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DIALECTICS VS HERMENEUTICS: HISTORY AND LITERATURE IN THE ANALYSIS OF THE BIOGRAPHICAL TEXTS

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Аннотации:

The “postmodern situation” demands to think of time and people historically in an age, when “objective history” is denied and rejected. One consequence of this paradox is predominance of hermeneutics in philosophy, literature, linguistics – science, in general. Everything is open to interpretation, varieties of interpretations of historic events and historical people are included in the hermeneutical discourse, incorporated with the problem of text in relation to genre. In biographies the real exists (and existed) but our understanding of it is always conditioned by different ways of talking and writing about it. The problem is that people still need objectivity; in reading “histories” – biographies included – we try to understand what is true, and what is opinionated, subjectivated and is simply deceit and fraud. Hence comes the importance of a dialectical method, – a method, which means weighing up contradictory facts or ideas with a view to the resolution of their real or apparent contradictions.

Key words: methodology, history, postmodernism, interpretation, subjectivity, literature, representation

«Ситуация постмодерна» в дискурсах нормализации изменений с неизбежностью вынуждает думать о времени и об «героях» в нем исторически в то время, когда вся теория постмодернизма отрицает «историю» и отвергает историческое мышление. То доминирующее положение, которое занимает сегодня герменевтика, – одно из последствий этой парадоксальной ситуации. Множество интерпретаций «истории» и исторических лиц включены в герменевтический дискурс, отягощенный проблемой соотношения текста и жанра. Последнее напрямую связано с биографическим жанром, где «реальное» присутствует «по определению», но наше восприятие текста всегда обусловлено нашим «прочтением». С другой стороны, проблема в том, что нам необходима «правда», важно знать, что истинно в биографиях, а что обман и фальсификация. И здесь диалектический метод приобретает особое значение, – метод, подразумевающий систематический подход к противоречивым идеям с перспективой решения их реальных – или видимых – противоречий.

Ключевые слова: методология, история, постмодернизм, интерпретация, субъективность, литература, репрезентация

Introduction. The problematics posed by the “conditions of postmodernity” exists both for the scientific schools and for individual scholars. In our attempts at theorizing literary biographies, we adhere to the scientists who consider that postmodernism is not merely a new intellectual perspective but rather an expression of or a response to the dramatic changes in the character of social life (A. Giddens, E. Gellner, S. Zizek, etc.). The problem is that those changes – radical and complicated – represent a more revolutionary time than the Western world has ever known. The word “revolution” here is a not a symbol or a metaphor, nowadays the most

influential contemporary theorists are involved in the analysis of marxism. S. Zizek, F. Ruda, A. Hamza represent a vivid example of the Renaissance of the classical schools of philosophy, political economy, sociology [30]. Hence the importance of the dialectical method as a method of argument that systematically weighs up contradictory facts or ideas with a view to the resolution of their contradictions. On the other hand, biographies as a genre of literature, “by definition”, should be analyzed using complex methodological approaches.

No doubt, that in today’s postindustrial society literature has lost the status of the “pantheon” of the highest spiritual and aesthetic achievements of mankind. The axiom is also a hostile attitude of the poststructural critical theory to considering both history and literature primarily in social and cultural theoretical fields. M. Foucault writes that nowadays literature has liberated itself from the necessity to express something [23, p. 71]. The identification of literature with its practical application has become old-fashioned, – claims W. Iser [5, p. 39]. Hermeneutics is now of paramount importance mainly in its meaning of the theory of interpretation. Generally, J. Caputo treats hermeneutics as the key to the postmodern mutation of the idea of truth [28, p. 200]. In this connection the question arises: who should perform the task of analyzing that time-verified material, which writers, critics, historians present in their books? Thus, the main target of the humanities – History, Literary criticism, Anthropology included, – is not to describe simply the results of man’s cultural activities in their spontaneous state, but to reveal mechanisms of that activity, those deep-rooted “springs” which set culture in motion. The matter is not simply in the increased demands of the contemporary society for biographies as “samples” and “examples” for future generations. It mainly concerns the problem of providing principles of anthropocentrism in the historical sciences. The latter is impossible without enhancing the status of the biographical method in corresponding scientific studies. Thus, we set the following objective for this paper: we assume to be obvious that the researches in the humanities, on the whole, and history, in particular, should take into consideration both changes in the socio-cultural life and the corresponding transformations of the methodologies in the analysis of the phenomena of the “liquid modernity”. It is necessary to analyze the reception of the biographical method in the modern researchers’ papers with the subsequent exposure of the historical, philosophic, cultural vision of the biographical methodology in its dialectical development. This paper does not present sociological problems of the biographical studies of the “private documents”, the methodology of the “live history” which is widely used in the Western publications [29]. We focus on the biographical methods genetically connected with psychological approaches; these imply that a detailed analysis of the “whole personality” of the great man must be performed [21, p. 49]. It is important that for in a work of art, along with the psychological analysis, philosophical and social content is of great significance. This approach completely agrees with our own thoughts concerning the most important target of a writer of biographies: that is to reveal and represent in a work of art different “facets” of a hero or heroine: society, history mind and soul included.

