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The Human Values as Study Object of Science

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Abstract:

The purpose of this article was to perform a review and analysis about human values as a study object in sciences such as Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy and Psychology; offering an evaluation of the main currents and historical trends. With greater emphasis on the main authors who have investigated on the subject of Psychological criteria such as Behaviorism, Cognitive Psychology, Psychoanalysis, Humanism and Historical-Cultural. Offering relevant information for the researchers that want to deepen on the topic.

Keywords: *Psychological Criteria, Human Values*

1. Introduction

Values are part of the spiritual life of society and the inner world of individuals. From the time of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were already speaking about the philosophy of values, recognizing truth, justice and love as values necessary to live honestly as a person. Throughout history, the category value was studied by different sciences, such as Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy, and Psychology. However, it is not until the middle of the nineteenth century that the study of values takes on a proper and independent place within these branches of knowledge. It was favored by the emergence of axiology at the beginning of the 20th century (from the Greek axia-value and logos-study), in charge of questions about the categories of good and evil.

Each of these sciences investigates different dimensions of the subject, and although offer reasons to understand it, they have not yet allowed an integrated and interdisciplinary vision in their scientific treatment (Giniebra, 2005, p.8). Nevertheless, each one of them contributed with essential considerations to the category at present. For that reason, we consider important to make references related to the branches that in our opinion were more integrative.

2. Discussion

In Marxist Philosophy, the question of values is analyzed from the dialectic of the universal and the particular. The universal exists through the particular and the singular. Values do not acquire a static character; they are socio-historically changing for each specific moment. The systems of values objectively shaped, in the last case, are the derivation of the structure of socio-economic relations that make up each particular society and the interests of the whole social spectrum. In this way, the role of the society as a developer of individual traits is rescued by the dominant social patterns (ideals and values), under the influence of various institutions and socializing agents.

From Sociology, it is emphasized in the positive social meaning that every object, phenomenon, quality, idea, behavior, must possess to be considered a value. Its close connection with social progress plays a role of behavioral orientation. In this sense, N. Chacón (2006) points out that moral value is a reflection of the positive social significance of a phenomenon that has a normative-evaluative character at the level of the moral conscience (social-individual). This value, based on principles and norms, regulates man's attitude and behavior towards moral progress, the elevation of humanism and human perfection.

Highlighting the complex nature of the value category, J. R. Fabelo (1995), points out the possibility of its study on at least three levels of analysis.

The first level of analysis is to consider values as a constitutive part of social reality within the framework of a meaningful relationship between the processes and events of social life and the needs and interests of society as a whole.

The second level of analysis refers to the way in which this social significance, which constitutes objective value, is reflected in the individual or collective consciousness. From this derives the composition on the part of each subject of its own a subjective system of values, which is produced as a result of a process of active evaluation of the events and phenomena of social reality. This aspect of the analysis is represented as a significant point of intersection between the sociological and psychological tendencies. The latter tries to explain how the process of subjectivation of value occurs, as well as the regularities that take place when these formations participate in the present and future regulation of human behavior.

A third and last level of analysis described mentions the need for society to organize and function in the orbit of a system of values instituted and officially recognized, which can correspond to a greater or lesser extent with the objective system of existing values. Of these instituted values, emanate the internal and external politics, the legal norms, the right and the formal education.

In general, we can see that this sociological perspective considers the social conditions in which values arise and develop as the context from which meaningful learning is generated. These occur within the framework of the different groups of belonging or reference, by which the individual passes through life. In this sense, the role of the various socializing agencies that comprise the family, the school, political and cultural organizations, informal and collective labor groups, mass media, among others are highlighted.

Psychology as a science is interested in the study of values from its subjective expression and tries to explain aspects related to the moral regulation of personality and the way in which values are constituted and involved in behavioral regulation. Psychological approaches were devoted to the study of values. Among them, we can mention some as Behaviorism, Cognitive Psychology, Psychoanalysis, Humanism and the Historical-Cultural Approach.

