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Cultural activity of the subject in the perspective of psychoanalytic pedagogy

Introduction

Activation, or activity as a form of representation of subjective action, which has become the leading topic of the conducted deliberations, on the one hand sets the field of obviousness, on the other hand it should arouse reflection allowing to avoid trivialization and at the same time reduction of meaning, or, as Zbigniew Kwieciński says, zeroing the meaning (Kwieciński, 2004).

For this reason, it becomes necessary to explain the difference between understanding what the activity of the subject is in his existence and the activities activating this subject in the space of educational activities embedded in the framework of animation and creation of these activities. Undoubtedly, being an active subject carries as many expectations as fears of the effects of what the subject himself can offer us and what he will want to impose on *the Other*¹ in the area of building relationships – or as we could say with Lacan – in the perspective of generating a desire for *the Other*. The considerations within which I build the discourse proposed here refers to the oscillation between **the assumed sense of the functional perception of activity**, in relation to which the Self (ego) of the subject is entangled in demanding another (similar to us man), **and the (non)sense generated by the system** as a mirage posing the subject to the question of the lack² that he experiences or would like him to experience.

1 In Lacan's terminology, the „other” written with a lowercase letter is an ordinary, subject-like human (familiar) person, and another written with a capital letter is the one that is significant (essential), because it determines the direction of the subject's desire. In this sense, the Other is a function, not a specific person, and is associated with many meanings, referring to something objectively existing in the symbolic sphere outside the subject, but which affects the subject (Węc 2012).

2 In Lacan's concept, the basis for considering the importance of problematizing the issue „becomes the „raison d'être of the subject” – determining the knowledge of the Other's

The cognitive perspective I propose is embedded in the discourse of Lacanian psychoanalysis, which I use as a kind of linguistic and interpretative tool. I find particular significance for pedagogy in Lacan's understanding of the subject and the figure of *the Other*, which allows us to look at the educational process from the perspective of the difference between adaptation to reality, assimilation of reality and construction of this reality. Therefore, using the praxis constituted by psychoanalysis, I recognize that adaptation limits both the development of the subject and his activity also in the process of shaping his individual and social identity. In this sense, the question of the emancipation of the subject, which is a representation of the activity we demand, concerns giving the subject the right to: choice, freedom, worldview, word, sexuality, constructing his own development in the sense that is important to the subject, and of course the right to subjective activity or (un)activity, which I will not call passivity here.

Psychoanalysis is also important because it shows certain dependencies in educational or institutional relationships that result from the individual history of the subject (Lacan, 2015), which may have an impact on the formation of conflicts between these relationships. Of course, I must stipulate that I do not demand that psychoanalysis become a pedagogical method, because its value is to show a specific practice that formulates a comprehensive knowledge about the constitution of the subject and its potential limitations. Therefore, my goal will not be to determine a specific epistemological scheme, but to activate a certain phenomenological sensitivity, which will allow me to look at the subject of the pupil from the perspective of his otherness, presence or subjective relationship towards *the Other*. This is possible because psychoanalysis allows us to approach pedagogical discourse in relation to praxis, which is defined by non-rational forms and forms of activity based on the affective behavior of the subject. From the perspective of cultural value determining thinking about the activity of the subject, we can refer to the thought of Theodor Adorno, who sees in psychoanalysis an opportunity to maintain the "critique of instrumental reason" and to make Freud's theory a tool that triggers self-reflection abolishing the strength and intensity of the mechanisms of enslaving the subject also by rationalizing his activity (Adorno, 1986). Referring to the psychoanalytic interpretation, it can be assumed that different categories of rationality are possible only if they take into account the existing sphere of (in)rationality, which for the

own desire and desire of the Other to place his lack in the emerging difference and to shape his own development strategy towards him, also resistant to the manipulation of the Other. Pedagogy, which willingly reaches for the moral law while claiming the right to establish its own discourse as a potential carrier of „assumed knowledge”, must also address the question of desire, which in its inadequacy reveals the place of lack, present in the subject. The solution to the dilemma caused by the presence of lack and the problem of „coping” with the Other – shows the paradoxical construction of the interweaving between impossibility and necessity at the same time what becomes a claim to the position of the subject towards his activity and existential passivity (Węc 2015).

subject may be the result of an action resulting from the orders of the *Unconscious*, *Imaginary* or *Real*. And here we are dealing with Lacan's concept of three psychic orders, where the *Imaginary* order is the place of reaching meaning, the *Symbolic* order is the field of ambiguity, and the *Real* is the place of everything that is impossible to conceive.

Another interpretative horizon important for the conducted reflections is the social context of psychoanalysis, which, for example, in Habermas' interpretation allows us to see in psychoanalysis a theory not only concerning the autonomous subject, but sees it from the perspective of a tool leading from ideology and social repression to the freedom of the subject (Habermas, 1999, 2002). This means that where psychoanalysis uses language, Habermas sees interpersonal communication understood as a practical discourse.

