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LANGUAGE AND PHYSICAL CULTURE. PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON PERCEPTION AND CREATION OF PHYSICAL CULTURE

Key words: physical culture, language philosophy, deep structure, language code.

ABSTRACT

The article analyses the philosophical differences between perception and creation of physical culture. The author juxtaposes physical culture with different language theories: Wittgenstein' "fly-bottle", Chomsky's deep structure, Bernstein' language code and Lyons' revision of distinction between "primitive" and "civilized" language. Physical culture is treated as a whole philosophical entity, which we create using language.

> *The transition to the new type of intrinsic perception means also a transition to a higher level of inner mental functions. The perception of things means acquiring other possibilities to act. It is like a chessboard: I see in one way, I play in another way* [11: 325-326]
>
> L.S. Vygotsky

The main thesis proposed in the following considerations is that physical culture is not created through physical effort alone, but first of all, through intellectual considerations of such effort. The real creators of physical culture are those who not necessarily have to have direct contact with practicing sports or corporeal training. They make the sphere of "physical" activity a subject of intellectual *reflection*. This thesis is by no means an attempt to belittle the significance of physical effort in physical culture. If we want to abide by the principles of a healthy lifestyle, the significance of physical exercise must be constantly affirmed. The two spheres do not contradict each other, but they go hand in hand.

Let us, however, return to the issue of physical *culture* (!). If it is "conceived" within the intellectual sphere, then considering the way our mind works, it must involve language as a "carrier" of ideas. It can be concluded that in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of physical culture is *de facto* analysis of the linguistic ways of its perception and creation. In our considerations on physical culture we will refer to the "classic" researchers of language and to those who can make some interesting contribution to our discussion. We will not, however, follow blindly their ideas, because we do not aim at some ultimate verification of their concepts. We will treat their ideas as inspiration or even *pretexts* for expressing our own thoughts. In this way, we will reach a transcendent horizon on

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which different languages of perception and creation of physical culture converge.

LANGUAGE GAME AS A GAME OF PHYSICAL CULTURE

The above quote from Vygotsky makes us realize the existence of an interaction between perception and creation. To "act" more accurately in the sphere of physical exercise (physical exercise being an *object* for us), or – in other words – to create physical culture in a better way, we must see what we see as a complex whole with a hidden, deeper sense. Then we can notice the other possibilities, which will empower us to deal with physical culture in a more creative manner. A deep analysis ("I see in one way") will make us create it much better ("I play in another way"). The use of the concept of "playing the game" is deliberate here. When we refer to playing the game, we tend to ignore the game of chess and enter the sports arena. The concept of playing the game reflects a certain kind of team physical activity.

The mentioned concept can be, however, subject to even more in-depth interpretation, which gives us the key to understand the complexities of physical culture. This interpretation was made by Wittgenstein, who studied reality through the ways language worked. In his philosophy all problems are solved "by looking into the workings of our language" [12]. This type of cognitive approach seems substantiated, if we accept all that has been said so far. However, to avoid one-sided interpretations, it should be emphasized that language is not some kind of *pure form* of communication abstracted from life. Wittgenstein clearly defines the way he sees the language game: "Language game is the whole consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven" [12].

The scope of this article does not allow us to relate to Wittgenstein's longer considerations included in his *Philosophical Investigations*, illustrated with unconventional "food for thought" examples. Let us consider one of Wittgenstein's main aspects of language game. He asks: "What really comes before our mind when we understand a word? Isn't is something like a picture? Can't it be a picture?" [12]. He goes on and suggests; "Well, suppose that a picture does come before your mind when you hear the word 'cube', say the drawing of a cube" [12], and then he asks "In what sense can this picture fit or fail to fit a use of the word 'cube'?"

Let us try to "get into" Wittgenstein's thinking and see what will come out of it. Instead of a cube, let us try to picture a ball, which can definitely be identified with sport. What does the cube (ball) test give us? According to Wittgenstein, the picture of the cube (ball) may suggest a certain use, but there can be other uses. He writes: "Then what sort of mistake did I make; was it what we should like to express by saying: I should have thought the picture forced a particular use on me? How could I think that? What did I think?" [12].

