

The Subject Area of Humanistic Sociology in the Russian Society

Alexander Konstantinovich Degtyarev¹

Igor Alexandrovich Guskov²

Rashid Dumalichevich Khunagov³

Vladimir Alexandrovich Kirik⁴

Yury Grigorievich Volkov⁵

¹Southern Federal University, Rostov-on-Don, Russian Federation

²Southern Federal University, Rostov-on-Don, Russian Federation

³Adyghe State University, Maikop, Russian Federation

⁴Southern Federal University, Rostov-on-Don, Russian Federation

⁵Southern Federal University, Rostov-on-Don, Russian Federation

Email: infoippk@sfedu.ru

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Abstract

This article contains an attempt to examine the development of humanistic sociology based on accepting humanism as a concept model of the research, which aims at identifying humanistic parameters of the social macro-level. The article suggests the statement that the intention of the Russian sociology to "transform into the sociology for society" is characterized by deviation from the traditional understanding of humanistic sociology as the micro-level sociology, because the key elements for categorizing the humanistic tendencies in the Russian society are the creative class and creative practices. Based on the statement about humanistic sociology as sociology of social creativity, the substantiation is given for the relationship between humanistic sociology conceptualization and of the sociology subject area expansion by explaining and predicting social and cultural changes at the social macro-level.

Keywords: humanistic sociology, positivism, social macro-level, social micro-level, understanding, creative class.

1. Introduction

Humanistic sociology is seen as a reaction to the sociological positivism proclaimed by A. Comte and E. Durkheim. Therefore, humanistic sociology includes the sociological thought domains which are anti-positive in their theoretical and methodological parameters and the studied problematic. According to the "broad" interpretation, humanistic sociology comprises understanding sociology, interactionist sociology, and ethnomethodology. Humanistic sociology uses the formula "the human as an acting and creative subject", independent or autonomous from repressive impact of social determinants.

The position described above involves certain theoretical difficulties. Firstly, it is rather difficult to develop an independent sociological concept with an analytical, explanatory, and prognostic potential from the reaction situation and realization of dissatisfaction with objectivized sociological knowledge. Secondly, the establishment of a new sociological paradigm, which combines the representatives of the sociological community by certain principles and criteria of the research, can hardly result only from the intention to make sociology humanistic. Finally, "centering" of sociological methodology and problematic at the level of understanding the human as an initial structure of sociological research not necessarily excludes the possibility of suggesting a compromise option.

2. Literature Research and Methodology

The development of sociological thought is tightly related to the humanistic turn. To some extent, the concept of 'understanding sociology' by M. Weber (Weber, 1990) includes a stimulus to the development of humanistic problematic in sociology, although not having a direct reference to the "human factor." The idea of humanistic sociology was

implemented through two trends. The methodological trend was focused on stating the postulate of methodological individualism and accepting the social individual as an initial point. That aspect was studied by W. Thomas and F. Znaniecki (Fotev, 1994), the representatives of the Chicago school approached sociological knowledge as the construction of individual reality. The supporters of the second trend believe that the turn to humanism resulted from the change in the subject area of sociology that grew more prosaic, which is clearly shown in the ethnomethodology of A. Schütz (Schütz, 2003). Nevertheless, the level of scientific development of the theoretical and methodological grounds for humanistic sociology demonstrated – in the context of similarity of the general position of negativism to sociological objectiveness – a gap between the analyzed trends in the form that can be defined as incompleteness of humanistic discourse. This position was indicated, firstly, by the fact that the acting individuals found themselves in the space of “everyday abstractions”, which resulted in impossibility to commit to the humanistic values. Secondly, there was a lack of collective activity, without interpreting which it is difficult to identify transitions from the social micro-level to the social macro-level.

Considering the above, it seems reasonable to comprehend the problems of humanistic sociology through the activism paradigm, which is related to the ideas by A. Etzioni, A. Touraine, M. Archer, and P. Sztompka (Touraine, 1998; Archer, 1999; Sztompka, 2006). That choice is argued for by several facts. Firstly, humanistic sociology is given a new stimulus for development based on the active principle of the human behavior, which allows considering humanism as a certain attitude of social action. Secondly, the subject area of humanistic sociology is set with a theoretical comprehension of the subjects’ activity within the individually structural area. Thirdly, the boundaries of the society self-transformation and self-reorganization are identified as a resultant of capabilities and motivations determined by the individual’s ability to self-fulfillment at the group level.

