

Philosophical and Methodological Potential of Categories “Social Time” and “Social Space”

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Abstract

The article is dedicated to one of the most relevant issues of contemporary philosophy: methodology for analysis of social space and social time. It considers the cognitive foundations of perception of space, some aspects of the design process of spatial models and their reflection in a natural language. Understanding of space is impossible without linguistic constructions, as many peculiarities of environment including spatial and ontological facts can be formed and fixed in human consciousness through linguistic concepts.

Two dominant structures of social objective reality - i.e. social time and space - have been discussed: processes of genesis of informational society and world globalization. It is revealed that usage of category of “identity” gives principally new opportunities to reflect specificity of social space and time under globalization. The article considers social networks as a principally new form of social space in information society: they are deprived of constant localization and calendar determinants, abide by their internal laws and are not vulnerable to unification processes.

It is also shown that in the general context of world globalization the character of mutual determination of social time and space is changing. Not so long ago the main tendency of social time and space was seen in accelerating its “going”. Nowadays, under contemporary hyperdynamic globalization of social objective reality the objective measure of social time is power of substance streams in social space, energy, and information, and this power is mediated by new forms of social objective reality, including global market, international corporations, electronic stock exchange and money, Internet etc.

Keywords: identity, information society, modernity, network society, social space, social time, world globalization

1. Introduction

Internal laws of philosophical cognition are such that its intentions are determined by the general context of social reality in the most general understanding. The latter includes level of culture, social processes which are dominant at the current moment, forms of activity and communication that have been formed (or being formed). In this sense the categories of time and space (the main measures of objective reality) are unchangeably topical matters of cognition. In its turn, the meaning and forms of operability of these categories are inevitably determined by the level of philosophical cognition that has been reached. It engenders a certain “vicious methodological circle”, the breach of which means a new stage in cognition development. This article deals with certain cognitive basics of space perception and certain peculiarities of reflecting spatial perception in natural language.

Processes going on in our consciousness at the moment of constructing spatial models are little researched. There are not enough researches that could be characterized by interdisciplinary character and lie on the verge of gnoseology and particular branches of linguistics. However, the question of spatial modeling is referred to in different sciences: Physics, Mathematics, Philosophy, Linguistics, Psychology, and Neurophysiology. Understanding of space is impossible without linguistic constructions. The language itself is not just the instrument with help of which man communicates, but the most important medium in which multifaceted

practical experience is rolling out (Polyakova, 2015). Natural language allows us to fix and describe complex structural components of environment, phenomena of events, and configurations of different circumstances. It also allows us to fix it all in structures of sense. In this meaning, these processes appear to be tightly connected with morphological structures of language that fix the main spatial characteristics (Polyakova, 2014). As to perceptive and gnoseological components of cognition, it is possible to say that perception of reality is based on transformation of data and their being transmitted by human consciousness with help of language. Linguistic concepts allow us to form and fix in human consciousness many peculiarities of environment, including spatial and ontological facts.

2. Method

In the epoch of ancient, contemplative Philosophy time and space were understood naturalistically: space is extent, time is duration. It eventually deprived these categories of cognitive sense and operability. Mysticism that became the dominant of Philosophy in Middle Ages sees time and space differently – as God's creation (a part of his creations). In this context time and space get dual dimension: terrestrial (temporary, imperfect) and celestial (eternal, perfect). Only with Galilei and Newton's natural conceptions time and space became operational elements of natural scientific ontology and of cognitive processes, which later deepens and develops in Einstein's conception.

Nowadays interpretation of time and space as an ontological measure of natural world is determined by physical cosmology and synergic ideas. It should be mentioned that up to the modern era there were practically no distinguishing mechanisms of causality in the world of social and natural processes, which is principally important for the purposes of this article (Gatiatullina, 2011).

In ancient philosophy there is a model of "macrocosm" and "microcosm", which spreads natural laws on society. In Middle Ages, God was the absolute cause, i.e. a universal form of causality, equally actual in natural and social world. In this sense the question of social space and time in Philosophy emerges comparatively late, in the context of Vico's ideas. It is Vico who became the first to insist that forms and mechanisms of determination of social processes principally differ from such in natural world, thus bringing up the question of social time and space, because only basing on them it is possible to understand specificity of social objective reality, its causal mechanisms and forms of their manifestation.

Later G. Simmel directly raises the question of social time and space, which gets rather unlike development in Rickert, Marx, and Parsons' theories. It should be mentioned that while Simmel's social time and space appear to be "pure forms" (in the spirit of Kant's a priori), basing on which the comprehension and description of reality are possible, Rickert speaks about space and dynamic of culture and cultural senses. According to Marx, as we know, social time and space are forms of class structure, the system of relations of manufacturing forces, relations and their dynamic, which acquire definite typological forms in socio-economical formations and in their type spectrum. As to Parsons, he interprets social space and time as a system of stratifications and a measure of their dynamics and transformations as if highlighting interdependence of social space and time (Zijdeveld, 2006).