Our test concerns a ball, but imagine it concerns the whole of physical culture. The context of *use* is not in this case seriously modified. How do we then *perceive* physical culture, and what does our perception of physical culture entail? Do we immediately see in it what we always used to see? Is our reaction provoked by some sort of standard scheme of action? Does the perceived picture of physical culture force a particular *use* of it upon us, i.e. the only permissible way of using it?

It seems that the area of physical activity is so broad that we can enjoy unlimited possibilities of "using" it; that we should not allow establishing some one narrow, oversimplified way of its perception. The "later" Wittgenstein (quoted above) realized this hazard of oversimplified thinking, unlike the "earlier" Wittgenstein who saw the world as explicitly constituted. In his earlier, short but significant work *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* Wittgenstein had written that "a proposition is a picture or reality" and that "Everything that can be thought at all, can be thought clearly. Everything that can be put into words, can be put clearly" [13].

The mature "later" Wittgenstein departed from the illusive explicitness and began to deliver intellect from schematic language forms. His philosophy became "a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language" [12]. As an illustration he used the image of a fly in the fly-bottle. We are flies trapped in a fly bottle, i.e. in our schematic linguistic interpretations. In his philosophy Wittgenstein attempted to show "the way out of the fly-bottle" [13].

LANGUAGE STRUCTURE AND PHYSICAL CULTURE

The "fly-bottle" problem was also dealt with by Chomsky, for whom a typical fly-bottle was exaggerated "scientific" perception of science, which can be called a scientific view of reality. In such an approach each "true" science should only be concerned with observation and analysis of human behaviors in their objectified extrinsic forms. This assumption is only seemingly obvious because its closer scrutiny would reveal some hidden reductionism. Acceptance of the scientific method is like reducing physics to a science of reading measuring instruments. Chomsky asks a rhetorical question what would the natural sciences be, if they were reduced in such a way [5].

In his criticism of the scientific method Chomsky refers to *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* by Ralph Cudworth from 1731, and concludes that there must be some "inborn" principles, without which experiencing, perception and understanding would not be possible [7: 74].

It seems we all possess some kind of deep language structure, which plays the fundamental role in transformational grammar, and which is activated on the initiation or interpretation of sentences [3]. According to Chomsky deep structure is a theoretical construct representing meaning in mind; whereas surface structure is the mental representation of a linguistic expression, derived from deep structure by transformational grammatical rules [6: 149-150].

Could there be some sort of Wittgenstein's "fly-bottle" constraining our thinking and formulating our thoughts in some inter-subjective manner? Are we always to refer to physical culture in the precise ways determined by some mysterious, and at the same time, ominous deep structure? Is it that we only think we can expand infinitely the ranges and forms of physical culture, but in fact we must follow the hidden "algorithm" of communication? It is fortunately still a premature conclusion, as the impact of deep structure, according to Chomski, may not be that significant.

Following Chomsky's theory of *language competence*, language is in a sense "unlimited" because by using language we are able to create an unlimited number of different grammatically correct sentences. Language provides us with means of expression of infinite thoughts and respond correctly to an unlimited number of new situations [7]. Chomsky refers to Humboldt, for whom language, consisting of a definite number of constituent parts, makes use of them in an infinite number of ways. However, Chomsky goes beyond the surface formulation of this idea, pointing to the "deep" foundations of syntactic creation.

It should also be emphasized that the process of language creation involves the whole body (which is highly significant in the context of our considerations of physical culture), not only intellect as merely one of the body's constituent parts. According to Chomsky, the relative suddenness, uniformity and universality of language learning, complexity of language skills, perfection and finesse of using these skills they all lead us to a conclusion that the basic foundation of language must be some kind of extremely complex initial structure [4]. This structure is not a constraining one, but to some extent, it conditions realization of language learning skills and formulates some general rules which regulate the entire process. These skills are called by Chomsky *language competences*.

In this way, language as a tool of the created culture, is perceived from a wider perspective of development of humanity (*phylogenesis*), and not only from a perspective of an individual (*ontogenesis*). Language involves dependence between man's psycho-physical constitution and the universe. In his universalism Chomsky defies the confined scientific method. According to him, a view which entirely attributes man's complex achievements to a few months of experience – rather than to millions of years of evolution or the organization of principles of the nervous system, which may be even more embedded in the laws of physics, cannot be taken seriously [7].