What defines meaning for educators concerns the research field, which becomes the speaking of the subject, which thanks to psychoanalysis allows you to better understand yourself and direct your own life. This is also noted by Fromm, who considers psychoanalysis to be an empirical method of revealing the unconscious desires of the subject, hidden under the mask of rationalization, revealing the character and various unconscious motivations of actions pretending to be the truth (Fromm, 1998). Freud's well-known formula *where the id was, there will be the ego* is an indication of the direction of thinking about a man who cares about his own development, a man who understands his own limitations and knows how to abolish these limitations (Freud, 2007). Paraphrasing this metaphor, we get a statement where the affect was, there will be activity, because Freud's belief in reason, by means of which the Unconscious can reveal itself in the conscious, and what was irrational becomes an instrument of human liberation. Ultimately, this principle leads to the formulation of a new dimension of truth and freedom of man, who knows himself in a new way – rejecting the certainty of his own consciousness.

The ontological status of the subject in relation to the cultural determination of meaningful activity

Returning to the plane of pedagogical discourse inspired by the psychoanalytic understanding of the subject and the figure of the Other in their mutual relationship – it becomes necessary to resolve the conflict between the emancipatory interest of the subject and the instrumental reason dominant in the educational space of the functioning of this subject.

In this sense, from the perspective of ontological, epistemological but also functional assumptions generated by the assumed knowledge of the subject and the expectation of *the Other* – the game is about the way of constructing the system of upbringing as a place of Heidegger's being-in-dawn (*Dasein*) (Heidegger, 1995) activating the desire of the subject in relation to *the Other*.

At the opposite pole, we are dealing with the generation of an action consistent with the assumptions of the system or the expectations of some other – to which the subject is obliged to adapt. Not without significance here is also the issue of thinking about the identity of the subject who, due to the dynamics of cultural, philosophical and ideological changes, has acquired a specific status in relation to social expectations and technological progress appropriating the space previously reserved for *the Other*. The dynamics of the changes we are witnessing should trigger a pedagogical reflection on the current perception, as well as the reception of fundamental categories that allow us to understand what identity is today and what is its embedding in the sources of subjectivity. The main problem is the change in the functionality of the mental orders of the *Symbolic, Imaginary and Real*, which Lacan formulated precisely in the aspect of the existence of the subject and its oscillation between activity and (non)activity. Basically, it is about the type of activity of the subject, starting from linguistic activity and ending with activity embedded in looking at the image, which effectively displaces language from the everyday functioning of the subject. The question remains open: are we as educators aware of the consequences behind this change?

The exemplification of these ontological and phenomenological representations is not accidental and is to lead to the emergence of cultural phenomena representing the spectrum of this kind of hermeneutics allowing to take into account the contemporary understanding of man as an entity entangled in technological progress. For this reason, we are faced with the need to reformulate the subjective cognitive interest and to re-verify the role of emancipation not only as an inalienable right, but above all as an obligation of the individual, determining his place in the world and for the world. The main reason determining this necessity results from the fact that *the Other* loses to technological progress appropriating all the activity of the subject. Nor can we underestimate the fact that, despite all these functional differences, we are still dealing with a subject who is invariably entangled in his own family history, existential fears, or individual complexes resulting from inadequacy towards the surrounding reality and uncertain relationships with *the Other* (Węc, 2018). Paradoxically, for our considerations, the problem becomes the external activity of the subject, which – covering the internal activity – does not allow us to perceive his existential rift, which is increasingly destructive for him. Taking into account this interpretative horizon, it becomes necessary to answer the question: will organizing at all costs the activity of a child or a young person exclude spontaneous internal activity necessary for the balanced development of the subject? As educators and educators, we also face this dilemma: how can we avoid making activity an ideology?

Between the activity of the subject and the action of *the Other*

The adopted cognitive perspective also introduces a tension between the idea of education understood as the coexistence of *the Other* (educator) with the subject (pupil) and the action triggered by another (man (not) significant for the subject)