3. Methodology of the Research

The tendency to humanize sociology and deviate from the oppositions “society-individual”, “structure-activity”, and “institution-choice” is constantly traced in the sociological thought development. It should be emphasized that the “invitation” to humanistic sociology is related to two reasons which are often considered parallel to each other. The first reason is that sociology of the micro-level (institutes, structures, processes), according to G. Ritzer, is unattractive due to the fact that it transforms the subjects into “blockheads” (Ritzer, 2002). The second reason is that the integration of macro- and micro-sociology provides the opportunity to preserve the objectivity criterion and refuse from actualizing ideological meanings aimed at the mutual approaching of research constructs and ideological values.

In this effect, one can predict that the attempts to create integrative sociology, as a construct of synthetic sociological knowledge which includes normative and value aspects will continue: although the findings of the search are argued, one can expect at least sociological knowledge expansion. However, sociology loses the quality which can be defined as the development of “sociology for society”, a system of knowledge with socio-diagnostic and socio-transformative meanings.

As noted by a French sociologist P. Corcuff, the increasingly ineffective oppositions and classical antinomies are gradually substituted for a new space of issues and problems which are described as social constructivism (Corcuff, 2002). According to that opinion, the “new sociologies” allow eliminating a number of fraudulent problems which, obviously, include the connotations relating to the “humanism–anti-humanism” dilemma. Although bringing the subject in the foreground includes the subjective and intersubjective dimensions, it may involve the risk of sociological nominalism and relativization of the objectivity criterion.

“Plurality of individuals” does not propose an alternative to holism and individualism (Corcuff, 2002), since it reduces criteriality of sociological knowledge through the construction of a new version of “complimentarity.” This refers to the fact that like the cultural anthropology schemes the scheme of “constructed realities” is implemented, which allows considering the construction and reception of a discourse interrelatedly (Demintseva, 2013). Although it may help avoid “sociocentricity”, it fails to relate the explanatory tasks to the cognitivity of sociological knowledge to what can be defined as humanistic influence on the social life and public relations.

Of course, one may ask the question how sociology, without paying tribute to the reflexing subject or addressing exclusively to the elite audience, can form the humanistic principles of the research in order to be perceived not just as socially useful, but aiming at social activity and social creativity through knowledge. Naturally, it is impossible to deprive sociology of its social and critical function which, by the way, is diagnostic by its nature and cannot equal to the “logics of social liberation.”

When estimating the role of sociology in the Russian society, the “troubles” of the sociological community identified by J.T. Toshchenko are related to the vulnerability of the methodological and methodical levels, the eclectic use of

different approaches, and pettiness of the issues (Toshchenko, 2013). While the polyparadigmality, which is being introduced, presents a post-modern concept of sociology, one should be careful in interpreting humanism: it is obvious that the approaches defined as humanistic do not guarantee social diagnostics and cannot be accepted as perfect evidence of public sociology. The point is, on the contrary, that the research in the context of ethnomethodology or social drama is narrow and limited to comprehending the social micro-level through elimination of generalizing conclusions and evaluations.

The plea for the sociology to influence the process of making important social and political decisions and encourage social mobilization and self-mobilization is based on using the research tools by the criterion of social orientation. The opinion that the Russian sociology is isolated from the society means that it is perceived only through its academic status. It is not less important that the humanistic explicitness of the Russian sociological tradition is "neutralized" by the fact that in its origins, the sociological thought was considered a positive or reformist discipline and the humanism issues were considered the priority of the Russian tradition which was ethics- and literature-centered.

The Russian sociological thought is strongly influenced not only by the "denial of the right to be humanistic", but due to the established theoretical and methodological positions is "suspected" of having the lack of autonomy and following the lead of sociological objectivism. In other words, the position of "non-humanistic concessions" is accepted without any discussions and the macro-sociological schemes, which deviate from the humanistic orientation of the research, are considered a successful borrowing.