The aim of the paper is to represent analytically an important role of the complex methodological approach that connects the classical theory of dialectics with the postmodern hermeneutics in one of the most contradictory literary genres of biography.

Publications and discussions. As for the Soviet period, the situation in the historical sciences was mainly paradoxical. On the one hand, the canon of the biographical literature was created at that time including such masterpieces as “Napoleon Bonaparte” by A. Z. Manfred [15], “V. O. Kluchevsky: The history of life and creative work” by M. V. Nechkina[18], “General de Gaulle” by M. M. Molchanov[17], “Bogdan Khmelnitzky” by I. P. Kripyakevich[14], etc. It is worth mentioning that in 1933 the series of the biographical books “The lives of the outstanding people” began to be published on M. Gorky’s initiative. It has been published in the Russian Federation since that time and up to now about 1700 biographies have been published and more than 200,000,000 books have been printed [6]. On the other hand, Soviet scientists had to abandon the interpretative approaches which were based on the priority of man’s role in history; the biographical method was considered bourgeois in the humanities.

Historical science was “non-personal” and preoccupied with the achievements of the socio-economic and political processes in the mainstream of the CPSU, with the Communist leaders who did not look like live people but monuments in granite and bronze. In the independent Ukraine after the disruption of the Soviet Union there have been no publications of that type, though some papers published recently, are dedicated to the usage of the biographical method in pedagogical science, sociology, economics [1], [4], [22], [26]. However, at present in the historical science there is an understanding of the fact that readers seek for representation of not only social processes and economic changes, but the characters (the “heroes”) who thanks to their will, talent and morals determine the history process. It is worth mentioning that this very comprehension is shared by the scientists of Oles Gonchar University in Dnipro, who during 2007-2017 defended 12 Candidate of Historical Sciences dissertations devoted to the activity of the Ukrainian outstanding political, social and cultural persons – men and women. We should note that some papers published recently, are dedicated to the usage of the biographical method in pedagogical science, sociology, economics [1], [4], [22], [26]. Thus, it is evident that there is a necessity for the further methodological investigation in the historical, anthropological and biographical fields.

Scientific novelty. The present paper can be considered a reflexion on the evident scientific demand for the further development of the methodological provision seeded in the historical, anthropological and biographical research. These problems have not been studied in the fundamental papers of the “patriarchs” in methodology of the Ukrainian science [3],[11],[12],[16],[17]. The scientific novelty of this paper mainly lies in exposing the interconnection of the dialects and hermeneutics in the research methodology of analyzing biographical texts.

Main materials of the paper. We can read a biographical text for pleasure or knowledge, but quite often we are left with a sense of enigma, a final sense which the text does not express. Since the 70-s of the last century both literary theory and history have been self-conscious about context – about the importance of signification of the circumstances surrounding any utterance and any event. The full context is an intertextual as much as a social one. Hence the importance of hermeneutics with its focus on intertextuality. The idea of “text” in this sense is that which stresses process, context and intertextuality. The concept of single, closed “work” shifts in hermeneutics to one of plural “open texts” – verbal communication can never be understood and explained outside of connection with concrete situation and context.

