

World Centre of Humanist Studies

Symposium Ethics in Knowledge

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About the Structural Dynamic Method (SDM)

When some years ago, we started in different places to organize the Centers of Studies, which are converging today at this symposium, many were the subjects which drew the attention of the different study groups.

However there was one subject that interested all of them, and referred to the Method we would use to carry out our studies and which expresses, in theory and praxis, the vision of the Universalist Humanism.

All great systems of thought in philosophy and science have developed methods of work which are proper of them.

In philosophy from Socrates Mayeutics, through Plato's Dialectic, Aristotelian Logics, Thomas Aquinas Scholastics, the Methodological Doubt of Descartes, Kantian Critic, Marx's and Hegel's Dialectic and Husserl's Phenomenology. In science the Deductive Method of Mathematics, the qualitative methods used in anthropology and psychology, the Hypothetic-Deductive of Popper and the Quantitative Methods with statistical basis, which are in a strong development phase nowadays due to informatics, to mention the most known ones, have developed procedures to produce and validate knowledge.

The Universalist Humanism, which is a cosmovision about man, has also developed its own methodology of work.

It is not strange, because the first study groups started to work in the 1960's, the main topic was the method, and thirty years after, we founded the Centers of Study, basing our work in the experience gathered in the notes of those workshops.

In this way, as its name indicates, besides the Cosmovision of humanism, the Structural Dynamic Method (SDM) integrates a double perspective of phenomena: its structure and its dynamic.

When we talk about a cosmovision, we mean that it is an intuition, a direct capture, an experience.

In this case, the experience of capturing the structuralism of the relationship consciousness-world, in permanent transformation.

It is from this experience and the observation of the mechanic that occurs in thinking, on which this method is based on.

In this sense, it defers from the methods traditionally proposed by philosophy and particularly logics, which have studied thought from and outside perspective, developing diverse methodologies, according to the metaphysics they were based on.

Inversely, the Structural Dynamic Method, closer to the phenomenological description, starts locating itself within thought itself, not seeking the interpretation of the experience of thinking, but the description of the experience of thinking and from the seizure of this experience it elaborates a system of procedures which facilitate the processes of elaboration and comprehension proper of the coherent thinking.

The difference is similar to think about how it is to fly an airplane watching from the ground or sitting in the cabin handling the controls.

Thus we try to briefly describe the mechanic of thinking as it occurs to the one who observes how he thinks, to afterwards explain the steps of the Structural Dynamic Method and end up with some considerations.

To start, the first thing we see is if we can talk about thinking is because we have experienced it. We talk about thinking because we have registers.

So, the description we are going to perform is not about a theory of thinking, but about the experience of the registers of this operation.

We can observe that thinking is always to think about something, there is no object of knowledge which does not have an act referred to it. There is no thinking without an object and there is no object without the act of thinking about it. **This defines the basis structure of thinking, which we will call act –object structure.**

This is not a static structure; it has a dynamic given by the reference of the act towards the object. And this tendency of hooking every act to an object is what we call **intentionality**. And this intentionality is what gives direction to our thinking.

Thus, thinking has a structure and a direction.

On the other hand, I observe **this launched act does not happen in the void, but frames by an interest which makes me focus on certain things and not others.**

At the same time objects, due to their nature, put limits to my interest. They are interesting to me due to certain qualities they possess. And in practice, I observe that a permanent coming and going happens between consciousness and the world and from the world to consciousness, allowing, among other things the growing adaptation to the environment. If I did not count on this feedback, I would have no reference of the environment and the result of my actions.

Making a digression at this point, we can say that this observation puts us in a different position than the one of the realists, empirics, positivists and materialists, which start with the acceptance of the intrinsecal reality of the World, but also it differs from the position of idealists and rationalists, who affirm the supremacy of the conscience, denying in this way the existential value of the World.

We can also observe that not all acts are fulfilled in objects, but they are **also in search of their objects.**

These acts in search of their objects have great relevance because they are the ones who give dynamic to the conscience.

Now, the interest is mobile and skips from object to object, and sometimes settles on one. Thus, this activity of the conscience is reversible and as I can fix, I can also move my interest, this avoids me to get “stuck to” an object, without the possibility of developing a sequence. But to be able to think I need to halt this dynamic and stop my act in an object.

This situation of apparent halt of the mental dynamic is what we will call **“moment of thinking”**. **This occurs to the ability of the conscience to abstract an instant, of the going by of a process.** As if we would take a snapshot, and by doing this we would fix the interest, the object and the ambit where the operations will take place..

This fixation will allow us to make the next step in the mechanic of thinking, the “differentiation”, thus I differentiate interests, objects and ambits.

It is oriented by the interest that I, in these ambits, differentiate objects.

However, if we would only count with this ability, our thinking would consist basically of a non ending succession of differentiations that would not allow any elaboration.

So, I observe that to the ability of differentiation we add another, which is the ability to **relate the differences; in a procedure we will call “complementation”**.

