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EXISTENTIAL AND PSYCHOANALYTICAL POTENTIAL OF THE CATEGORY OF ACTIVITY

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ABSTRACT

The author investigates the potential of the category of activity from the point of psychoanalysis and existentialism. The author states that activity is a crossroad of such directions of European philosophy as Marxism, psychoanalysis, and existentialism: a self-activity of man involved in being-in-the-world is rooted in natural drives that energize the primary existential concern (care) about the world. The author affirms that activity is the result of transfer of the initial natural impulses for enjoyment onto a new sublimated stage by means of the anthropomorphic arteries of existential care. The fundamental motive of activity is the intention to shield from the most unavoidable perspective of one's own death by means of concern about the world; the main need for activity is vital needs that push through in the variety of socially approved areas; the fundamental goal of human activity lies in involvement in the socio-historical world and meaningful goal-setting that changes man and the world around him.

INTRODUCTION

M. Foucault marked the decisive "semiotic" importance of F. Nietzsche, K. Marx and Z. Freud for all subsequent philosophy: "The nineteenth century – and particularly Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud – have put us back into the presence of a new possibility of interpretation; they have founded once again the possibility of a hermeneutic" [1]. Paraphrasing Foucault, in our opinion, Marxism, psychoanalysis and existentialism determined the anthropological atmosphere of the late XIX - first half of the XX century. At first glance the combination of these three trends in European philosophy appears eclectic: the difference in subject, methods of knowledge organization, and approaches is obvious although there have been various "interdisciplinary" researches aimed at discovering the potential of each of these three directions from the point of the other two. Thus, W. Reich and G. Marcuse developed Freudo-Marxism, L. Binswanger and M. Boss laid the foundations of existential psychology and dasein-analysis, E. Bloch and J. P. Sartre, inspired by existentialism, revealed the humanistic potential of dialectical and historical materialism. Accordingly, at least formally we can assume that there exists a common semantic field for all the three mighty traditions of European philosophy of the twentieth century, and the writings of, say, E. Fromm [4] exemplify it: his attention to psychoanalysis and his own interpretation of the Oedipus complex through the Marxist social consciousness that forms and transforms man striving to existentially be rather than have touches on the three philosophical directions this way or another.

In anthropology all the three lines do converge, and the Marxist theory of activity is the field that conceptually consubstantiates them. Activity as perceived by Marx and Engels, and in the Soviet Marxist philosophical and psychological tradition by S.L. Rubinshtein, E.G. Yudin, E.V. Ilyenkov, etc. is the basic attitude of man towards reality that practically transforms both reality and man.

In the work "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844" Marx unequivocally points to the sphere of activity as a topos in which existential, psychoanalytic and dialectical-materialistic concepts of man are interlocked: "Man is directly a natural being. As a natural being and as a living natural being he is on the one hand endowed with natural powers, vital powers – he is an active natural being. These forces exist in him as tendencies and abilities – as instincts. On the other hand, as a natural, corporeal, sensuous objective being he is a suffering, conditioned and limited creature, like animals and plants. That is to say, the objects of his instincts exist outside him, as objects independent of him; yet these objects are objects that he needs – essential objects, indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of his essential powers." [2]. This quote contains all the key concepts of Marx's understanding of man: instincts and natural needs as the basis of psychoanalysis; man's sufferings as a limited, natural and therefore mortal being facing the material world different and independent from him, which is the overarching theme of European existentialism and personalism; objective, transforming activity of man by means of which he satisfies his natural needs.

METHODS

In the research different theoretical and philosophical methods are used: analytic method, hermeneutic method, phenomenological and dialectical methods.

KEY WORDS

activity, concern,
instinct, creativity,
pleasure, enjoyment.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Post-Freudian psychoanalysis to a large extent overestimated the theory of instincts and shifted the focus of investigation towards the role of sexual needs in social consciousness. Since Freud we've observed a tendency for an extensive interpretation of instincts and the variety of sublimation forms. K.G. Jung tried to remove the dominance of sexuality from the theory of the unconscious, he associated instincts with the desires whose satisfaction is accompanied by different pleasures. Rank, Adler, Stekel, Blum and many others also followed this line of a broader interpretation of libido and generally treated it as psychic energy. To develop the line, it is possible to extensively interpret not only the psychosomatic needs of man, but also the forms of the libidinal outburst of psychic energy which does not have any prevalent and predominant channel of sublimation (i.e. in the form of art or any other separate sphere). It is also possible to extensively interpret the forms of social prohibition on satisfaction of the basic needs: it is not merely a moral or religious intention that dictates the "rules" of satisfaction of instinctual needs to consciousness, but the entire socio-historical world with the existing state of affairs opposing the consciousness, for the world initially forces the person coming to it to accept it as it is. And this status quo is maintained for a while. Accordingly, by the state of affairs we mean a certain state of social reality at a given stage of its development. It has developed independently of an individual and is taken as given. And this frustrating contradiction between the instincts and the possibilities of their satisfaction determines the initial sufferings of man forced to contend with the world, to compromise with it, for the world is undoubtedly stronger than an individual. P.N. Kondrashov considers suffering the central anthropological concept of Marx: "...the concept of suffering (leiden) is the fundamental category bearing the greatest existential meaning for Marx» [3].

