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THE APPLICATION OF HERMENEUTICAL METHOD IN C. GEERTZ'S INTERPRETIVE ANTHROPOLOGY

The author analyses the application of the hermeneutical method in the explanatory scheme of interpretive anthropology. The consequences of modification of the hermeneutical circle concept are studied.

Key words: *interpretive anthropology, hermeneutical method, hermeneutical circle, cultural phenomena, frame of reference, meaning, understanding, explanation, social fact, representation.*

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ЗАСТОСУВАННЯ ГЕРМЕНЕВТИЧНОГО ПІДХОДУ В ІНТЕРПРЕТАТИВНІЙ АНТРОПОЛОГІЇ К. ГІРЦА

Аналізуються особливості застосування герменевтичного методу в пояснювальній схемі інтерпретативної антропології. Розглядаються наслідки модифікації поняття герменевтичного кола.

Ключові слова: *інтерпретативна антропологія, герменевтичний метод, герменевтичне коло, феномени культури, значення, розуміння, пояснення, соціальний факт, репрезентація, точка зору.*

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ПРИМЕНЕНИЕ ГЕРМЕНЕВТИЧЕСКОГО ПОДХОДА В ИНТЕРПРЕТАТИВНОЙ АНТРОПОЛОГИИ К. ГИРЦА

Анализируются особенности применения герменевтического метода в объяснительной схеме интерпретативной антропологии. Рассматриваются следствия модификации понятия герменевтического круга

Ключевые слова: *интерпретативная антропология, герменевтический метод, герменевтический круг, феномены культуры, значение, понимание, объяснение, социальный факт, репрезентация, точка зрения.*

The relevance of this topic is determined by dramatic changes of current cultural studies inherent in postmodern response to the challenges of globalization and cutting-edge scientific developments. This situation generates impulse to upgrade the routine set of humanities' notions. The concept of hermeneutics is not an exception.

The interpretive trend in cultural anthropology has been studied by A. Boscovic, Yu. Dzhulai, I. Kasavin, V. Kilkeev, A. Zorin, A. Yelfimov and others.

For instance Yu. Dzhulai describes the “obvious influence” of the hermeneutical conception of P. Ricoer on the interpretive anthropology of C. Geertz (Dzhulai, 2001, p. 123). A. Yelfimov asserts that the notion of text is only an instrument of understanding of cultural phenomena and therefore the method of interpretive anthropology can be defined as hermeneutical only provisionally (Elfimov, 2004, pp. 538, 541). V. Kilkeyev confirms that C. Geertz applies hermeneutical method but notices that “inner logic” of his methodological deductions remains vague (Kilkeev, 2009, pp. 141–142). Hence hermeneutical positioning of the interpretive anthropology needs further elaboration.

The purpose of the article is to study the specific character of hermeneutical method application and its impact on the research technique of C. Geertz's interpretive anthropology.

The interpretive anthropology of C. Geertz takes central place in the hermeneutical turn of the cultural studies. It is based on the theories of L. Wittgenstein, T. Kuhn, S. Langer, K. Burke, M. Foucault (Geertz, 2000, p. 16). Hence C. Geertz's style of thinking crystallizes against the backdrop of the postmodern worldview (Lewis, 1998, pp. 716, 717). Unlike most of prononents of hermeneutics he is an advocate of the objectivist take on culture. He comes to believe that reduction of culture to the totality of mental phenomena is a cognitive mistake. C. Geertz stresses: “Culture is public because meaning is” (Geertz, 1973, p. 12). So the understanding of the concept of meaning paves the way to the comprehension of the entire interpretive-anthropological endeavour.

C. Geertz asserts: “The turn toward meaning, however denominated and however expressed, changed both the subject pursued and the subject pursuing it” (Geertz, 2000, p. 17). “The turn toward meaning” presumes the explication of *objective meanings* which exercise control of the ethnic communities, i.e. the *multitude of social meanings*. Relativism of perception is the outcome of this stance. Therefore “meaning” in interpretive anthropology is not identical to the hermeneutical concept of meaning. The latter designates unity of the cognitive procedure which outlines the sense of the object. The unity of the hermeneutical perception, which determines the unity of the object, stems from the unity of consciousness. Ergo the hermeneutical meaning is generically subjective. It demonstrates credibility and cogency of internal way of cognizing which takes subjectivity for its root and kernel.

