

Cultural Trauma in the Context of Self-Consciousness

Gulnaz K. Gizatova, Olga G. Ivanova, Alexander S. Safonov

Abstract: *Researchers agree that the reasons for the trauma are the sudden radical changes taking place in society, which lead to a mismatch of all its spheres, especially the social and cultural spheres, causing instability. Today, scientists are focused on cultural trauma, as it is the transformations in the sphere of culture that cause the most serious consequences, have the most significant effect on the life of society. With regard to the problem of cultural trauma role we consider in the development of historical memory, the thing is about a narrative representation of reality both in historical science and in national consciousness as a whole. Also the thing is about the representation of the trauma itself. One should take into account that during the social studies of trauma, most theorists emphasize that often trauma is not so much what really exists or existed; trauma is a social construct created by a social group, ethnic community or society as a whole. Moreover, the creation of this construct is decisively influenced primarily by sociocultural processes. Ethnic conflicts that do not fade in the modern world actualize the development of new methodological approaches to the analysis of both cultural trauma and cultural and historical memory.*

Keywords: *trauma, cultural trauma, historical memory, national identity, representation, narrative.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The study of historical memory is inextricably linked with such a trend in humanitarian research as the problem of trauma. The latter acquired the status of not only a concept, but began to take shape in a theory that has several levels of trauma understanding. There are two main approaches to the analysis of this phenomenon: sociological and psychoanalytic. We find interesting the approach by P. Stomka, who considers the concept of trauma in the framework of modern theories of social change. In his opinion, three types of dominant paradigms can be distinguished in sociological theories of social change: the paradigm of progress in the 19th century, the paradigm of crisis in the middle of the 20th century and the paradigm of trauma at the end of the 20th century [1]. The Russian scholar

Zh.T. Toshchenko in the discussion article “Society trauma: between evolution and revolution” talks about the effectiveness of “trauma” concept introduction to characterize a specific intermediate variant of a society development that is neither evolutionary nor revolutionary. In his opinion, first of all, “the society of trauma does not have a clear and distinct strategy and understanding of development prospects” [2, p. 74].

It should be noted that, since the trauma discourse is in the process of development, the scientific literature does not provide more or less clear definition of this concept. Researchers distinguish various types of trauma: individual (personal) and collective, social, historical, national, cultural trauma, while its types also do not clearly differ. So, according to R. Ayerman, at the theoretical level, the difference between national and cultural trauma is minimal [3]. A. Neil actually identifies the concepts of “national trauma” and “collective trauma” [4]. From Ayerman’s point of view, cultural trauma differs from both individual and collective trauma, although it is associated with them [3].

One of the theorists who placed social trauma at the center of their research is the American philosopher, professor of Yale, J. Alexander. So, considering this phenomenon, he identifies two types of trauma: individual and collective. By individual trauma, he means a blow to the human psyche that destroys protective psychological mechanisms so suddenly and with such brutal force that an individual cannot respond effectively and fully to this. By collective trauma, he means the blow to the very foundations of life, which destroys the bonds that bind people together and weakens the prevailing sense of community. Collective trauma can act slowly and even “insidiously” in the minds of those to whom it is inflicted, often without the suddenness property that usually accompanies “trauma”. But this form of shock, however, leads to a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared [See: 5, p. 88].

II. METHODS

Considering various points of view that have developed in historical trauma understanding, he notes the greatest heuristic significance of the psychoanalytic approach. In the framework of the psychoanalytic tradition, Alexander singles out, first of all, the role of Lacan, who emphasized the importance of language in the formation of emotions, noting that it was Lacan’s theory, often in combination with the principle of Derrida’s deconstruction, which filled humanitarian studies of trauma with these ideas [See: 5, p. 89].

Revised Manuscript Received on October 30, 2019.

* Correspondence Author

Maria N. Spirchagova, Assistant professor, PhD in Philosophy, Kazan Federal University, Institute of Social and Philosophical Sciences and Mass Communications, Department of Social Philosophy; Address: 420008, Russian Federation, Kazan, Kremlevskaya st., Russia

Olga Gennadievna Ivanova, Assistant professor, PhD in Philosophy, Kazan Federal University, Institute of Social and Philosophical Sciences and Mass Communications, Department of Social Philosophy; Address: 420008, Russian Federation, Kazan, Kremlevskaya st., Russia

Alexander Sergeevich Safonov, Assistant lecturer, Kazan Federal University, Institute of Social and Philosophical Sciences and Mass Communications, Department of Social Philosophy; Address: 420008, Russian Federation, Kazan, Kremlevskaya st., Russia

Researchers agree that the reasons for the trauma are the sudden radical changes taking place in society, which lead to a mismatch of all its spheres, especially the social and cultural spheres, causing instability. Nowadays, scholars are focused on cultural trauma, as it is the transformations in the sphere of culture that cause the most serious consequences, have the most significant effect on society life. According to P. Štompka, “any trauma is a cultural phenomenon by definition. But it can be cultural, affecting the cultural fabric of society. Only this can be considered a cultural trauma in the full sense of the word” [1]. According to Smelser, cultural trauma is “an exciting and overwhelming event that undermines one or more key elements of culture or culture as a whole” [6, p. 38]. In our opinion the following approach is more effective: cultural trauma is seen as a series, a chain of events that generate predominantly negative emotional experience and receive an appropriate interpretation in society.