This ability to complement has implicit the previous one of differentiating, because we would not be able to produce coherent relationships if we were not be able to differentiate the diverse possible relationships.

But, I also observe, that it is not enough relating to elaborate a thought. If we would end here, we would be facing a non ending succession of relationships without arriving to any conclusion.

For this, **we need a new procedure, which we will call “synthesis”**. This is produced when I can link the established relationships. **This is a relationship of relationships, which allows me to build a new structural whole, and by this mean complete this process of elaboration.**

This synthesis, which is qualitatively superior, assumes the previous differences considered in the frame, given by the interest which set this process in motion.

The syntheses are experiences of comprehension, of insight, of change in the way I see something. Curious is, that these experiences, which we all have had, occur without us knowing how they were produced, we also ignore, what it is to do to make them happen, fact that is of interest, because these experiences are the best result of the intellectual work, and they give us the sense of growth in our comprehension about ourselves and the world that surrounds us.

In summary, the process of thinking starts by the fixation of a moment of thinking, and occurs in three steps: the differentiation, the complementation and the synthesis.

Let us now take a look at how the **Structural Dynamic Method** works reflecting the observation of this experience.

For a better comprehension we can divide it into **three stages**:

In the first, which refers to the question that motivates the study, we set out the problem; we formulate the question and define the Object of Study.

In the second, which is the structural and dynamic analysis, we define the frame of the object of study, according to the mayor ambit where it is set, the middle ambit in which it acts and the minor ambit it includes and we develop the triple analysis, according to the point of view of the composition, the relation and the process.

In the third and last stage, through the description and the summary, we arrive to the synthesis and conclusions which will allow us to elaborate an answer to the original question.

It is not the interest of this presentation to enter in details of each step, but to make some **considerations** we think are relevant.

First, the method we are presenting does not settle on logical axioms, but it bases itself on the observation of moments of thought and therefore it accompanies and educates the process of thinking of the one who practices it.

In this sense, we can understand that the education given in the houses of study at different levels, privileges one aspect of thinking which is the differentiation, highlighting the accumulation of data, which in only few cases establish relationships.

On the contrary, from our point of view, education at all levels should be oriented to enable the contact and acknowledgement of the registers of thinking and to exercise the relationships that in this dynamic will produce synthesis and will generate comprehensions and real intellectual growth.

The second consideration refers to the way humanisms acts in the world, searching for complementation and overcoming differentiation. This attitude, which tends to look for cooperation instead of dialectic, is not a product of the lack of strength to impose a point of view, but a reflex of our comprehension of the richness of possibilities that complementation allows, which, in process, promotes new synthesis, as steps of superseding in social interaction.

The third consideration refers, to the location of the researcher. In the scientific methodology, particularly the quantitative methods used in natural sciences, the attention is set upon the object of research, without considering who is investigating. In any case, we try to generate conditions so that subjectivity will not alter the results of the investigation.

In the case of the methodology we are introducing and in close coherence with the comprehension that the conscience and the world are in an indissoluble structure, the researcher is integrated in the investigation. This occurs as we incorporate the interest of the researcher to the conformation of the structure of the object of study. We do not try naively to null and void the point of view of the one that researches, on the contrary, this point of view is incorporated to the study taking place.

The fourth point we would like to mention is that the work with the Method, because of starting and developing itself from experience, involves that the researcher has to contact with the registers of his/her thinking and learn to recognize the paths of the construction of a coherent thinking.

This makes while we train ourselves in the work with the Method, we will make aware the ability to recognize the non constructive paths of thinking, avoiding by this mean, to err in unproductive labyrinths.

When we talk about coherent thinking, we are talking about a thinking that not only does not have contradictions, but also that it is vital and able to generate progressive, unprejudiced, original and creative comprehensions.

I would also like to emphasize, that by talking contact with the registers of thinking and by appreciating a coherent building, appears in the intention that accompanies the synthesis, the experience of the beauty of thinking. And, even if it may sound strange, it is the esthetic of thinking which allows us to recognize and orientate in this world of abstractions, which is basically made of sensations.

So, in this work, as we exercise and make us aware towards coherence, we necessarily generate a personal change, that modifies the way we see and the way we orient ourselves in the internal and external world.

As an appliance to what has been said, and in reference to the thematic of this Symposium, these reflections lead us to understand that it is not random to put as an ethic supreme rule, the golden rule, which says: "treat the others as you wish to be treated", because in coherence with all that has been said, my own register is the best reference I have to know if my actions are correct. It is not an external moral, but an internal ethic, where I will find the references for my own and society's path.

Finally, in these times, where the old paradigms which lead us here, are no longer useful, and the honest men and women of science are in the search of a replacement, this method and this vision can give us an interesting perspective to face new searches.

I think that, arrived at this point, we will not be able to get forward with the comprehension of the world that surrounds us, if we do not at the same time change our point of view to improve the comprehension of our own internal world, the engine of search, generator of comprehension and what gives us sense.