On the other hand, it should also be stressed that the millions of years of evolution did not make Chomsky belittle the language creativeness of individual language users. Each of us by "using" the creative-linguistic structure, can become *sensu stricto* a culture-creating subject. It is therefore possible to create physical culture individually and infinitely, as the deep structure does not limit the ways in which language can be used.

The key to the problem of the "use" of language seems the correlation between perception and acquisition, i.e. separation of perception and acquisition from the comprehensive perceptual structure. According to Chomsky, traditional

discourses on the mutual relationships between the mind and the senses in the process of creation of ideas do not differentiate between perception and acquisition. There is, however, no contradiction in saying that the deep mental structures once initiated are able to interpret sensual data differently than before [7].

FROM LANGUAGE CODE TO SYMBOL IN PHYSICAL CULTURE

In his studies of determinants of culture creation Basil Bernstein came to the conclusion that all communication must involve some kinds of language codes. His concept of language "code" does not refer to any particular verbal statements, but to a certain system or "operational principle" of language. There is no direct relation between a language code and an ethnic code as this is a matter for linguists. Considering, however, the existence of particular social relations, the language and ethnic codes began to determine one another in an indirect manner. Language code can generate a number of speech codes; it is a set of rules followed by all speech codes. However, which speech codes are generated depends on the system of social relations [1].

In spite of the aforementioned relations Bernstein observed that the relation between language, culture and customary thinking is forged without any social structure [1]. Society is considered here a factor which creates and evaluates its own cultural products. According to Bernstein society can attribute different values to the orders of experience revealed and preserved by individual codes. It might appear as if culture in its entirety consists of a multitude of cultures, determined by the number of language users. Bernstein notices that within the common language, understood as a universal code, there are numerous distinct language forms and speech codes, which trigger different types of reaction towards people and objects in the consciousness of language users [1].

Only in this context does Bernstein intend to show the social determinants of language. He even leaves aside his metalinguistic considerations and directly refers to social matters. In result, he paradoxically observes that the theory of language codes does not attempt to reveal whether there are properties of universal culture of all social community members, determined by general language code, i.e. language on the syntactic level. It is a sociological theory since it defines a system of social relations [1].

To avoid sidelining the role of language in creation of culture, a more precise definition of language code is necessary. Unfortunately, Bernstein was not able to provide any unambiguous definition of language code, as each code always appears in a complex network of linguistic, psycho-cognitive and social factors [2]. He differentiates, however, between *elaborated* and *restricted codes*, and contrasts language code as some kind of speech system with *speech act* and *speech process*. In this context he opposes Sapir and Whorf who reject the division into primitive and civilized languages, i.e. less and more complex languages. Despite his acceptance of divisions within language, Bernstein remains convinced that no code is worse or better than others [1].

Bernstein's conviction about the semantic relativity of particular codes relies on the fundamental difference between verbal and non-verbal communication. The former, especially everyday communication, is more predictable than the latter which signifies one's own hidden properties. Bernstein notices that verbal communication featuring the maximal predictability, such as verbal rituals, usually takes place in contexts in which individual characteristics of each interlocutor are less predictable from the standpoint of their partners. The code allows "adjournment" of communication. The future form of communication will be based on the meanings interpreted in the course of non-verbal communication [1].

The differences between the two types of language communication consists of different arrangements of "material." Planning of verbal communication is practically limited to the choice of particular sequences – it is not concerned with intra-sequential procedures of selection and organization [1]. It appears that in creation of physical culture, all non-verbal components must be highly significant. If we consider the specificity of physical culture, we can say that its creation is optimally correlated with its essence. This is often the case with more "humanistic cultures" in which the form is "over-intellectualized" more than the content.

The above considerations point to the primary significance of the symbolic layer of communication. This significance may seem

obvious, but, in fact, it does not change much our perception of culture creation. Bernstein even observes that each textbook containing chapters on culture and socialization celebrates human capacity for creation and interpretation of symbols, but then completely ignores all consequences of this capacity [1]. How can we change it? Bernstein shows that each language may have a variety of speech codes functioning in the same way as social relations. A given social relation or structure generates separate language codes, which then communicate culture and certain patterns of behavior [1].