A. Bergson imparts an absolutely new sense to categories of "social time" and "social space" in the context of ideas of life Philosophy. The situation appears that social time and space turn out to be functions of life and consciousness. In his turn, Bourdieu defines social space as a certain field of tensions, created by so-called habitus, which is a normative system of social actions that are determined by culture and transmitting social experience from foregoing to upcoming generations (Bergson, 2003).

The stated conceptions, although seeming to differ, fit into the paradigm logic of classical science and Philosophy. They interpret social time and space as certain ontological constants of society, its structure and essential mechanisms of objective reality and linear progressive development (Tkhangapsoev, 2011).

Socio-historical dynamic of civilization (context) and cognitive culture of the second half of the 20th century engendered principally new views on social time and space.

As we know, modern civilization's state is estimated as nothing else as "threshold". It is on the verge of changing all forms of human activity, from economical, technological, social, and structural to existential. Consequently, scales, temps (dynamics), and plurality of changes nowadays act as the main measures of objective reality. They envisage all basic spheres of life: culture, technology, cognitive practice, socio-political organization, communication. It should be mentioned that the dynamics of changes is such that the possibility to express the essence, spirit, image, structure, and temporality of the upcoming is problematic. A whole range of definitions claims for it: post-industrial, informational or creative (as it is more and more often called these days)

society, “post-economy epoch”, “society of knowledge” and even “post-human epoch”. Obviously this unusually dynamic process of shifts and changes in objective reality of man, society, and culture, which we are witnessing, is going to be deflected through categories of “social space” and “social time”.

In this matter a special attention should be paid to Castells and Beck’s approaches (Beck, 1999). Castells thinks that when we speak about modern society, which he defines as informational, social time and space can be no longer considered just a form of society’s existence and a measure of its objective reality, because nowadays social time and space are society itself. Moreover, he thinks that all the various transformations that have taken hold of the world in this way or another are summed up in transformation of social time and space. Also Castells’ main form of social space is not a geometrical metric and social structure, but streams and their structure: goods, money, raw material, labor, information. These views find support in Beck’s conceptions that are dedicated to globalization processes (Castells & Elgar, 2004).

It should be mentioned that in Castells’ theory social networks occupy a special place. The matter is that the essence and character of modern transformations of social time and space in the general context of our civilization’s current radical changes were expressed namely in social networks, forms, and ways of their being. Here (in social networks) space loses its physical and geometrical dimensions, while time becomes the absolute measure of space. Perhaps the most important is that social networks become a mechanism and space of producing senses and of their exchanging, which means the principle sociality (Freeman, 2004). The possibility of constructing dimensional models is based on empiric approach. Language, in its turn, gives wide opportunities to describe various structures of space, time, objects, and phenomena. Modules of visual perception divide inside the brain all the coming information into objects and places. It is on these data which objective perception of reality is based. It reflects in semiotic structure of language.

Perception of a material object is projected in semiotic structure of language as a synthesis of visually fixed information. Space is a part of objective reality. This part is material and actual, as it has countable physical parameters. It is impossible to imagine any material object without definite characteristics that would prove its existence in space. Constructed space models are reflected in natural language, they express individual’s cognitive abilities and have empiric basis. In the center of this basis lies the perception of an individual as subject of cognitive relations in the system of his interaction with environment.

Although, the final result of all changes of objective reality, about which we speak, is a growing variety of social objective reality, forms, and types of its manifestation. It touches upon the principal measures of objective reality: social time and space (Levine, 1971). Now they express not just a certain range of social structures and relations or a set of, in fact, standard time measures of temporality, but a fluid and multifaceted stream of information, senses, resources that immediately require identification.

3. Results

So there arises a question of identity of social space and time - to be precise, of variety of their forms and contents. Let’s make it clear on the example of social identity. The peculiarities of social objective reality (epoch, historical moment) to some extent deflect in identity of social factors. It happens because human identity is a certain variant of individual’s aggregation and constellation of the senses of objective reality, forms of culture and sociality, motivations for actions, axiological positions and behavioral schemes in environmental conditions of communication, interaction and activity “here and now”, to be precise, in a certain historical epoch (Erikson).

As personal forms of culture and cultural objective reality became possible (sanctioned by society) only with appearance of early forms of European capitalism, at earlier stages of history a man had to stay within socio-cultural identity given to him by birth, taking into account his class position, religion, and ethnicity. Such identity, which can be defined as “sacred-temporal” leaves no place for personal distinction and thus can be called personal only conventionally. However, over the years (as capitalism and differentiation of society and forms of social objective reality developed) a new type of personal human identity is constructed. It is of “corporate-transformative” type, which marks appearance of social lifts, variants of cultural choice, and self-determination. From the beginning of the 20th century, the modern modus of personal identity is formed in the general context of dynamic of social objective reality and development of means and forms of communication. It can be defined as “communicative-spectral”, because it expresses unprecedented modern human mobility (mental, axiological, professional, cultural, dimensional and behavioral) and decisive role of information streams in human life. In this situation, personal identity inevitably acquires not just plural, but aberrant, shimmering, highly unsustainable character, which is suggested by current factors (minor social group, fashion, mass media, political and cultural technologies). In this context forms of social human objective reality as well as their spatial and time dimensions inevitably acquire multiple and unsustainable character. It requires

implementing specifying measure “identity” in methodology of social time and space (Tkhagapsoev & Gatiatullina, 2012).

