secțiunea a II-a Articole în limba engleză

THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN VALUES FOR THE FUTURE GENERATIONS

Assoc. Prof. Alina Nicoleta PADUREAN, PhD

Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, "Aurel Vlaicu" University of Arad, Romania alinapadurean@yahoo.de

ABSTRACT: The Importance of Human Values for the Future Generations.

Human values influence the way we are and we interact with each other. Irrespective of the field we work in, the way we relate to human values influences our lives. The changes in society that we have experienced lately, have made us forget about some of the values that must guide us.

The study is a brief presentation of the most important human values of our society and refers to the importance of cultural values as part of the teaching process. Given the fact that migration, forced or voluntary is a common phenomenon, such values should be taken into account and presented to future generations.

Keywords: human values, humanity, culture, teaching.

General Considerations

In a society under constant changes, where illness and war bring about hatred, uncertainty and humiliation, people can wonder about the meaning of human values and their importance in our society. Social psychology and sociology itself refers to *value* in terms of norm and attitude. According to P. Iluț¹, value is seen as "general and abstract principles about what is important and to be valued in life, about how people should behave and appreciate situations, events, people as well as social and natural objects."

¹ P. Iluț, Psihologie socială și sociopsihologie (Social Psychology and Sociopsychology), București, Editura Polirom, 2009, p. 409.

Rokeach² sees value as one unique conviction that trespasses particular objects and situations. One individual has tens of values, which are to be regarded as fundamental principles.

Van Deth and Scarbrough³ conceptualize value by three important aspects:

- Values cannot be observed
- Values involve moral considerations
- Values are concepts of what is desirable

Values can also be defined as preferences in terms of appropriate actions or effects. For people, values indicate what is good or bad, how things should be, i.e., equal rights, mutual respect etc.

Values are classified according to their level or degree of generality, their meaning, their support, the relationship between them, the requests that have to be satisfied and the means by which they are satisfied.

A classification of values is provided at the following link: https:// www.scribd.com/doc/47809918/Tema-2-Clasificarea-valorilor (accessed 19.10.2022)

- Potential and real values
- Positive and negative values
- Values of a person or of an object
- + Values as means and values as goals
- Material and cultural values

Potential and real values

Depending on their degree of generality, values are *general-human* (*potential*) or of a *restricted generality* (*real values*). The last category refers to inter-individual values, familiar, professional, national, continental values. The general-human values are only potential, i.e., they can be shared by any cultivated person that would get in touch with them though without being perceived as such by each person. In other words, they are a person's ability of identifying the things and objects which are useful, necessary and important for one's aspirations. Real values are a concrete projection of

² Milton Rokeach, The nature of human values, Free Press, 1973, p. 259.

³ Jan van Deth, Elinor Scarbrough, *The Concept of Value*, in Jan van Deth, Elinor Scarbrough (coord.), *The Impact of Values* (Beliefs in Government, vol. 4), Oxford University Press, 1994, p.28.

potential values. They are material or spiritual creations of sustainable and everlasting form. Values such as the truth, the good, the sacred etc. have the same meaning for all.

Positive and negative values

Any category of values is structured so as to contain both positive and negative values. The positive ones refer to human needs and aspirations that strengthen the individual's biological and psycho-emotional life, whereas the negative ones are contrary to the authentic man and its state of health.

Values of a person or of an object

This category refers to values pertaining to people (vital values, moral or religious ones), to objects (hedonic, economic, political, legal, theoretical values) and the values that pertain to both categories (aesthetic values).

Values as means and values as goals

The difference between these two values lies in the fact that the first category can be used as such whereas the second category refers to values that are used to create other values.

Material and cultural values

Material values cannot be reduced to goods but they are also the biological and economic values. Cultural values are to be seen as legal, political, theoretical, artistic, moral and religious values.⁴

Furthermore, we'd like to refer to certain human values that are compulsory for the existence of societies. As they are the pillar of a healthy society, such values are common among most civilizations and societies. The most important ones are: honesty, tolerance, respect, responsibility, compassion, gratefulness, altruism, humility.