“Meaning” in the interpretive anthropology designates the external social entity which is used as a basis of explanation of the social fact. Ergo understanding is an auxiliary tool of explanation. The moral adjudication of the fact and relativism of perception are the indispensable conditions of this method of cognizing. Whereas hermeneutical meaning is internally and subjectively crafted tool of interpretation. Hermeneutics applies facts as the tools of understanding. Therefore the purpose of interpretive anthropology is the explanation of fact

which employs understanding as a tool; the purpose of traditional hermeneutics is understanding which applies explanation as an instrument.

The clarification of meaning is the means and ends of hermeneutics. The act of cognizing comprehends the text as a whole, i.e. endows it with the new quality of particular meaningful subject. This act transgresses the boundaries of text and facts, it transcends them since they are passive material under consideration. It is this way that it creates their specific ideality. Cognizing stops at this point since its job is done.

Whereas interpretive anthropology developed the specific scheme of explanation. It is “incessant”; explanation constantly provides additional groupings of facts to the chain of evidence pursuing “thick description”. Conventional social meanings are applied as tools of explanation. The explication of objective social meanings, which organize social community, expands the explanative basis. Unlike hermeneutic interpretation, which takes entirety of the object for starting point, this technique is incapable of initial comprehension of totality. It gradually adds new details to the representation of the object. The facts covered by explanation are used to elaborate on the topology of the object. These facts are installed in one frame by the force of explanative construction. Ongoing elimination of discontinuity of the picture through the accumulating of facts gradually improves the “thick description” and maintains the homeomorphism of the object.

The cognizing transfers between two distinctive aspects of the social fact which are represented by two specific branches of science. Thinking incessantly circles inside the pair of aspects; it transfers between two “localities”. Hence relativity is not only the frame of reference for the perceiving of cultural phenomena, but it is the principal feature of C. Geertz’ style of thinking. Unlike W. Dilthey he does not construct the abstract “initial fact” of interpretive anthropology, which is employed as a template for case studies; but he is striving to form the specific topology of particular object which reveals its “locality”. The case study as such (but not an *eidōs* of study) is on the agenda. Wherein technique of circular cognitive transfer between two complementary aspects of the object is a way of pursuing the ends. The construction of the object and consequently the choice of aspects under consideration (independent scientific representations of the object) is defined in accordance with particular case.

For C. Geertz this transfer of cognizing between two aspects of the object is an empirical situation of research whereas F. Schleiermacher, W. Dilthey, H. Gadamer consider hermeneutical circle as a universal cognizing pattern of cultural reality. Hermeneutical circle is a part of research techniques of interpretive anthropology but not a universal problem of philosophy. Abstract opposition of notions (the philosophical tool to specify the peculiarity of the fact, i.e. create the particular factual texture) is replaced by the pairing of the complementary scientific subjects that builds up to the topology of the object: “an opposition—*another* opposition — is what we need or ought to want, rather than a shifting focus of particularity” (Geertz, 2000, p. 134).

Thus author pairs, for instance, religious concepts and social forms, law and ethnography to work out the hermeneutical interpretation of the fact (Geertz, 1973, p. 171; Geertz, 1983, pp. 167–169). These aspects are accepted as the complementary constituents of the object. Author elucidates their “elective affinity” and “family resemblance” (Geertz, 1983, pp. 168, 170). Law is entitled to be the societal factor which outlines and maintains the social content of the ethnical community. And the ethnical partition provides the social substratum to the approval and execution of the respective norms of law. Hence the scheme of interpretation is the circular transfer of cognizing between two constituents of the object. C. Geertz also exposes the “penetration of a juridical sensibility or of ethnographic one into law” (Geertz, 1983, p. 168). He expands: “This seems to me to imply a somewhat more disaggregative approach to things than has been common; not to join Law, *simpliciter*, to Anthropology, *sans phrase*, but a searching out of specific analytical issues that... lie in the path of both disciplines. It also implies... a less internalist... approach; not an effort to infuse legal meanings into social customs... but an hermeneutic tacking between two fields, looking first one way, then the other, in order to formulate moral, political, and intellectual issues that inform them both” (Geertz, 1983, pp. 169–170).

Unlike the hermeneutical conception of W. Dilthey, which is based upon the “theoretical cognitive grounding” and the necessity of determining the fundamental “initial fact of inner experience”, postmodern interpretive anthropology denies the epistemological fundamentalism; it operates empirical scientific subjects – two complementary aspects of object which are involved in hermeneutical circle. This is not the classic concept of hermeneutical circle elaborated by F. Schleiermacher, W. Dilthey, H. Gadamer: the circular movement of thinking between the pairs of opposite categories (part – whole, particular general) (Shleyermaher, № 20.1.2, 23.1.3; 2, p. 131).