Behaviorists, assuming pragmatism as an epistemological stance, refer to values from the observable, measurable and comparable, placing the center of their analysis in behavior. In Neoconductismo, an attempt is made to introduce some variables that could guide us more in the understanding of the problem. From this standpoint, the formation of values is conceived as a process of learning successive behaviors, starting from the mechanisms of social imitation, reward, and punishment among others, which act as reinforcers of these behaviors. It thus obviates the mediatization of the individual's internal psychological processes, in the process of acquisition of values. Morality is considered as a set of patterns of behavior that parents and adults impose or pass on to children, so it is an external phenomenon of acceptance and accommodation to the conventions established by social authority.

This approach "greatly reduces the concept of value, which has its expression in behavior and is formed from external actions, constituting a necessary but not sufficient indicator of the presence of moral values" (Collective of authors, 2001, 43). Cognitivism arises as a consequence of the lack of answers on the part of Behaviorism to the problems that faced the society in those moments. It is based on the neopositivist conception, considering the process of formation of values as a product of relations between individual consciousnesses, starting from the formalization of language. The main representatives, about the subject, are J. Piaget and L. Kohlberg.

Jean Piaget was a pioneer in the study of moral conscience, dedicating himself to characterizing its development using the clinical method based on observation and interrogation, not being reductionist regarding the limits of the good, not only being linked to social duty.

According to Piaget (1971), the subject in ontogenesis goes through several levels that have to do with moral regulation of behavior. From a first level, in which the subject has no sense of obligation to social norms and rules (pre-moral level), is passed to another where this regulation is carried out by the need to obey the rules and conditions that are imposed socially. Here the relation of obligation with respect to authority (heteronomous or heteronomous moral level) will be of great importance. Finally, we move to a third level (autonomous) where moral regulation of behavior is produced by internal conviction and by understanding what is necessary to comply with social norms (cited by Giniebra, U., R., 2002, page 8).

For this author, what guarantees the transition from an initial level of regulation to the subsequent levels are precisely the development of logical thought. This makes it possible for the subject to abandon his self-centered positions and project himself in the sense of cooperation concerning the other, which is given by internal conviction and not as a result of coercion or other mechanisms of external pressure.

Kohlberg (1978), on the other hand, bases his analysis on moral situations of conflicts. It incorporates into its conception affective, motivational and self-value factors, but still, fails to overcome Piaget's conception. He establishes a parallelism between the motivational and intellectual factors involved in this process, where ultimately the development of motivational aspects occurs as a consequence of the maturation of intellectual structures, (cited by Giniebra, U., R., 2002, page 9).

Both Piaget and Kohlberg based their theories of moral development on the intellectual aspects of individuals and focused on the problem of the transition from an external or heteronomous morality to an autonomous internal morale. (Collective of authors, 2001, page 29). This conception limits and unilateralizes the meaning of the value itself, since in the development of its study the consideration of social conditions is obvious, constituting in this way an ahistorical and reductionist approach in this sense.

We agree with the postulates of Kon, when he states that intellectual development is a necessary but not sufficient condition for moral development. The behavior of the individual depends not only on how he understands the problem before him but also on the psychological preparation for any action. The formation of the internal moral instances and the moral self with which the individual relates his motives and behavior is the result of the joint expansion of the group of actions. Also the responsibility for the development of the intellect, emotions, and will, which occurs during the individual's practical activity (Kon, I. S. 1990, p.150).

The psychoanalytic conception of Sigmund Freud oriented to the affective world proposes a structure of the personality where the id, the ego, and the superego occupy a primordial role in the life of the individuals. In this theory, values fulfill a function of regulation of social behavior. According to Fernández (2003), the super-ego represents internally traditional, social values, warns, forbids. It is the moral conscience (sanctionable, punishes and generates guilt) and the moral ideal of the self (generates pride). It is the moral weapon of the personality, seeks perfection, inhibits the impulses of the id and represents the ideal, deciding about good and evil, according to the moral canons of society, trying to substitute realistic goals for moralists. It embodies the norms of morality and culture, controlling the self, demanding moralistic ends.

By critically assessing the psychoanalytic position we find that the formation of values is reduced to a process of internalization of norms and social demands that become part of the personality. That formation is ultimately determined by the strength of instincts that

mark the whole course and rhythm of development, all of which occurs fundamentally in the first six years of life (Collective of Authors, 2001, p.30). Through this conception, the spontaneous and innate nature of moral development is emphasized, without assessing the determining role played by the system of social relations in which the subject is immersed, as space where new learning takes place.