In this regard, M.K. Gorshkov states that in the context of the quality shifts in the Russian society, the modern sociology has overcome the extremes of empiricism absolutization and underestimation of empirical sociology (Gorshkov, 2011). If one agrees with M.K. Gorshkov's opinion, then while differentiating between the identity of micro-sociology and humanistic sociology, one can say that the Russian sociological thought needs theoretical consolidation of humanistic focus. Developing that thought, it is logical to define the construction of humanism as a social and analytical concept determined by the criteria of social creativity. Firstly, due to the fact that the Russian society is undergoing macro-systemic transformations, it would not be right to consider an individual or a micro-group as a key element for humanistic orientation. Secondly, in the current situation, sociology has to research the institutions, social macro-communities, and mass conscience. Does it mean that the humanistic shift in sociology is not possible?

Taking into account the correlation between humanism and sociology of social action, one can say that this statement needs to be supported by a "medium-level" theory. That does not necessarily call for the construction of the Russian version of humanistic sociology. It is obvious that the focus of sociological research on the social diagnostics and the understanding that the Russian society has a significant human capital and follows the tradition of "spirit consolidation" (Gorshkov, 2011) stimulates humanistic sociology as sociology of social creativity.

This statement has been developed in the works by Y.G. Volkov, for whom humanism in the structure of sociological knowledge is determined by the influence of creative practices, expansion of human possibilities in the context of self-fulfillment, and orientation toward free creativity (Volkov, 2011). Therefore, there is a need to introduce new notions into the sociological discourse, which would require a reasonable level of theoretical development. Based on the fact that the Russian sociology studies social changes, but at the same time is transforming into sociology for society, one can draw a conclusion that humanism is determined by the transition from sociology of "social statistics" to sociology of social creativity and social transformation.

Addressing the problems of humanistic sociology in the current situation points out to the process of reaching a theoretical compromise in the context of limiting the possibility of attracting the approaches accepted as humanistic. In other words, the Russian sociologists have the possibilities to conventionally approve the introduction of the notions "social creativity", "creative practices", and "creative class" as indicative ones for humanistic sociology. On the one hand, one cannot rely on structural and functional schemes unconditionally; on the other hand, the introduction of the research models based on the theories of social movements or sociology of uncertainty can be considered as an obvious simplification.

The strategy of humanistic sociology is different in that regard. Assuming that the need to acquire new knowledge remains, the efforts of the researchers to identify a new public paradigm (Gorshkov, 2011) result in consolidation of an "ideal type" of humanism in sociology. Firstly, the point is that sociological problematic in its concentrated form describes and explains humanistic indicators in the Russian society (social optimism, spiritual safety, social harmony, social solidarity). Secondly, as the sociological construct does not equal to social reality, there are "the rules of exception" characterizing the level of de-humanity in the society.

Thirdly, realizing the differences between humanistic sociology and humanism ideology, one should emphasize that humanistic sociology explains background and subject-action parameters of humanization of the Russian society, while humanism ideology introduces the humanistic ideals and values into the public conscience and public life. It is clear

that humanistic sociology ceased to be just a theoretical and defining construct: the methodological constraints, which are being raised, relate to the fact that humanistic tendencies do not come from an "individual" and can be described and reflected in the schemes of social macro-level. That was the view that Y. G. Volkov based on, when he made the creative class a "cell" of sociological analysis (Volkov, 2011). Following the principle of "transition from a multitude of creative individuals to the creative class", Y.G. Volkov uses the phenomenon of simultaneous participation and creative practices, based on which he believes that humanistic sociology relies on the research of social macro-level.

Assuming that the imperative of humanism prevents the theoretical definitions from functioning in the empirical research, a French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu introduces the notion of "agent" (Bourdieu, 1993). While identifying activity and ability to act as a key quality of the agent, P. Bourdieu avoids the risk of attributing humanistic meanings and ideals to the agent. It is obvious that Bourdieu's position demonstrates uncertainty of the perception of structural approach as the one not using values to explain social actions.

For the Russian sociological thought in the context of social anonymity of the society, the category of evaluation seems "attractive" compared to being criticized for introduction of ideological ideas into sociology. Indeed, the intentions to build the conservative or liberal sociology do not look flawless, because they introduce the problem of blurred boundaries of sociology and can argue the procedure of sociological knowledge interpretation. In addition, as M.K. Gorshkov fairly states, one cannot underestimate the important role of theory in identification of a concept model of applied research and in logical combination and semantic explanation of the findings (Gorshkov, 2011).