Honesty means revealing your true self. An honest person wants to be better, is aware of his/her imperfection, of the fact that besides qualities, we have faults. An honest man brings about love and is cherished by the others. Honesty is a fundamental human value and can influence every aspect of a person's life. To possess honesty or to be honest means acting ethically and honestly in human relations and in the fulfilment of obligations.

⁴ Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, *Om-Demnitate-Libertate* (*Human-Dignity-Freedom*), Cluj-Napoca, Editura Risoprint, 2019, pp. 201-215.

Tolerance is an attitude that does not imply superiority over the others, but respect and the ability to learn from the others. It means being flexible and accepting those around you, with their flaws, but it does not mean taking up their negative attitudes. Tolerance can contribute to the improvement of relations with those around, but it also has an effect on one's own person. This can be cultivated every day through a balanced behaviour towards the others, towards parents, friends, teachers, acquaintances or strangers with whom we interact.

Respect refers to one's own values. At some point, we become aware of respect as part of our value system, we understand that we want it to define us. The Japanese pay great attention to respect, cultivating it from childhood through their way of thinking: "everything I do, I do taking into account how the other person feels when they see me or interact with me". Respect is not demanded; it is a form of communication beyond words.

Responsibility is an attitude that is acquired through education and is not an innate value. It is first of all a virtue of the group you belong to, family, school, society.

Responsibility makes us anticipate the consequences of our actions and the fact that, among these consequences, we consider the impact we can have on the lives of the others.

Cultural values in language teaching

As stated in the etymology dictionary, the history of the word culture started in the 15th century when it first entered the English language. The word was borrowed from the French language which in its turn was borrowed from the Latin stem colere; the Latin meaning is to guard, to cultivate, to tend and the French meaning also makes reference to farming the land: tilling the land.

The English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, was the first who changed the word's signification when he used the word culture in order to describe children's education in his work entitled Leviathan (1651): "the education of children a Culture of their minds". As time went on, the term culture became frequently used in the modern signification of the word.

Today, the Cambridge dictionary and Oxford dictionary are offering similar wordings to define culture. While the Cambridge dictionary states that culture is "the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time"⁵, the Oxford dictionary defines the term as "the beliefs and attitudes about something that people in a particular group or country share."⁶ Tracing back the roots of the word culture seemed quite simply, but in reality, explaining the notion as it is nowadays is much harder than one might think.

Although, the internet along with many other books, offers a vast information on this topic, trying to find a comprehensive definition of the term culture, reveals how evasive and challenging is to conceptualize the word.

According to Edward Tylor and Chris Jenks there has been an increase in the use of the term lately, and the notion of culture become "increasingly broad currency within the fashionable discourses of the modern academy". And without a doubt, the cultural theory has strongly emerged and has remained high on the agenda for the last three decades.

Chris Jenks' fourfold typology

Chris Jenks was an important professor of Sociology at Brunel University in London for eight years, including six years as Vice-Chancellor. His work is a significant reference for anyone concerned in the topic of culture. He published a large number of books, some of them based on his experience as a professor, or books that deal with subjects such as childhood, visual and urban culture, cultural theory, sociological theory or extremes of behaviour.

In one of his books, he states that the notion of culture is "a concept with a history" rooted in the customs of mind. He compiled the origin of the notion into a fourfold typology having a single aim: to offer some instructions for those who wish to become informed in this field. According to Jenks` fourfold typology, culture can be understood as follows:

1. Culture as a cognitive category.

"Culture is a cerebral or certainly a cognitive category; it is part of a general state of mind and carries with it the idea of perfection, a goal of or an aspiration for individual human achievement or emancipation."⁷ From this point of view, culture is completely individualistic; it characterizes a

⁵ Cambridge Learner's Dictionary, 2012.

⁶ The Oxford Dictionary for Learner's Dictionaries, 2000.

⁷ Ch. Jenks, Culture, Routledge, 1993, p.12.

perspective, a desire for flawlessness which is established in the Romantic literary cultural analysis in the creations of authors such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Thomas Carlyle and Matthew Arnolds.

2. Culture as an embodied and collective category.

"Culture is a more embodied and collective category; it invokes a state of intellectual and even more development within a society." According to this category, the meaning of culture is equivalent to that of civilization. It is established in the theories of Charles Darwin and also his adherent and sets the ideological base of the 19th century imperialism.