At the same time, we do not share the point of view of a number of researchers who believe that cultural traumas are created rather than appear on their own [see: 3], and that the media play a crucial role in the development of cultural traumas.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With regard to the problem of cultural trauma role we consider in the formation of historical memory, in our opinion, the thing is about a narrative representation of reality both in historical science and in national consciousness as a whole. Also we are talking about the representation of trauma itself. It should be taken into account that during the social studies of trauma, most theorists emphasize that often trauma is not so much what really exists or existed; trauma is a social construct created by a social group, ethnic community or society as a whole. Moreover, the creation of this construct is decisively influenced primarily by sociocultural processes. Another feature of understanding trauma is that the latter is considered as inextricably linked to the problems of collective identity. Collective trauma is what poses a threat or even deforms collective identity, and identity is always the result of sociocultural processes. In this sense one can argue that trauma, in order to have an impact on society at the collective level, has acquired a collective scale, the social crisis caused by it must be clothed in a cultural form. One cannot disagree with the authors of the national collective monograph, who argue that “crises in culture are the factor of mankind social memory actualization” [7, p. 18].

The American historian H. White, reflecting on the role of narrative in modern historical science, notes that in the framework of professional historical research, most theorists considered narrative not so much as a product of theory, not so much as the basis for a method development, but as a form of discourse that can be used or not be used to represent historical events, depending on the initial task: to describe the situation, analyze the historical process, or tell a story. Arguing that this form of discourse, narrative, does not add anything to the content of the representation, but rather is the simulacrum of the structure and processes of real events, he concludes that the story reproduced in the narrative is a mimesis of the story lived in some area of historical reality, and in this sense, since it is an exact reproduction of this reality, it can therefore be regarded as a true description [See: 8].

The special role of narrative in particular, and the language as a whole is emphasized by most social theorists during new knowledge development. So, according to F.R. Ankersmith, one of the most interesting facts concerning language is that language not only expresses knowledge, but can also be used (in the true sense of the word) for linguistic entity development, which are both language and things at the same time. And these linguistic entities are the matrices for the production of new knowledge [See: 9, p.24].

IV. CONCLUSION

Ethnic conflicts that do not fade in the modern world actualize the development of new methodological approaches to the analysis of both cultural trauma and cultural and historical memory. Both that, and another are directly connected with the existential bases of people existence. Cultural trauma, reproduced in historical memory, can create the prerequisites for an existential crisis development. An important point here is that the basis of ethnic consciousness always contains the opposition “we - others”. Reflecting on the relationship between “I” and “Other”, one of the founders of existentialism J.-P. Sartre wrote the following: “The fundamental difference between the Other - the object and the Other - the subject comes solely from the fact that the Other - the subject can not be known at all and even represented as such; there is no problem of knowing the Other-subject, and the objects of the world do not indicate its subjectivity; they refer only to its objectivity in the world as the meaning of the intra-world current, translated to myself” [10, p. 315]. As Yu.V. Vatolina noted, in accordance with such logic as “I”/another relations, represented in such a mode, it is obvious that “I” has a desire to transform the other from a subject into an object in order to maintain its transcendence and the status of the subject “I” recognize the limitations that others impose on my freedom. The desire to objectify the other is aimed at overcoming the shame or fear associated with his (other) presence [See: 11]. Ethnic self-awareness, expressing the unique identity of a particular community, is inseparable from existential issues related to the analysis of one’s existence in the world, and, therefore, related to the correlation of one's being and the being of the Other.

S. Zizek develops his position regarding the ethnic Other. So, considering the phenomenon of anti-Semitic racism, he distinguishes two elements in it: firstly, the ethnic Other has privileged access to enjoyment, and secondly, he seeks to steal our enjoyment. Demonstrating the influence of Freud and Lacan, the Slovenian philosopher writes the following: “Behind our attempts to attribute to the theft of our pleasure to another we hide the traumatic fact that we never possessed what was supposedly stolen from us: the lack ... is primary” [12,17]. According to Zizek, it exists insofar as its specific form of enjoyment can be materialized in the form of social practices and transmitted to other generations using national myths.

The desire to preserve their integrity is accompanied by the activation of ethnic self-consciousness adaptive function, and the interpretation orientation of consciousness is extremely important in this process, inextricably linked with historical memory, the process in which subjective selectivity can often prevail.

S. Ushakin writes the following: “Over time, the circulation of emotions and stories generated by traumatic experiences forms loss communities, which are both the main author and the main recipient of narratives about traumas. In this context, the post-traumatic condition often turns out to be the mechanism of social consolidation and differentiation (“grief united”). The ability to recognize the "community of pain" serves as a social watershed, symbolically isolating the "survivors" from everyone else" [13, 18].