appropriating education for the purpose of adaptation to some system subordinated to the structure determined by the ideological or programmatic framework desired at the moment³. In this sense, this choice extends between activating the desire of the subject and generating its demand for another fulfilling the promise of structural effectiveness of the system giving the subject some profits. Meanwhile, the affirmative goal for *the Other* (educator) can be the realization of the imperative that gives the subject the right to freedom and independence, but only by appealing to his existential responsibility – of course as a form of subjective activation through *the Other*. The essence of the matter lies in the fact that the assumed knowledge of *the Other* postulated here, triggering the desire of the subject, will trigger an action that we can identify with the pedagogically expected activity. The point is that the pedagogical discourse rooted in the language of Lacan's psychoanalysis introduces the pursuit of a situation in which the teacher (as *the Other*) becomes the assumed subject of knowledge, to which the desire of the pupil (subject) is directed as a result of launching the analytical process of transfer. In this sense, we are also faced with the dilemma that any assumed knowledge" is not able to fulfill human existence due to the fact that the reality "assumed" by it, as well as the "assumed" subject of knowledge, are entangled in a game where the first violin belongs to *the Self*. What seems to be the most important concerns the presence of the subject as an assumed object of educational interactions. The subject assumed in this way (formatted and expected) is either an organism striving for homeostasis promoted by humanistic trends called naïve by Lech Witkowski, or a "regulatory structure" that is affected by external stimuli that are influenced by external stimuli conditioned by behavioral social engineering. The pedagogical directions listed here presuppose the existence of a subject ready for self-realization by updating oneself and for the authentic experience of one's own growth and development. This expectation is one of the directions of building relationships in education constituting the question: Is the desire of the subject to be directed to the teacher as the Other, or to the knowledge of which he is a representative? The problem is when the teacher for any reason finds himself outside the knowledge, representing only a systemic interest (e.g. by verifying the effect of education) or a strictly defined cultural order determined by an ideologically determined worldview excluding otherness. The activation of psychoanalytical competences of teachers in the field of the phenomenon of building the transfer process will enable the creation of a new type of interpersonal relationships of an educational nature, enabling the introduction of clinical categories for pedagogy, which show a different plane of influence contained in the space of intersubjectivity. (Węc, 2012: 16).

3 Of course, we can argue about the understanding of education in the context of the axiological understanding of educational action, or the universal conceptual category adopted in pedagogy. The key item that explains this oscillation to us in the perspective of cognition and action (as a practice) is Dorota Klus-Stańska's book *Paradigms of Didactics*. (Klus-Stańska 2018).

Meanwhile, at the other pole of pedagogical thinking, instrumental educational goals are generated, subordinated to the expectation of the subject's activity by searching for ways for the subject to take action in response to the proposal of another in terms of systemic functionality and usefulness. Undoubtedly, this kind of educational activity leads us to a positivist, albeit seemingly humanistic, pro-social attitude towards the subject, generating the expectation that the meaning of action constitutes the assumed knowledge that is outside the subject and the Other. It is also important that the knowledge we use in this case is determined by the flagship postulates of self-development, self-realization and self-actualization, which inevitably become a manifesto of endless activity for the subject, with which he will not necessarily want to undertake. It also seems that the chance to solve the dilemma resulting from waiting for subjective activity is rather the question of the **subject's passivity and often the resistance of the subject to forms of activity** imposed on him by *others*, which are alien to him or with which he does not want to identify.

Ultimately, the contextuality of the modern world again confronts us with the question of the meaning of education, the role of socialization and our subjective meanings that allow us to see, interpret but also create or adapt the world in which we live. This task does not seem easy, because thanks to what we consider to be subjective freedom and the pluralization and multiplicity of our experiences, the contemporary subject faces dilemmas that at least put him in the embarrassing situation of understanding *the Other* and the choices that he must consequently make. In this context, the choice that the subject must make becomes a fundamental problem. In the perspective of the issues we are interested in, it is a choice between **activity and (non)activity** – not necessarily meaning passivity.

However, we must assume that the understanding of what activity is also not unambiguous and depends on whether we are talking about it from the perspective of the subject's action or from the perspective of *the Other's* expectation of the subject. The point is that the postulated and expected activity must concern both the subject and *the Other*, who does not limit his activity to planning, initiating or animating activities outside of his own involvement. In this relationship, *the Other*, as an educator, must also activate the desire for the subject (the pupil) that this relationship may acquire authenticity by constituting the community in one space of coexistence. And in this way *the Other* does not lose his subject, and the subject is at the same time the Other, against whom the one activates the desire. It could be said that from the perspective of psychoanalytic understanding, **it is the most desirable form of activity that activates the subject to act in relation to the Other through the pulsating oscillation of being together-in the world**. What seems significant in the discussions conducted here is the assumption that we are dealing with a certain (significant) questioning of the construction of "modern education", leading to the weakening of fundamental concepts that allow understanding: subject, reason, truth, responsibility, or sovereignty. The tension between discourses on tradition and modernity on such important issues as education, socialization,

education and, of course, activity, which is important from the perspective of our considerations, becomes palpable. In this case, the dispute will concern what forms of activity of the subject are known in the circle of interest of educators. Are they only those that are socially accepted, propagated and induced, or created? Are there also those that we do not accept, that we are ashamed of, that we do not want to undertake, and those that we do not want to notice?

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Abstract

The article concerns the interpretation of the subject's activity in the light of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis. The main goal is to show the difference between the educational process understood in three cognitive perspectives: as adaptation to reality, assimilation of reality

and construction of reality. The deliberations are conducted in the perspective of emancipatory discourse defining the field of development of the subject along with the right to resist the transmissiveness of culture distorting its identity.

Key words: activity, subject, culture, psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan

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