The biographical method is used both in the historical-anthropological research and in other spheres of history and literary criticism: social, economic, political ones. The biographical method makes historical representation more vivid, historical processes more humane, historical phenomena more dynamic. That is why the question how to single out and analyze the subjective phenomena mentioned above, is so topical. The latter, in its turn, accounts for the necessity to provide the methodology for its investigation and use; the methodology for investigating certain persons and personalities in history. The latter seems impossible outside the scientific field of both the “old” and the “new” in historical studies and literary criticism.

It is natural that the increase of the human factor in life representations demands application of the corresponding complex of the historical sources, and there are two types of the sources of the biographical material: primary (oral narratives of people) and secondary (official archive documents, private correspondence memoirs etc.).

In “The biographical method in research” (1998) Russian scientist in the field of sociology I. F. Devyatko stresses the functional importance of both primary and secondary sources with the aim of the maximum “stereophonic” representation of the life of a definite person in the scientific work. According to I. F. Devyatko, any oral or written narrative of a person about his/her life is a primary material, questionnaires, interviews included. The secondary sources of the biographical data cover memoirs of other people, correspondence, official documents, private and public archive documents, diaries, private notes, conversation transcripts, and also functional private documents: timetables and schedules, rough copies, etc [4]. As important secondary

sources some other official documents are mentioned by the scientists: e.g. notes in the official books of births, deaths and marriages. Verbatim reports and protocols of different forums; documents, which are related to the professional carriers: lists of honours and awards, recommendation letters, etc. Of some interest for the researchers are some medical and legal documents as well. Private letters as a type of private documents are considered by scientists an informative source of the biographical data, and epistolary genre can serve as means of characterization of the definite facets in the relationships of the authors. The style itself, the frequency of correspondence can be as informative for the researchers as its very content. The current experience of the contemporary sociology, literary criticism, history includes many examples of applying to private correspondence as an effective source of biographical data in many research aspects [4, c. 46-47]. Thus, as the basis of the social research is informative documents of economic and statistic materials, the biographical method demands by all means to study memoirs, diaries, epistolary and other biographical material, both published and kept in archives.

It should be noted that in the biographical scientific editions the focus of the readers' attention is often diverted by bulky bibliographical and operational apparatus which is by all means necessary to the author in his/her argumentation. However, sharing the point of view of many scientists, we would like to stress the fact that in the biographical information that very "core" that is able to excite interest in the readers, should be taken into focus.

Considering the methodology of the historical and anthropological research, it is necessary to note that, the dialectic method is considered of great importance in those studies; we should stress, that in our opinion, it is also a principle of scientific investigation. As a method, dialectics is one of those tools that helps a researcher to reveal the very essence of the phenomena and processes, to analyze their complexity, their contradictory character, their past and future. As a principle, dialectics is an imperative, that makes a scientist research any phenomena in their constant motion, in the contradictions, unity and fight.

Moreover, all primary documents can be divided into 2 main groups: documents (memoirs, letters, etc.) which were written from the person who is studied, and documents whose authors are other people. While analyzing those documents we should always take into consideration that every person has his/her self-estimation, – that is, as a rule, – high, and has an intent to hide their own negative features. On the other hand, other people's estimations can be subjective, caused by private attitudes, and also by political, ideological, religious, nationalistic reasons. To give an objective character-drawing, it is necessary to pay attention to those circumstances.

It is known that the use of all methodologies is subjected to the definite principles, the biographical research is not an exception. No doubt, in all historical and literary studies scientists must apply objective, systematic many-sided principles. Moreover, it is necessary to pay attention to the peculiarities of the historical epoch, evolutionary and revolutionary developments both of a certain historical figure and his/her environment.

The systematic principle assumes that all the circumstances of a person's development, all the facts and data should be taken into account. The vivid example of the latter is M. Kostomarov's book "Russian history in the life-narratives of its outstanding people". In this book each of the 70 portraits, described by the historian, is depicted against both the historical background, and the private life's one: life-stories, achievements, contributions [13]. According to the principle of a manifold representation, an author of biographies must not use only those facts that can prove his/her conceptions. Moreover, the facts which are not given in the proper context can produce false impression and historically will not be true. When historians do not adhere to those principles, they give superficial representation of the historical people, which is the case with some popular series of the biographical portraits ("100 great people", "100 great generals", "100 great thinkers"), which were published by Russian publishing house "Veche" in 2000. The same is true for the book of the Ukrainian politician I. F. Sharov "100 outstanding names of Ukraine", in which pictures of well-known people look like some portraits of street photographers [23].