The phenomenon of sublimation as a socially significant transformation of instincts fully fits into this view on activity. In the light of a broader interpretation of instincts, by sublimation we mean reorientation of psychic energy rooted in the drive for pleasure (its other side is the drive for aggression, for any instinct is uncompromising and as primal is primarily aggressive) blocked by the world and thus transformed and manifested in the socio-historical reality under a new "guise".

Since Freud the concept of pleasure has been interpreted primarily as vital, associated with natural human needs. So, the satisfaction man gets, being instinctive, does not affect the actual conscious, meaningful activities, and the pleasure obtained is temporary in nature. As it does not involve volitional or intellectual efforts, it affects the conscious activity externally and superficially. Fromm writes about it: "One has made the attempt to break through the boredom of unproductive activity and for a moment has unified all one's energies—except reason and love. One has attempted to become superhuman, without being human. One seems to have succeeded to the moment of triumph, but the triumph is followed by deep sadness: because nothing has changed within oneself "[4]. Such pleasure gives way to nothing, it can transform neither the world, nor the person himself.

And now we are approaching the sphere of everyday existence characteristic of existentialism. Psychoanalysis and existentialism explore the phenomenon of everyday life primarily as a defective way of existence. In consideration of psychopathology of everyday life, Freud analyzes the factors leading to neuroses of everyday life: blocked sexuality leads to obsessive ideas, forgetfulness, mechanicalism in behavior, slips of the tongue, etc. However, at the beginning of the twentieth century Freud regarded daily life as a sphere of manifestation of neuroses, whereas everyday life as a modus of being can itself be a provoking factor that gives rise to pathologies, and this aspect of everydayness was revealed in existentialism.

Man is a transcending being that strives to get beyond the finite existence, regardless of the way transcendence is understood - in religious, borderline, socio-historical or adventure sense. Accordingly, devoid of this aspiration, a human being degrades and vegetates in routine, impersonal, absurd existence typical of (according to the terminology of M. Heidegger) a falling being, and this approach to everyday life is shared by G. Simmel, A. Camus, and many others. Falling being is characterized by loss of man in publicity as well as by meaninglessness of existence: "Falling Being-in-the-world is not only tempting and tranquillizing; it is at the same time alienating. Dasein plunges out of itself into itself, into the groundlessness and nullity of inauthentic everydayness." [5]. Existentialism finds the escape from everyday life mainly in exposition of existence expressed through determination and courage of accepting one's own finiteness, for the latter is accompanied by a metaphysical horror that shocks man when he realizes the temporality of his own being, which in fact allows him to transgress into the infinite: "But, absolutizing the finiteness of Dasein, Heidegger unwillingly and simultaneously indicates the possibility of overcoming the finiteness, for what is voluntary acceptance of the unavoidable possibility of unbeing (being-to-death), if not the ancient principle of Amor Fati?" [6].

But in a defective, relatively safe mode of existence, man is shielded from his own abandonment and the prospect of inevitable death - he preoccupies himself with various and innumerable everyday "pursuits", he loses himself in use and consumption that give man the ersatz-joy of being. In everyday life there are no conditions for sublimation, for there is no ground for a switch of psychic energy wasted in the race for the fetishized "small" pleasures of everyday life generated by the "machine of desire" and following each other in an endless sequence. A member of the consumer society cannot bring something into the world or change himself.

The concept of pleasure is frequently interpreted rather ambiguously both in psychoanalysis and in philosophy ranging from the postmodern "unbearable" pleasure (jouissance), its excessive measure beyond the threshold of sensitivity which can be associated even with painful sensations (J. Lacan, S. Zizek) to mystical and religious pleasure arising from the contact with the true divine being (Gregory Palamas, M. Eckhart).