EQUIVALENCE (OF LANGUAGES) OF PERCEPTION AND CREATION OF PHYSICAL CULTURE

The reality of culture-making communication is highly complex as evidenced, for instance, by the symbolism of non-verbal communication mentioned above. Also the interactivity of the creative process during communication is very significant. It is not interaction between different subjects of communication, but perhaps, first of all, it is about communication "within" each subject of communication. The creator becomes the creation and vice versa. Communication and the form of culture stemming from it do not only result from actions of a concrete, individual mind. The intellect also becomes a result of interaction between communication and culture.

This particular issue generates a variety of different, even very radical views. Some of these views stipulate that the role of the intellect is dominated by creative communication. For example, Mead thinks that mind is formed through communication, not the other way around. According to him, mind is created in the process of communication taking place through conversations and gestures or experience [9].

This exaggerated concept of "formed" mind is justified, according to Mead, in man's biological constitution, and although this theory might seem controversial it employs very clear arguments. Mead observed that the process of communication was only a product of some particular intelligence possessed only by the vertebrates. The mechanism which allows analysis of reactions depends on the brain, and communication is a means of regulation of this mechanism. Communication simply permits individuals to use their intelligence [9].

Even if we disagree with Mead's theory in its entirety, it forces us to reflect upon it. We sometimes treat physical culture creation as the process of subjective referring to (affecting) something which is objective. We seem to forget that the subject of creation is simultaneously a subject of creation of "subjectified" culture. We should realize that the actions of certain creative individuals culminate in creation of certain forms of physical culture, which in turn affect (!) those creative individuals. It appears we are unable to assume the role of "objective" creator and free "ourselves" from the products of our creation. Perception becomes paradoxically creation, and creation becomes perception, or at least both are combined into an inseparable reality.

Let us return for a while to Chomsky's concept. Lyons in his revision of Chomsky's theory concluded that the division of languages into primitive and civilized is unfounded. According to him, this can be seen in the context of grammatical structure. There are differences between languages, but not necessarily between "primitive" or "civilized," but between *all* languages.

Moreover the "primitive" languages are not less systematic or structurally less developed than "civilized" languages. Lyons observes that all human communities known to us communicate using language of almost the same level of complexity. The differences in the grammatical structure between languages of the world may not be related to the level of cultural development of their users. These differences cannot be treated as empirical material for the construct of theory of human language evolution [8]. All these differences are virtual and in no way affect human communicative capacities. Lyons is adamant in his views. According to him, no lexicon of any language can be regarded as richer or poorer than others. Each language has its own vocabulary, which is rich enough to express all significant aspects of life by its community [8].

The above observation is, however, an incomplete answer to the question about the language foundations of physical culture, without considering of the meaning of the "far-reaching" symbol. Do symbols only represent reality, or do they do *something more* than that? According to Ricoeur, *symbol* is situated on the line between *bios* and *logos*, which shows how discourse is deeply

embedded in life. Discourse is conceived out of a combination of strength and form [10]. If we first consider *logos*, which introduces us to the area of communication, it also shows us the perspective of creative *Logos*. The symbol then combines the Source of all creativeness and our own creativeness placed in the earthly *bios*. Our life with the omnipresent discourse is transcended into the area of Life and Discourse, which *de facto* is omnipresent and all-pervasive.

The symbol does not become weakened in the dynamic expression (Ricoeur's "strength" of the symbol), and is not only of biotic. It points to some higher entity of religious, esthetic and moral experience or – from a different perspective – to a higher entity of culture creation. The reference to the non-semantic aspect of symbol and the category (?) of *logos* confirm the "equality" of all languages in Life, which can create culture to the same extent. Using Vygotsky's words, this "new type of intrinsic perception" allows transition to a "higher type of intrinsic mental activities." Once we acquire "other possibilities" of creating physical culture, we can create it better. If "I see in one way" then "I play in another way", as evidenced by the aforementioned dialectics of perception and creation.

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