3. Culture as a concrete and descriptive category.

"Culture is a descriptive and concrete category; it names the collective body of arts and intellectual work within any society." This category implies that culture, in its day-to-day use, associates with terms such as elitism exclusivity, particularity.

4. Culture as a social category.

"Culture is a social category; it implies a whole way of life of people." This category comprises the entire way of people's life; the connotation of culture is the area of anthropology, sociology and cultural studies. This fourfold typology of Jenks demonstrates its efficiency in defining culture for anyone who desires to have a better understanding of the term and is caught up among the many definitions that culture possesses. Also, Jenks' fourfold typology defines very clearly concepts such as big C and little c, high culture and low culture or the distinction between a dynamic and a static view on culture.

Edward Tylor

Sir Edward Burnett Tylor (1832 - 1917) was an English anthropologist of the nineteenth century and is considered the founder of the cultural anthropology. His books that deal with subjects such as history, development of civilization, mankind and primitive culture are now regarded valuables works.

Tylor is regarded as a cultural evolutionist but he also was the first anthropologist to give a distinct definition of the term culture as a collective category: "Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."⁸

⁸ E.B.Tylor, Primitive Culture, Cambridge University Press, 1871, p.14.

Since he was the first to investigate culture, he established the basic concepts of culture in anthropology and sociology which are still applied nowadays in studying the nature of man or society. According to Tylor, the concepts of culture are as follows: tradition (rituals, habits, folklore, beliefs, customs in a certain ethnic group), folkways (the assumed behaviour that is practised in specific ethnic groups), values (the general ethical standards in which members of a certain group can distinguish what is wrong or right), beliefs (the attitudes, ideas or viewpoints a distinct group of society shares), mores (the long-lasting traditions and customs that have been implemented in ethical and moral values of the society), language (the form of communication in which perform the written and spoken words in order to transmit information to a group of people or an individual), norms (the expected manner of social behaviour that an individual should follow in society), laws (the guiding policies, rules and regulations of social institutions).

All seven concepts proved to be very useful in planning a curriculum when teaching culture or only seeking to include culture elements in any language classroom. Similar concepts or categories were identified in the symbolic representations and definitions of culture in the work of two influential anthropologists Edward T Hall (cultural iceberg) and Geert Hofstede (cultural onion).

Language and culture represent important patterns of the society for the entire humanity from the beginning until nowadays. The importance of these two branches of society is reflected in different analytical approaches and situations that we encounter in our lives. The linguist Ferdinand de Saussure affirmed in his work entitled "*Course in General Linguistics*" (1916) that: "In the lives of individuals and societies, language is a factor of greater importance than any other. For the study of language to remain solely the business of a handful of specialists would be a quite unacceptable state of affairs."⁹

The problem that Saussure's influence poses is that the revolution of language made appear other secondary approaches, which were in many ways unscientific. Moreover, language is viewed in relation to culture, history, society and everything that is to be encountered in human lives.

⁹ F. Saussure, *Course in general Linguistics*, 1916, in trans. Harris, R. *Reading Saussure*, London, Duckworth, 1983, p.21.

In this regard, it is generally agreed that language is not only an expression and a display of history and society, but it is also the component of culture that makes it unique, and differentiates from one another. "Linguistic differences are also often seen as the mark of another culture, and they very commonly create divisiveness among neighbouring people or even among different groups of the same nation. A good example of this is in Canada, where French-speaking natives of Quebec clash with the English-speaking majority".¹⁰

This fact can explain how language is a pathway to culture and a symbol of human interaction. Taking into consideration that language is transmitted culturally and culture is illustrated through language, we cannot separate language from culture or vice versa but we can make a difference between them by presenting the historical background and definitions from the most eloquent linguists and anthropologists in the field.

While language reflects the ways through which humans conceptualize the world and its elements at a highly schematic level, culture is providing a large set of meanings shared by a group of people through language and communication. Culture appears to us as an ensemble of languages, symbols and meanings which are integrated into a comprehensive and complex communication process. The one who gives the tone and colour of this ensemble is the human, who is always interested in everything that surrounds him.