Based on the above-said, the evaluation of theoretical potential of humanistic sociology is determined by the possibilities of empirical verification of humanism. Although being paradoxical, the approaches, which are related to humanistic sociology, do not aim at obtaining representative results and "hail" the quality methods of research for a reason. The difficulty is that the state of the Russian society requires a social diagnosis at the social macro-level, since the role of institutional and structural changes in explaining and predicting the humanization tendencies of the public life is obvious.

The "deficit" of humanism experienced by the sociology of macro-level has nothing to do with the research tools, with what is considered to be the domination of quantitative methods. The way the acquired knowledge is used and the way the sociological problematic is interpreted are becoming the key elements. I. Wallerstein states that the strange competition between "macro and micro" was not related to the attitude to the human as an object of sociological research: microscopic examination of social science resulted in narrowing of the research area (Wallerstein, 2003). The available data quality was becoming a criterion of reliability. In that context, humanistic sociology, one way or another, was determined by the contextual one and was feebly connected with the reproducibility of quantitative facts.

I. Wallerstein states that if the problem was considered to be epistemological, then humanism related to the procedure of interpretation which implied multiple meanings of the findings. In reality, this refers to the model of interpretation and the fact that the "mistake" of sociological qualification of humanism is a gap between the research procedure and the deviation of the idea of humanism.

In the pursuit to define humanistic sociology, the parameters of humanism involved selection of a human or a subject, but did not relate to the idea of the common good, to what was perceived as politicized or having a strictly temporal context. Y.G. Volkov consistently develops the thought that the analysis of the creative class role in the Russian society is impossible without humanistic meaning, without what results from the logics of human actions (Volkov and Krivopuskov, 2013). The congruence with the views of I. Wallerstein is that the idea of the common good, which is applicable to the current sociological knowledge, means that the initial point in humanistic sociology is creative practices aimed at creating the environment for self-fulfillment and achievement of social harmony.

I. Wallerstein gives a precise diagnosis of microscopic examination of the social science, when he considers that as a refusal from social problematic in the form of focusing on protection and substantiation of corporate and micro-group interests. In other words, sociology cannot avoid fragmentation, as humanism is "squeezed" into the multitude of issues comparable to methodological individualism. That means that the accuracy of sociological knowledge is guaranteed by "proximity" to the object, but at the same time humanistic targeting is "dissolved" in the multitude of meanings attributed to it.

The same situation results from the introduction of multiculturalism and tolerance practices, when the humanism values are discredited through recognition of identity of evaluation schemes, which are legitimate for those who use them. In reality, the critics of Eurocentricity results in the actual realization of the issue of equality and equal rights, because those issues – by intent or not – are attributed with cultural meaning, and instead of conditions and factors of social discrimination, the arguments for identity are found.

Humanistic sociology is influenced by the multiculturalism trend, mainly when humanization is related to the cultural minorities, or the interest to the movements of cultural changes and counter-identity is stimulated. Therefore, in

the Russian context, sociology is pushed to the periphery of the public life: the criticisms that sociologists only identify the problems without proposing their solutions often come from the groups of interests, for which sociology is becoming a way to ground their own social claims that greatly differ from the interests of the "core of the society." As a background, those requirements often use a wide popularity of the "language of distrust" to sociology, its results and possibilities of practical application.

The sociological analysis criteria and instruments cannot be a subject of a public discussion, but the problematic and the subject area of sociology show the degree of sociology publicity and its role in the society. While the construction of a concept model of humanism in sociology is discussed in the academic circles, the evaluation of humanistic influence of sociology is admissible and even desirable for raising the status of sociology in the Russian society.

In that regard, a relation between humanistic sociology and its socio-diagnostic and socio-transformative potential has been found. The position of distrust of sociology is based on the fact that sociologists use the "a posteriori" principle, i.e. they state social facts, following the principle of non-involvement which is strangely set equal to the possibility of neutral evaluations and judgments. Meanwhile, according to P. Sztompka, sociology wishes to predict future events and had practical intentions to navigate the society in a worthy, right direction (Sztompka, 2005). While understanding the concerns of the Russian sociologists about social forecasting in the context of increased risks in social development, it should be noted that it is not the accuracy of short- and medium-term predictions that determines the weight of sociology. The attractiveness of the sociological science in the society is determined by creating – based on the model of humanism – the mood of social optimism, which relies on the analysis of groups of positive social action and on those who can implement common creative practices, establish and support a dialog with the authorities and the elite.

