession” [7]. Diving into the informational flow, a human being chooses what he likes, what is close to him. He connects “fished out” elements into the picture corresponding to his level of presentation the surrounding world. Thus, an individual perceives, analyzes, synthesizes, generalizes, i.e. he thinks, realizes, dives into the depth of the contents. These facts are the signs the author confers upon humanitarian culture. Actually, personalized and creative culture is based on the humanitarian culture, its cognitive (humanitarian knowledge and principles of logic mentality) and operational (skills permitting to analyze events, to compare them with each other) components. Thus, culture acquires a new form of existence becoming available for everybody with time.

At first sight, the humanitarian culture concept seems to be somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, the author determines it as the culture of the past at the beginning of his work; on the other hand, he refers to it systematically in his further study. This contradiction disappears after the intensive study and analysis of his work.

The author studies the phenomenon of humanitarian culture from different angles. Studying culture A. Mole uses the method of historical analysis and defines humanitarian culture as one of the stages of its development. During the period, it was formed as social and cultural phenomenon, some peculiarities of its

contents and method were defined, “tools of mentality” were worked out. Undoubtedly, the replacement of historical paradigms caused changes in the development of culture, though as a matter of fact, humanitarian culture turned out to be a universal phenomenon. It confirms its existence in the context of mosaic and personalized and creative cultures.

Being part of other cultures, humanitarian culture fills them with humanitarian and humanistic contents and forms a kind of Gestalt, putting together different elements and facts. Therefore, one can come to the conclusion that humanitarian culture is defined by A. Mole as a universal and transparent phenomenon. Characterizing humanitarian culture like this, it is possible to present it as a specific method of world cognition.

Our hypothesis is confirmed by cultural and socio-dynamic doctrines of mass media development. The author singles out four main social and cultural doctrines: demagogic, dogmatic, eclectic (informative) or cultural and socio-dynamic (fig. 2).

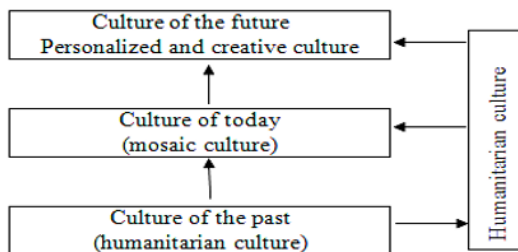


Fig. 2: Functioning of humanitarian culture (according to A. Mole).

Rejecting two last doctrines, he sympathizes with the latter ones.

The cultural doctrine, in A. Mole’s opinion, forms a basic goal: “to move as near as possible the contents of “socio-cultural table” to the contents of culture itself, picked up at the moment” [7]. In the author’s opinion, the doctrine is based on “a universal socio-cultural table” which is incarnated materially in the phenomenon called “world memory” [7]. World memory for A. Mole is universal cultural information worked out by the mankind and expressed materially in libraries, monuments, languages.

Analyzing A. Mole’s universal socio-cultural table, one can see that its humanitarian knowledge occupies its most part – 41.5 (table 1).

Judging by social studies, presented in table 1, the author defines the main notion of a cultural doctrine as “a notion of systematic knowledge and humanitarian culture in a broad sense” [7].

Using the doctrine, the author sees the main task in supplying an individuum, a member of the society, with such individual culture which would be in some sense an untwisted reflection, a reduced copy, a thorough statistic selection of huge humanitarian and humanistic culture – the culture which is at the core of any human activity – the conquest of the world by means of their ideas.

Table 1. Table of quantitative distribution of knowledge(different encyclopedic data) [7].

Origin of knowledge	%
Numbers and shapes	6.50
Time and calendar	2.50
Measures and weight	1.00
Physics	6.50 A cycle of natural sciences 27.00
Chemistry	3.00
Astronomy	2.50
Physical geography	5.00
Man (anatomy, physiology)	5.00
Animals	2.50
Botany	2.0 A cycle life 11.50
Environment	2.00
Politics, political geography	2.00
Law	2.00 Society 15.50
World economy	2.50
World economy and statistics	4.00
Transport	5.00
Civil construction	1.20
Electricity	2.00
Metallurgy	8.00 Technique 5.00
Technical documentation	1.00
Literature	0.50
Music	6.00
Fine arts	4.50 Studies of art 13.00
Theatre, radio	2.00
Sports	5.00

The following conditions should be observed: life itself should introduce a human to a direct contact with human knowledge; it is important to avoid significant distortion reproducing a huge net available to human reason.

The author does not limit his idea of humanitarian culture to a system of humanitarian knowledge. One of his main postulates of the humanitarian doctrine is the statement that human culture itself creates its own table of valuables independent on the moral valuables, which are of arbitrary character, and weak. This thesis was conclusively proved by the philosophers of the last century (Bentham, Nitsche, Marx, Sartre etc.). In the author’s opinion, it is “cultural ethics” itself which “differs from transcendental ethics only by the introduction of proved factors” and which makes it attractive for “intellectual microenvironment” [7].