From another perspective, we find the theorists of the so-called Third Force in Psychology; this is Humanism. Among them, A. Maslow (1979) conceives values as an active content in the development of self-realization and personal self-determination of the individual, the basic need of the whole human species. "It seems as if there is only one fundamental value for humanity, a distant goal toward which all men tend ... so that he (man) can be fully human" (quoted by Córdova & Rosales, 2007, p.4).

For his part, Allport (1965) refers that value represents a meaning perceived as related to the self. A person experiences a value when he knows that its meaning is comforting and central to himself. In this way, the individual can discover his values as he develops his personality, insofar as he discovers the importance of things for himself, and attains higher levels of the internal organization. Having a self-developed image and ability to function autonomously in the regulation of behavior, with a level of responsibility in regulation and autonomous motivational wealth.

In a general sense, the Humanist position contributes elements that allow the human being to be understood as a subject with a tendency to self-actualize their intellectual, ethical and human potentialities and capacities. In particular, values participate as regulators of personal performance and conducive to human growth.

The Historical-Cultural Approach, elaborated by LS Vygotsky (2003) in the first decades of the last century, is based on a materialist and dialectical epistemology and supports, as a central idea about the humanization problem of man, his historical-social character and the role that the material activity and communication play in that process. The person is conceived as an active social being and acting consciously and in this sense, producer of values. He or she creates the material and spiritual wealth which in turn constitutes the source of his development, in close connection with their living conditions and the influences of this on its personality.

In this way, the incorporation of values into individual subjectivity takes place in an active process of interaction, where the psychological previously formed determines each new acquisition that is made from the external environment. The young person incorporates those objective values that are part of the social reality, mediated by his history, his psychological formations and values already formed or incorporated that determine the way in which new values are internalized and constructed subjectively from the point of view personal.

Bozhovich, the continuator of Vygotsky's work, points out that: "moral development is intimately linked to the development of the personality as a system, is explained by the variations that affect the sphere of affections and needs, which determines the trend and the direction of its development." (1976, quoted in Collective of Authors, 2001, page 22). Thus, when inserted in the personality system, values are in close relation to other instances of personality such as the conception of the world, ideals, self-assessment, and of course future projection, among others.

Also in Cuba have been studies on this topic, because of the importance that has been given to values throughout our history. González (1989) writes that: "Personality reaches a high degree of moral development when moral contents are committed to the fundamental experiences of the individual and are expressed in complex psychological formations (ideals, self-assessment, scientific conception of the world). At the same time, values are based on a high degree of development of self-consciousness, where thought is a component, which not only guides the expression of the moral contents of the personality. Also, is an active source of such content, because man as a conscious being affects his emotional world through his reflection, which is linked to his experiences and experiences " (1989, cited by Lugo, XX., I., 1998, p.9).

In this sense, we see that for a value to be integrated into the personological system and begin to regulate the performance of the subject effectively, it is necessary that the person not only knows the value in question. Also that the value acquires a personal sense to this subject, linked to their needs and affective states.

Likewise, for L. Domínguez (2014, p. 42), values are part of human subjectivity, as motivational formations of the personality. The value has a cognitive component, represented by the knowledge of the content of the value or said otherwise, the awareness of what is, for example, being honest, responsible, worthy and fair. Also, the value has an emotional component that determines the subject's emotional commitment to the content of value. This unity of the cognitive and the affective allows the value to become a capable regulator of the behavior of the subject.

In this way, we see how the Cultural-Historical Approach conceives the dialectic between the internal and the external, between the objective and the subjective, from the formulation of the genetic law of development and the principles of interiorization and mediatization; achieving a solution to the problem of the objective and subjective nature of value.

3. Conclusions

In general, it can be said that values are a reality of the ideal character, which makes them part of the spiritual life of each individual. In them is present the rational and also the emotional, that is, the feelings of human beings. Values are an essential component of ideology; are also an expression of the material, economic conditions of the existence of people's lives. They have their source in the multifaceted human activity, where necessities - material and spiritual - occur as well as their dissatisfaction. They are achieved through interpersonal relationships and in the relationships of people with the things that surround them (subject-object); that is, in the dialectic of the objective and the subjective, in the plane of the social, individual and institutionalized.

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