Another obvious process is the development by sociologists of the alternatives to public transformation, public development, and humanization of social, political, administrative, and economic reforms implemented in the Russian society. Sixty-five percent of the Russians believe that the changes in the Russian society must be implemented "from above" and controlled by the authorities (Gorshkov, 2011). One can say that the Russian society is not permeated with the spirit of boundless conservatism, and the mass conscience favors the changes in general. The humanistic function of sociology consists in initiating the scenario of changes and possible measures by the state, which would be optimal from the perspective of saving and multiplying human capital. Taking into account the fact that in its results sociology mostly has to serve as a "communicator" between the society and the state, the humanistic "message" is expressed in identification of socially organizing and socially mobilizing capabilities of the positive action groups.

The statement about the symmetry of explanation and prediction, which is characteristic of the positivistic model, is adjusted in humanistic sociology by the fact that creative development as a goal of humanistic society (Volkov, 2011) includes a degree of uncertainty and unpredictability, preserving the mainstream of humanistic "determinacy" of the Russian society development.

One can agree with M.K. Gorshkov's idea that social diagnostics increases when the situation is defined as forming spiritual concentration (Gorshkov, 2011): therefore, sociology cannot compete in the area of making absolutely accurate socio-economic or socio-political forecasts, but at the same time it must focus on the main trends of the mass conscience and the Russians' requests to the society and the state.

The significant background characteristics of the sociological thought development is that the indicators of the state and tendencies of development of the mass conscience and behavior demonstrate a strange set of evaluation combinations: blur, uncertainty, fragmentary nature and volatility of values, purposes, social mood, public and personal interests (Toshenko, 2015). In the current situation, humanistic sociology as aiming at the expansion of cognitive knowledge makes "disciplinary" and mobilizing influence on the society. Refocusing of the researchers' efforts on the social micro-level analysis introduces the syndrome of "sadness and indifference" into the public mood.

The point is that, according to the evaluations of explanatory schemes of the approaches which are accepted as humanistic (ethnomethodology, interactionism), at a certain level of reliability, the findings are limited to the describing the repeated situations without determining the impact of systemic changes on the social mood. In that case, identifying the parallelism of social macro- and micro-levels is not enough. In other words, one should abstain from the conclusion about humanization of everyday life and anonymity of social structures and institutions.

Realization of this circumstance makes obvious the introduction not only of the notion "idea structure", which, according to P. Sztompka, ties up social positions and social ideals (Sztompka, 2005). For the humanistic sociology development in Russia, it is relevant to identify the area of social creativity, which would interpret the idea structure in its interrelation with social subjectness. The difference from P. Sztompka's position is that P. Sztompka tries to make the notion of social structure multi-dimensional: social creativity is substantiated based on the "ideal subject" with no social positions. Defining the social space, P. Bourdieu tried to separate from social spontaneity; the logics of his research was determined by the idea of "dual" structuration, which made humanistic sociology trivialize the "subject-object opposition"

(Corcuff, 2002).

As the humanistic approaches demonstrated unwillingness to categorize humanism as subjectness, the introduction of the notion of "agent" implied the impossibility to explicate humanism in sociology through refusal from the structural determination. The Russian sociological thought is skeptical of the possibilities of humanistic sociology, because it deals with a different environment: the sociologist has to "construct" a subject of social action. The level of social dispersion and atomization at the social micro-level prevents the groups from being considered collective subjects.

This conclusion is corroborated by the references to the creative class in the works by Y.G.Volkov: according to the author, in the context of the social mood and social behavior amorphousness, the borrowing of such constructs as "middle class" means recognition of "overtaking modernization", while for sociology this means that its role in the social life formation, publicity and openness is limited to following the schemes of modernization transformations.