In our opinion, both extreme aspect is sublated in an activity combining vitality and transgression into the spiritual sphere: enjoyment is rooted in the drive for pleasure but is not limited to it, for it rises to a qualitatively new level of experience. Marx used the concept of enjoyment to denote the emotional experience of man during the actualization of his essence in an activity that gives man the highest pleasure - the pleasure from self-realization and demand for the results of his activity from other people. As we know, self-activity combines two processes - externalization (auserung) and appropriation (aneignung), i.e., productivity and consumption of the products of labor by society. The true writer is not the one who writes but has readers. Therefore, in this respect there is no place for any fetishization of pleasure in the Lacanian sense: in his view, pleasure is isolated, it loses a connection with the socio-historical plan of activity and is lost in phantoms for the man oriented and driven by consumption. The vector of Lacan's man to the Other and the satisfaction with the fact that the Other experiences positive emotions instead of you is justified in case of a real action that you can enjoy.

M.E. Litvak notes that the practice of using the word "enjoyment" suggests a conscious level of satisfaction different from pleasure. Like Marx, he points out that "The degree of pleasure depends on the degree of skills" [7]. And the proper domain for enjoyment is the professional activity of man developing his craftsmanship: the things in which man "invests himself" while transferring himself to the results of his labour can bring a full enjoyment. Such a creative activity can really change man and the world around him.

Thus the repressive pressure from the world is just an intermediate phase of the suppression of instincts. We believe that this stage is inevitable as well as necessary for the matter of liberation of man from the state of affairs imposed on him: alienation, limitedness (in the sense of dependence on the outer world) of man's activities is never fatal, for from a certain point of time he gets the opportunity to change it in accordance with his own interests. The contradiction between the needs and the possibilities of their satisfaction forces man to become more active in his being-in-the-world; psychic energy gets transformed into the energy of creation in relation to any activity that involves a constructive intervention in the current state of affairs. The forced and alienated activity of man becomes free and creative. As Marx says, man transfers himself to the products of his labor in the process of his externalization in objective reality. No wonder that in respect to this process Marx often speaks of self-activity (Selbstbetätigung) that should also be interpreted broadly: not only as material and instrumental (which no longer corresponds to modern forms of labour in Post-industrial society) but as a creative one, for it brings novelty to the world and changes the current state of affairs in it. T.V. Kuznetsova and Z.M. Orudzhev mark that the contemporary world is widely regarded as a manifestation of spirit in a variety of ways: "At the present time, man enters the last historical epoch, the characteristic feature of which is the development of the individual's creative abilities as a person" [8]. The abilities that allow humans to identify themselves with their activities and their inalienable results. However, such an appearance of spirit in history, although a distinctive feature of the modern era, is not the prerogative of the present time as the whole history of mankind bears witness of that: it would not simply have developed without the activities of passionate people who have made history real through their efforts.

Arguing about the needs of independent activity, Marx emphasizes sensuality, corporality of man, although, since psychoanalysis had not yet been developed, he merely mentioned the instincts alongside the abilities and inclinations, whereas it is the instincts that are the motor of self-activity. His analysis of needs does not reach the basic, primal needs. In view of that, M. Scheler wrote "... the spirit and will of a person are nothing but leadership and management. And it always implies that the spirit as such offers ideas to the vital forces..."[9].

CONCLUSION

Thus, in self-activity the existential, directless care about the world (initially characterizing Dasein in his daily life) is saturated with energy from the side of instincts: " This (the process of sublimation) enables excessively strong excitations arising from particular sources of sexuality to find an outlet and use in other fields, so that a not inconsiderable increase in psychical efficiency results from a disposition which in itself is perilous" [10]. And in these areas, the primary concern for the world is transformed into a meaningful, purposeful objective activity. In a way, the passionary derives the performance-enhancing drive for his activity from his own nature, which allows him to fill the existential concern with the internal energy and change the habitual, regular and predictable way of life. Therefore, activity is not the basic universal intention of man to reality, for it consists of two even "more" initial elements, namely instincts and existential care.

Accordingly, the fundamental motive for human activity in the world is the desire to hide (in Heidegger's terminology) from the most unavoidable possibility of being, or rather unbeing, which is being-to-death. Man tries to escape from it by means of care about the world and various preoccupations; the main needs

for activity are psychosomatic vital needs that find their way out in a sublimated form in various socially significant areas; we believe that the fundamental goal of human activity lies in involvement in the socio-historical world that leads to human and the world's transformation in accordance with the interests of society reflected in individual's subjective perception.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.

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