The historical principle demands an author that he/she should depict historical figures against the definite context, without indirect suppositions, but providing facts, phenomena, behaviour, etc., in the general picture of the definite historical epoch with its laws, ethical norms, traditions. This is vividly expressed by M. M. Karamzin who, estimating Princess Olga's activity, wrote: "... we should judge about the Heroes of History according to the traditions and customs of their time" [10, p. 100]. Breaking this principle leads to false and perfunctory scientific conclusions, moreover, it is often used to serve political aims. This fact provides a basis for naming history politics turned into the past". In addition, it is a recreation of the spirit of this or that epoch, penetration into the atmosphere of the period with this or that historical figures.

Dialectics makes a scientists point out definite positive and negative features in the historical personalities, their inner development and external circumstances of their lives. Such qualities were represented by D. I. Yavornizky in his characterization of hetman I. Mazepa in his "History of the Zaporozhsky Cossacks": "Hetman Mazepa is a very complicated person and that is why it is difficult to comprehend his nature... . Generally, in Mazepa's character there was the combination of his private features ... and the features of the public man of Malorossiya who wanted to see his homeland politically independent". The historian explains that those features of Mazepa were formed in the court of the Polish king, the famous epicurean and libertine [27, t.3, p. 287].

Of great importance here is the development of the personality. Every person should become wiser as he/she becomes older, his/her outlook becomes wider and manifold. As for the political person, the general tendency is to represent evolution from the radical views to the conservative ones. The outlook principles often change with time concerning history figures. This is an example of the famous Soviet and Russian sociologist O.O.Zinovjev. In his grotesque novel "Gaping Heights" [7] and other fiction that was written in 1970s he made satirical portrayal of the Soviet reality; to the utter surprise of his readers later he began to praise it, even to defend Stalin as a creator of the Soviet civilization, he called Gorbachev's "perestroika" as "katastroika"; he was disappointed about the disruption of the Soviet Union. Concerning his own intellectual contribution into those events he wrote: "The aim was communism but it appeared to be Russia [9]." It is interesting that in all those things the philosopher was always honest in his views; he cannot be compared to the political hypocrites, who change their views for their own benefit in this particular case dialects does not work.

The famous Ukrainian historian V. S. Chishko points out three stages of the biographical investigation: 1) an empirical one, that is based on the euristic and source-science methodology; 2) a reconstruction of life and reality, psychological character of a person, which is based on the methods of historical and psychological reconstruction; 3) the representation of the personality in the sum of all inner and other links [24]. With our full agreement and appreciation we would like to underline one more stage of the biographical research, putting it on the second place – investigation of all the objective circumstances and factors of a personality development in their dialectical evolution, that is in their changes and contradictions.

Conclusion. History and literature both provide significant material for understanding radical changes in the social and culture development of a country of people who live there. In the biographies as a literary genre intertexts of history double up with those of literature, which influences the analysis of a critic who should acknowledge serious differences between "history" and "fiction". The idea of "text" in this sense is hardly possible without all the possible views on the particular subject in order to deduce a "definition" for the subject. The latter means dialectical research. On the other hand, the "text" is open and unstable, – interpretations are inevitable. This means the following: in hermeneutics a scientific or literary writer cannot deny approaches of interpretations.

With their focus on the complexity of the text interpretation postmodern theorists accentuate the political consequences of the work of art on the level of the "political unconsciousness" (M. Foucault, R. Barth, F. Jameson and others). The logic of the text

interpretation in the aspect of the sociological discourse leads to the simplified treatment of characters in the biographies, to the definite social and cultural reductionism. That is why, with all the acknowledgement of the systematic approach to the analysis of the biographical text, we have come to the conclusion that among the main methodological principles of the biography analysis dialectical principle along with hermeneutics should take the priority. It is both the dialectical methodology and hermeneutic approaches that provide the investigation of both the personality, and the external environment, that “frame”, the context, that stipulates the development of any person in his/her changes and contradictions.

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