However, as noted by M.K. Gorshkov, the obvious process is the recognition of the specifics of Russia's public development, of its cultural and psychological differences, as well as the relations between the society, the individual, and the state (Gorshkov, 2011). One can assume that for the "Western" variant of humanistic sociology, humanism is expressed in the focus on the critically thinking and acting subject and self-determination, while in the Russian context the consequence of humanistic sociology is the development of the mediation schemes between the individual and the state, in which the society is not an independent "sociological substance", but is defined as a space of social groups differentiated by the level of social activity and creativity.

The statements that humanistic sociology can be only individual-centered are unconvincing, because the individual in the sociology space is a structure of social relations, in which humanism has the capacity for self-fulfillment and creativity. Declaring "self-discovery" a quality of humanistic sociology, P. Berger believes that "growing up in the society means learning more and more about how people differ from each other" (Berger, 2014). One can assume that humanistic sociology is focused on identifying and grounding social and cultural differences in order to determine the boundaries and conditions for the personality's existence in its unique dimension in the society where everything is leveled. Social institutions and structures are perceived as objectivized and establishing social unification. As a result, the priority goes to variety, in which universal social norms and values are slowly destroyed under the influence of the relevance of "social preferences" and cultural purposes.

The Russian sociological thought legitimizes itself in another way: the collective forms dominate at the public discourse level. The sociological analysis paradigm is still presented by the relation between the individual and the state and the individual and the society, which is often differentiated not clearly, because in Russia the state is perceived as a "core of the public life and organization." Identifying the changes in the scheme of the above-mentioned interaction is relevant for the sociological problematic. The difficulty in sociological diagnostics of the Russian society state is that, on the one hand, individualism in the mood of the Russians does not contradict the generalizations regarding the positive evaluation of Russia as a country with new material and social achievements, capabilities, and also problems. In other words, the Russian sociology must pay attention to the fact that for the Russians, the relevant problems regarding social inequality, inability to influence the country's social and political situation, possibilities of building social and professional career are modified into the formula of "mutual obligations of the individual, the society, and the state."

In this context, humanistic sociology aims at studying the parameters of the corridor of opportunities offered by the social institutions and the development of creative social practices. Another equally important priority is studying changes made by the groups of collective creativity to social and "moral" reputation of the social institutions.

Therefore, the subject area of humanistic sociology is determined not by the dynamics of everyday practices, not by demonstration of the expanding gap between the society and the state, and not by identification of the level of social alienation between the Russians. The above-mentioned tendencies include a "self-paralyzing" effect, because they form the sociology of "social pessimism." In other words, when determining the level of negative social problematic, the sociologist is objective in describing and explaining the alternative trends, the increasing need for social consensus and expanded opportunities for the Russians to influence the internal affairs and international collaboration.

4. Conclusions

One can say that the Russian society achieved an internally mobilized state, meaning that, despite the crisis factors, a reasonable level of social stability and order is maintained. It is obvious that humanistic sociology determined the most interesting trend of the public life – the creative class, which could be perceived as a "conductor" of destabilizing influences and confirmed the position of the group ready to have a dialog with the authorities and the state in order "to be heard", based on the priority of the values of social altruism and civil patriotism (Volkov and Krivopuskov, 2013). It can be said that the creative class relies on the humanistic values, which explains the wish to see Russia as a country with a

developed economy, and not to a lesser extent, its place in the global arena was determined by its cultural and historical heritage and humanism of social relations.

The relevant problematic of humanistic sociology involves the development of a conceptual model of the research, which aims, on the one hand, at receiving empirical facts characterizing the state of the Russian society in the human dimension; and on the other hand, at identifying humanization tendencies at the social micro level, with a possibility to generalize institutional and structural parameters.

If humanistic sociology in its "foreign" variant is related to the tradition of "micro-sociology", then based on the fact that the Russian sociology addresses generally important social problems, one can conclude that the creative society, the creative class, and the creative individual are becoming the central notions of humanistic narrative, which established in opposition to the idea of humanistic sociology as a focus on the personality-subject-individual-oriented research, in which the social macro-level is de-objectivized. Despite the paths of anti-positivism, that approach narrows the subject area of the research and dims the chances of rising above the experience (Bauman, 1996). The Russian humanistic sociology "eliminates" this deficiency in one way: while researching the social macro-level, it finds an opportunity to reveal the relation between humanistic ideals and values, social biography, and regulatory structures.

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