The research technique of interpretive anthropology implies the circular transfer of cognizing between two disciplinary matrixes, two independent scientific representations, two “parts, aspects, landscapes” of the object. Thus content of the hermeneutical circle concept is modified. The hermeneutical interaction is establishing not between abstract philosophical notions (however fully filled with “specific content”) but between two particular scientific representations of the object which are allegedly capable to complement one another. Hence interpretive anthropology overcomes cognitive flaws of philosophical *a priori* which classic hermeneutical scheme is based upon. (The “standardized” pairs of philosophical categories part-whole and general-particular are proclaimed to be the once and for all legitimate instruments of cognizing.) Therefore interpretive anthropology is not just the new direction of hermeneutical studies. It is the explanatory discipline which employs hermeneutical method as a part and parcel of cognizing techniques. But it is applied as a tool of interpretive endeavour but not an end of it.

For example the application of “law anthropology” pair specifies the “relationship between fact and law”, contributes to the explication of “is / ought, *sein / sollen* problem”. C. Geertz elucidates: «But it appears as well in

the form of quite specific concerns... in the practical discourse of both law and anthropology: in the first case, in connection with the relation between the evidentiary dimensions of adjudication and the nomistic, what happened and was it lawful; in the second, in connection with the relation between actual patterns of observed behavior and the social conventions that supposedly govern them, what happened and was it grammatical. Between the skeletonization of fact so as to narrow moral issues to the point where determinate rules can be employed to decide them (... the defining feature of legal process) and the schematization of social action so that its meaning can be construed in cultural terms (the defining feature... of ethnographic analysis) there is more than passing family resemblance" (Geertz, 1983, p. 170).

Thus the essence of this technique is not the marking of the "consonant" points of representations, but the explicating of the specific sense of this consonance. After all the additional component, which exceeds the "family resemblance" of applied representations, is the externalized "surplus sense" of the fact. It is construed by interpreter and, owing to the fact of his involvement, transcends the sum of representational "common points" owing to the application of hermeneutical circle cognizing pattern.

The author expands: "The legal representation of fact is normative from the start; and the problem it raises for anyone, lawyer or anthropologist... is not one of correlating two realms of being, two faculties of mind... The problem it raises is how that representation is itself to be represented... But surely better than the matching image of fitting an established norm to a found fact, jural mimesis as it were, is a disclosure-centered formulation that... sees adjudication as the back and forth movement between the "if-then" idiom of general precept... and the "as-therefore" one of the concrete case... it does... focus attention on the right place: on how the institutions of law translate between a language of imagination and one of decision and form thereby a determinate sense of justice" (Geertz, 1983, p. 174).

At this point the statements of the author are reminiscent of I. Kant's division of "real reason" and "logical premise". (I. Kant asserts that "the real reason can never be the logical premise, and the rain is not determined by the wind accordingly to the law of identity" (Kant, 1994, v. 2, pp. 83–84).

This connotation comes from the distinction inherent in the task "to represent representation". "Representation" here signifies the real essence, i.e. the existing ethnic frame of perception and feeling. Whereas necessity "to represent" signifies the cognitive scheme – instrument of interpretation applied to the particular fact which has been perceived and felt (in this case – the fact of presence of specific ethnical mode of representing). Moreover C. Geertz stresses the necessity to extend this distinction all through the act of interpretation to mark this boundary. Ergo C. Geertz outlines two logical dimensions of the interpretative method: boundary between "real reason" and "logical premise" and distinction of "general notions" and "concrete case" which allegedly could be "blurred" through interpretation.

C. Geertz meditates: “Any legal system that hopes to be viable must contrive to connect the if-when structure of existence, as locally imagined, and the as-therefore course of experience, as locally perceived, so that they seem but depth and surface versions of the same thing”. In this sense the law is similar to “an *Anschauung* in the marketplace”. Author emphasizes: “And: other marketplaces, other *Anschauungen*. That determinate sense of justice... a legal sensibility – is, thus, the first object of notice for anyone concerned to speak comparatively about the cultural foundations of the law” (Geertz, 1983, p. 175). He asserts: “Such an approach to things... brings to the center of attention... “forms of life”, “*epistemes*”, “*Sinnzusammenhänge*”... Our gaze fastens on meaning, on the ways in which... (...whoever) make sense of what they do – practically, morally, expressively... juridically – by setting it within larger frames of signification and how they keep those larger frames in place... by organizing what they do in terms of them”.