Moreover, with growing role of social networks (which is characteristic nowadays), network organization starts to prevail over external, coercive government of society. So, forms and types of social identity, as well as senses, ideas, and projects, promoted by creative personalities by means of social networks, become the landmark of people’s self-organization, vectors of their activity and actions (i.e., what stimulates social time and space). It is observed everywhere: ideas, produced by creative people (or groups), social and cultural types, as well as promoted standards of habitualization and legitimization of horizons of social development determine practically everything that happens in society (politics, economy, culture), which means determination of spatial and time structure of society (Tajfel, 1982). All this, as was highlighted before, requires introduction of the category of “identity”, its sense and methodological potential in the process of analysis of contemporary problems of social time and space.

4. Discussion

Hitherto two dominant structures of social objective reality (i.e. social time and space) have been discussed: processes of genesis of informational society and world globalization. However, there is one more factor that determines considerable influence on contemporary social processes and on the structure of global social objective reality. This is ethnic factor (Bentley, 1987). Considering all the above-mentioned, the methodology of analysis of social time and space under globalization and informational society is based, as we see, on the following ideas and principles.

- 1) Nowadays, with total globalization and incessant transformation of all aspects of social objective reality, the traditional methodology of analysis of social time and space that is based on structural ontological categories (civilization type, regime, socio-economical formations) and categories of socio-institutional relations (social class structure, ruling class, institutions of law, power and government) loses its effect and requires new approaches.
- 2) Frequently made attempts to base analysis of social space and time on the category of “modernity” does not solve the problem, as with globalization processes social objective reality loses specifying spatial structure. In other words, type of modernity acquires spontaneously changeable (“stream-like fluid”) character (Khasanova, 2014). It also draws practically all “modern” measures of society and social processes which are forms of economical relations (market, private property) and consuming (mass consuming, consumerism), mechanisms of socio-cultural communication and means of interaction (electronic mass media, Internet, social networks) onto practically any locus of world space: region, state, ethno-social space.
- 3) Using the category of “identity” gives principally new opportunities to reflect specificity of social space and time under globalization and informational society because a broad marker structure of identity allows us to reflect differentially peculiarities of social time and space “here and now”.
- 4) Virtual medium of social space (the Internet and other electronic media) the role and importance of which are consistently growing nowadays, for all aspects and forms of social objective reality (economy, politics, culture, education, communication) are deprived of sustainable substantial-structural forms (Leshchyov, 2014). Thus, it can be described and reflected only when based on methodological potential of the category of “identity”, particularly on the basis of type and forms of identity of subjects acting in virtual space (blogger, poster, moderator, medium, provider, etc.) or identity of form of virtual technologies, practiced by them (chat, forum, flash-mob, social networks, etc.).
- 5) Social networks are a principally new form of social space. They are deprived of constant localization and calendar determinants. They abide by their internal laws and are not vulnerable to unification processes (tendencies of globalizing social objective reality). Thus, they act as a locus of constructing, spreading, and maintaining new forms (variety of forms) of personal and cultural human identity, which means forms of sociality and social relations.
- 6) In the general context of world globalization, the character of mutual determination of social time and space is changing. Not so long ago the main tendency of social time and space was seen in accelerating its “going” (which means the growth of dynamics of temps and rhythms of social existence and social forms). Nowadays, under contemporary hyperdynamic globalization of social objective reality the objective measure of social time (instead of calendar) is the power of substance streams in social space (goods, services), energy, and information. This power is mediated by new forms of social objective reality (including global market, international corporations, electronic stock exchange and money, the Internet, etc.).

7) The most considerable and active hindrance to total unification and homogenization of social time and space in globalizing processes is ethnic factor. However, under globalization influence the ethnos is gradually losing substantial forms of identity (geographic localization, economical arrangement, linguo-cultural sovereignty etc.). Instead, it acquires new forms of aspectual and symbolic objective reality in global social space, particularly in forms of brands and symbols of ethnic music, choreography, ethnic tourism and design, ethnic spiritual practices, etc.

5. Conclusions

In ethnic areas, under contemporary globalization the considerable (marking) level of specificity of social time and space is preserved. Meanwhile, this mentioned specificity transpires more and more often not in firm traditional forms and types of ethno-social connection, their organization and ways of functioning (institution of the older, power, and influence of clan, ethnic community and its regulative norms). It transpires in appearance of new spontaneously changeable (adaptive) forms of ethno-social objective reality (ethnic brands and ways of their market exploiting), in active restructuring of archetypes and symbols of ethnos (ethnic culture) in contemporary art forms (theatre, painting, music, belle-letters, design) as well as in various forms of re-actualization and politicization of ethnos' historical past.

To recapitulate, natural language is the unique instrument and medium at the time, within which reality "is caught" and fixed in categories, while spatial concepts are most important.

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