Through language and culture, humans improve their living environment and make sense of their life. There is no standard definition of these concepts because defining language and culture means defining the human condition itself in the unity and its variety- in the endless attempts to create and leave priceless values to the humanity. In this respect, Morin¹¹ states that "human is a cultural being through nature because it is a natural being through culture."¹² We can say that culture is a sort of human's second nature, a secondary nature, emerging from the enrichment of primordial nature without talking about a radical breaking between the two

¹⁰ A. N. Leveridge, "Language and Culture", Think Quest. Think Quest. Sect. 4, 2011. Available: http://library.thinkquest.org/C004367/la5.shtml> [2022, January 27]

¹¹ E. Morin, Le paradigme perdu: la nature humanine, Paris, Seuil, 1973, p. 100.

¹² Ibidem.

realities. They are permanently combined into the human being and his own development.

As it has acquired a frequent use in social disciplines, the terms *culture* and *language* have gained very broad meanings. While culture was considered a defining factor of human existence and an indispensable element of social reality, language was regarded as the primary cultural act, which involves an interactive exchange of messages between individuals, groups, societies, cultures. It makes possible the continuity and cohesion of social life by being a type of social action. In this way, both culture and language are viewed as significant elements and values of society and humanity.

Regarding this, language is a product of humanity and social events with the influence of people who brought to the fore new words and expressions from different other cultures and nationalities. People gained information from the social life and situations that they illustrated through language and symbols. The individual cannot live his life without manifesting himself in relation to others, and expressing his presence, thoughts, interests and aspirations.

Therefore, many of the factors that give rise to language variation are sometimes discussed in terms of cultural differences. Given the process of cultural transmission through which languages are acquired, it makes sense to emphasize the fact that language variation is very tied to the existence of different cultures. In the study of the world's culture, a clear observation is that different countries not only have different languages, but they have different world views, reflected in their languages. For example, the Aztecs did not have a figure like Santa Claus in their culture, and they did not even have a word for this figure.

The history of culture represents a long period of the world, which began in prehistory, with the advent of language, until to the current process of globalization. Culture and the emergence of language acted as a catalyst, uniting community groups in the name of survival. Culture is regarded as "a defining feature of a person's identity, contributing to how they see themselves and the groups with which they identify. Culture may be broadly defined as the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings, which is transmitted from one generation to another. Every community, cultural group or ethnic group has its own values, beliefs and ways of living". (Unknown author 2005) This affirmation shows clearly the importance of language and culture in forming and shaping human personality. Through culture, human personality is shaped and developed due to the fact that culture transmits behavioural patterns, social attitudes, acquired and learned reactions, and the whole history of human as a social being. Culture preserves the social and cognitive experience, holds the forms in which the self-consciousness of a society is expressed, develops and maintains the mechanisms by which human creation is asserted.

Therefore, we can say that the entire universe of culture is a cumulative result of expressions and communication that human invented and experienced throughout history. Without culture, cultural values and norms, societies would seek to exist.

Bibliography:

- Deth, Jan van, Scarbrough, Elinor, The Concept of Value, In Jan van Deth, Elinor Scarbrough (coord.) – The Impact of Values (Beliefs in Government, vol. 4), Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Hobbs, T., *Leviathan*, printed for Andrew Crooke, at the Green Dragon in St. Pauls Church-yard, London, 1651.
- Jenks, Ch., Culture, Routledge, 1993.
- Iluț, P., Psihologie socială și sociopsihologie (Social Psychology and Sociopsychology), București, Editura Polirom, 2009.
- Leveridge, A. N., "Language and Culture", Think Quest. Think Quest. Available, 2011: http://library.thinkquest.org/C004367/la5.shtml> [2022, January 27]
- Morin, E., Le paradigme perdu: la nature humanine, Paris, Seuil, 1973.
- Rokeach, M., The nature of human values, Free Press, 1973.
- Rotaru, Ioan-Gheorghe, Om-Demnitate-Libertate (Human-Dignity-Freedom), Cluj-Napoca, Editura Risoprint, 2019.
- Saussure, F., Course in general Linguistics, in trans. Harris, R., Reading Saussure, London, Duckworth, 1983.
- Tylor, E.B., Primitive Culture, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1871.

Webography:

 https://www.scribd.com/doc/47809918/Tema-2-Clasificarea-valorilor (accessed 19.10.2022)