C. Geertz asserts that “the cultural contextualization of incident is a critical aspect of legal analysis... as it is of political, aesthetic, historical, or sociological analysis” (Geertz, 1983, pp. 180, 181).

Thus author asserts that practical application of certain norms, laws (whatever generals), their ties to the local context, generic links to the local “form of life” are the crucial points of cognizing. This stance forms the frame within which “depth and surface versions” of the fact unfold. Hence thinking must move along the axis “general – particular” all the way through. We find here familiar entourage of philosophy – categories phenomenon – essence, form – content, general – particular and anthropological addition of local – universal. It is here in the interpretation of local facts that W. Dilthey’s concepts of worldview (*Anschauung*) and contextualization (*Sinnzusammenhang*) are applied. Cultural contextualization is considered by C. Geertz a universal method of social sciences.

We should notice that contextualization designates culturological explication of the social fact of belonging to the specific community, i.e. it is the specification of cultural consequences of this fact. To put it the other way the author gives in-depth analysis of socialization, elucidates the societal factors which weld community. Strictly speaking author imagines not a contextualization *per se* but gives a description of societal mechanisms. Namely he imagines norms of community and their effect on personal mentality and decision making.

The unity of the text – the object of hermeneutical interpretation – remains intact, owing to the unity of its sense, which is imagined internally by interpreter, as W. Dilthey claims. But the unity of the object of anthropological interpretation poses a problem, unless “context” here is the metaphor of external social facts which lack unity at least from the standpoint of interpretive anthropology. Since social facts *stricto sensu* are not the subject of interpretive anthropology, their specific unity, the *unity of their own kind* must be determined by another social discipline.

The author gives a detailed account of “the adjudicative styles that gather around the *Anschauungen*” (Geertz, 1983, p. 214). He explores “their imaginative

power” by the use of which “they do not just regulate behavior, they construe it”. C. Geertz stresses: “It is this imaginative, or constructive, or interpretive power, a power rooted in the collective resources of culture rather than in the separate capacities of individuals... upon which the comparative study... train its attention”. He points out: “Law...is local knowledge; local not just as to place, time, class, and variety of issue, but as to accent – vernacular characterizations of what happens connected to vernacular imaginings of what can. It is this complex of characterizations and imaginings, stories about events cast in imagery about principles, that I have been calling a legal sensibility” (Geertz, 1983, p. 215). He comes to believe that comparative study “cannot be a matter of reducing concrete differences to abstract commonalities”. The interpreter must “manage difference” not “abolish it” (Geertz, 1983, pp. 215–216).

From his point of view abstract stance eliminates details and subtle distinctions. We must notice that the result of the study depends on its logical purpose. Whether interpretation is focused on abstract laws, “commonalities” or it is delved into details, particularities, its direction is determined by the researcher. According to his intentions abstract concepts are treated as the end in itself or as a tool. Each distinction and detail of the object corresponds to the certain abstract aspect. Therefore abstract notions are not the hurdles in the track of case study but the indispensable prerequisites of it. Thus the cognitive stance of interpretive study is not extracted from the objective circumstances of community existence; it is formulated by the interpreter himself. Anyway the local aspect of the study is asserted by *the intention of local standpoint*. But since C. Geertz maintains the objectivist thesis of things-themselves’ availability, he considers the method and “objective” facts to be the equal partners in the study.

Let us recap: the interpretive anthropology is an explanative social discipline which applies hermeneutical method as an instrument. C. Geertz modifies the concept of hermeneutical circle. The hermeneutical interaction is establishing not between the opposite philosophical categories (part – whole, particular – general), but between two particular scientific representations of the object which complement one another. Cognizing is circling between two distinctive aspects of the social fact which are represented by two specific branches of science.

C. Geertz analyses the crystalization of social meaning and its impact on the internalization of norms and personal decision-making through the new concepts of ethnical sensivity and feeling. On the one hand, these concepts are products of the hermeneutical method application, on the other hand, they add to the furthering of the hermeneutical constituent of interpretive anthropology. The application of these concepts enables the author to develop the representational potency of interpretation. It is this conceptual augmenting of representational capacity that needs further explication.

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