Thus humanitarian culture includes an axiological component as a basis for the development of cultural ethics. Identification of culture and values constantly takes place. The thesis that there are no other values except culture itself and culture via its development bringing sense into life, at least, social life, has been generally accepted [7]. This opinion is shared by such researchers as E.N. Shiyanov [8] and T.G. Brazhe [9].

Analyzing the contents of the cultural doctrine, we have singled out the following functions of humanitarian culture:

- 1) educational (serves to continuous education of adults);
- 2) informative (“allows one to know where and how ideas and knowledge move in the world”);
- 3) axiological (“stresses the meaning of each idea in the process of cultural development in general);
- 4) democratic (each cultural element may be adopted by a human and its adoption depends upon the level of the significance of the element but not on the difficulty of its perception“).

The cultural doctrine is continued in the sociological doctrine differing from the previous one by “active ideas”. Each element of the “sociological table” is given a bigger or smaller “ratio” which might be either positive or negative. The ratio is determined by “progressive” and “regressive values. Thus the socio-dynamic doctrine may either accelerate or hamper cultural evolution.

In A. Mole’s opinion, creative persons and “bosses” of mass media who occupy strategic positions in the cultural cycle influence the main critical points (“crossings”) via which messages arrive. Changes, which are gained to create an intellectual society, are based on humanitarian culture as “humanitarian culture with its ability to set rational links, to build a hierarchy in the field of communication allowing connecting in a clear “Gestalt” different elements and facts, to make up plans of activity. It should enter more and more the world of mosaic culture as one of the three unsolved enigmas which bring power to a man” [7].

Unsolved enigmas according to A. Mole are the enigmas based on “social background” and they do not shut the door in front of a man but, on the contrary, open the door leading to the endless labyrinth of corridors” [7].

The mentioned above definition of humanitarian culture turns out to be a good example of humanitarian approach to characterize the phenomenon under investigation. On the one hand, it reflects exactly enough the specific character of humanitarian culture; on the other hand, it leaves the “unsolved” underlining its significance and depth.

A. Mole determines humanitarian technologies as main tools in the process of changing: “the problem of producing a new technology – a technology of humanitarian sciences is a future task. The technology, which is expected to answer the question “how to change a man?” is a technique corresponding to biological sciences. Humanitarian sciences have their method and technique – “technology”. It is a cultural technology that should answer the question “how to change a human consciousness?” [7].

Summing up the results of the analysis, we can come to the following conclusion: two meanings of humanitarian culture have been discussed in A. Mole’s work:

- 1) interpreting it as encyclopedic culture;
- 2) interpreting it as a specific method of knowledge selection and creating an individual culture.

Undoubtedly, A. Mole is right defining the decline of humanitarian culture as encyclopedic culture, but its specific transformation takes place.

Humanitarian culture functioning in the modern society is presented in A. Mole’s work as a complex and significant socio-cultural phenomenon which main character is universal.

It is possible to single out cognitive, axiological and operative components.

The main functions of humanitarian culture are: educational, informative, axiological and democratic. The common structure of humanitarian culture can be presented in a scheme (see fig. 3).

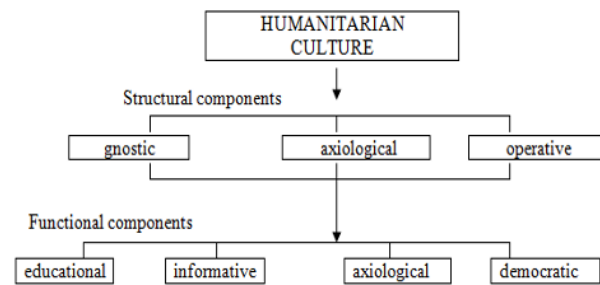


Fig. 3 Structure of humanitarian culture

In A. Mole’s opinion, humanitarian culture forms a basis for individual personalized and creative culture, which should be formed for mass media consumer.

The main means of its formation is introduction of humanitarian technologies into everyday life. These technologies are expected to develop in the future.

4 Conclusion

From our point of view, the contradiction in the theory of socio-dynamical culture lies in the fact that the author, on the one hand, puts some censors on the origin spreading information (creative persons and “bosses” of mass media); on the other hand, he speaks of the possibility and necessity to give information consumer methods of selection and creation individual values, individual “personalized and creative” culture [10]. Undoubtedly, humanitarian culture is a basis for the future progress in both cases. A. Mole forecasts a huge creative potential in humanitarian culture changing the contemporary society.

The analysis of the works of leading researchers makes it possible to come to the conclusion that humanitarian culture is a derivative from a man’s humanitarian activity in its vast context. It is a sphere of spiritual culture and has anthropocentric focus. This type of culture was formed as an opposition to technical-rational culture [11]. Humanitarian culture is a multilevel

phenomenon, as there are two levels in its structure: socio-humanitarian and individual-humanitarian. The specific attributes of humanitarian culture are as following: knowledge of the humanities and psychological peculiarities of people engaged in humanitarian activities. So, in modern science humanitarian culture has been recognized as a specific, different from other cultural phenomena, type of culture, as a specific method of world cognition. The systematization of the accumulated knowledge of humanitarian culture enables further investigations in this field on a higher level and makes it possible to define the place and role of humanitarian culture in the general cultural context.

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