We have already noted that most social theorists emphasize that cultural trauma is not so much a real phenomenon as a social construct that can be used for various, primarily political purposes. As T. Eagleton rightly notes, discourses, sign systems, and various kinds of signifying practices, from film and television to fiction and the languages of the natural sciences, create an effect, produce forms of the conscious and unconscious that are directly related to support or transformation of existing power systems [14,16].

SUMMARY

In our opinion, the consideration of cultural trauma in the broad context of historical memory as a whole has the greatest heuristic potential. At that, the emphasis on the narrative-discursive component of this study is crucial during the analysis of cultural trauma. It should be emphasized here that we do not consider the argumentation contained in postmodern theories according to which nations are “imaginary communities” (B. Andersen and others) as convincing, just as we do not consider cultural traumas to be a manifestation, a product of imagination of those who invents them, although, of course, imaginary traumas also exist. We only want to emphasize that the role of narrative in social trauma reproduction is crucial within the framework of historical memory. It is necessary to recall S.Zizek again, who wrote the following: “Truth refers to a traumatic, unforeseen collision in the narrative of individual or collective history, it does not fit into its fabric, and, at the same time, cannot “untangle it” [15,19]. Analyzing the role of narrative in the representation of cultural trauma, in our opinion, the idea by F. Jamieson that we should keep in mind the nature of interpretation itself is important. According to the philosopher, our understanding is largely determined by the concepts and categories that we inherit from the interpretative tradition of our own culture. The conceptualization of cultural trauma, taking into account the wider context of the ethnic component, national memory, national history, and national as a whole, makes it possible, in our opinion, to comprehend this phenomenon in a multicultural world more deeply.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

REFERENCES

1. P. Stompka. Social change as trauma // <http://ecsocman.hse.ru/data/983/017/1220/1-Shtompka.pdf>
2. J.T. Toshchenko. Society Trauma: Between Evolution and Revolution. Policy. Political research. - 2017. - No. 1. - pp. 70-84.

3. Ron Ayerman. Social Theory and Trauma // https://sociologica.hse.ru/data/2013/06/04/1285380221/SocOboz_12_1_07_Eyerman.pdf
4. Artur G.Neal. National Trauma and Collective Memory: Extraordinary Events in the American Experience // https://books.google.ru/books?id=sR9WDwAAQBAJ&pg=PT8&hl=ru&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false
5. J.C. Alexander. The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology - Copyright © 2003 by Oxford University Press, Inc. 296 p.
6. N.J. Smelser . Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma. – Alexander J.C., Eyerman R., Giesen B., Smelser N.J., Sztompka P. Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press. pp. 31-59.
7. European Culture: XXIst Century / Ed. by E.V. Vodopyanova. - M.; SPb.: Nestor-Istoriya, 2013. - 480 p. (Old World series - new times).
8. Hayden White. The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory//History and Theory/ <http://www.jstor.org>.
9. F.R. Ankersmit. History and topology: the rise and fall of metaphor. - University of California Press. Berkley and Los-Angeles, USA, London, England, 1994. - 252 p.
10. J.P. Sartre. Being and nothing. The experience of phenomenological ontology. Translation from Fr. V.I. Kolyadko. - M., 2009. - 928 p.
11. Yu.V. Vatolina. M.M. Bakhtin and J.-P. Sartre: “I” / other, boundaries of reflection // HORA. 2010 № 1/2 (11/12) // <http://jkhora.narod.ru/2010-12-09.pdf>
12. S. Zizek. Coexistence with the negative // Art Journal. - No. 9. M.: 1996. - pp. 79-83.
13. Trauma: Points. Ed. by S. Ushakina and E. Trubina. Moscow: UFO, 2009. - 936 p.
14. L. Hutcheon. Discourse, Power, Ideology: Humanism and Postmodernism // https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265279761_6_
15. Cit. from "Truth as an event. Political Action" // https://www.peoplelife.ru/105767_5
16. Luo, C., Li, M., Peng, P., & Fan, S. How Does Internet Finance Influence the Interest Rate? Evidence from Chinese Financial Markets. Dutch Journal of Finance and Management, 2(1), (2018). 01.
17. Jaramillo, L. E. S. Malware Detection and Mitigation Techniques: Lessons Learned from Mirai DDOS Attack. Journal of Information Systems Engineering & Management, 3(3), (2018). 19.
18. Simamora, R. E., Saragih, S., & Hasratuddin Improving Students' Mathematical Problem Solving Ability and Self-Efficacy through Guided Discovery Learning in Local Culture Context. International Electronic Journal of Mathematics Education, 14(1), (2019). 61-72. <https://doi.org/10.12973/iejme/3966>
19. Murzinova, K. E. A., Koblanova, A., & Ansabayeva, D. A. A. Prosodical means applied in communicative relations. Opción, 34(85-2), (2018). 61-96.