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THE VALIDITY OF THE DIALOGICAL PARADIGM IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Abstract. The research aim of this article is to answer the question of the validity of the dialogical paradigm when confronted with the challenges posed by new digital technologies. The article is a synthetic and selective study of this issue. The research intention is realised in several points. The scope of considerations includes a brief presentation of the issue of paradigm as an important element in contemporary science, the presentation of key issues in the field of philosophy of dialogue and the significance of the dialogical approach for challenges that arise in the context of new technologies. The thesis of this article is that the way of understanding the phenomenon of encounter proposed by dialogicalists makes it possible to assess the directions of the development of new technologies in such aspects as: the experience of the subjectivity of the Other in technological mediation, personal authenticity versus mediativity, the limitation of human autonomy. The next part of the article will be a discussion of selected digital technologies which, due to the effects produced on their users, pose a social challenge. In the article, I apply the critical-analytical method, there is also an attempt to reconstruct concepts and an application of own observations. The article ends with conclusions based on the analysis presented.

Keywords: dialog, philosophy, paradigm, T. Kuhn, digital technologies.

The concept of paradigm

In the contemporary approach to carrying out scientific research, there are rarely random and unplanned activities based on spontaneous decisions. There is a preference for a style of action based on the thoughtful and orderly execution of scientific inquiry based on a well-constructed theoretical framework. The orderliness of scientific activity is embedded in the search for permanence and stability, which can be found in the descriptive, or explanatory, function of science itself¹. This desire to order and systematise university activities has brought attempts to schematise sci-

entific endeavours in a broader perspective on the ground of the philosophy of science. In the twentieth century, a certain pattern of scientific conduct took shape, with its roots in the natural sciences, which makes it model-like due to the dominant value of clear and reliable ways of testing of results.

The concept of paradigm², proposed by Thomas Kuhn (1962), was described in the book: *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, and became a reference point for considering the course of changes in theoretical assumptions over the centuries. This was not the first major book position on the development and transformation that scientific theories undergo. An earlier work was Ludwik Fleck's (1935) monograph *Entstehung und Entwicklung einer wissenschaftlichen Tatsache*. However, it is safe to say that Kuhn's work received more publicity and helped to stimulate scientific discourse. The similarities between Fleck's and Kuhn's theories are significant, and the order in which the content was published provides an interesting field of research, but a definitive judgement on the extent to which Kuhn owes his popularity to inspiration from Fleck's reflections is not the task of this paper³. We certainly owe the popularisation of the term paradigm precisely to Kuhn.

According to the theory propagated by Kuhn, the appearance of a sufficient number of anomalies – incompatibilities between theoretical predictions and experimental observations of phenomena – leads to a situation in which the current paradigm can no longer provide a satisfactory description of the observed phenomena. He calls such a situation a crisis, in which extraordinary research is undertaken. This process, according to Kuhn, should lead to a scientific revolution and, consequently, to the emergence of a new paradigm. Kuhn's proposed model for the development of scientific theories has raised many questions. The ambiguity of the proposal has been debated, but it is certain that the term paradigm has become a permanent part of the scientific language. An understanding of the paradigm appeared in *largo* sense – a set of ordered elements defining a common position and *stricte* – a pattern, a certain new solution A. Krause (2022).

During a revolution, a new paradigm emerges, the old one is rejected. Kuhn believed that paradigms – the emerging 'new' paradigm and the 'old' paradigm being replaced – are sometimes incommensurable (they use different methodological standards) and, as a result, some explanations may be lost.

Consistency of views and sharing the same values, using the same concepts and research model leads to the delimitation and scope of the new paradigm. The paradigm should also present itself as coherent, logical, as

simplified as possible, accurate, non-contradictory, enabling detailed solutions. Looking at the paradigm from a Kuhnian perspective, we know that it is not given forever, that it can undergo transformations, of which crises and turbulent revolutions are symptoms, and that it distances the notion of absolute rightness.

Nowadays, Kuhn can be considered a classic of studies on the development of the philosophy of science. At the same time, it should be remembered that his main axis of interest concerned the sciences. On the basis of insights relevant to the aforementioned sciences, a schematic picture of transformations and changes applied to the social sciences and humanities was also created. Copying the model proposed by Kuhn may lead to a competition of paradigms, which in the humanities and social sciences may function side by side and have different statuses of scope, rank and areas of influence⁴. By respecting their distinctiveness and originality in looking at the issue under analysis, it is possible to expect a synergistic effect on selected problems.

The aim of research in this area is to avoid creating an incomplete, unclear and inaccurate picture. Dobrosław Kot (2009) looks at this issue in a similar way, noting that a paradigm shift, preceded by a scientific revolution, leads to an erasure of the significance of the previously prevailing paradigm, which in relation to philosophy would amount to a radical unification of views. Continuing these considerations, he suggests treating the notion of paradigm as 'weaker' than in the case of the sciences, which would allow the preservation of the achievements, interactions and permeations of philosophical currents.

Philosophical reflection is not about rejecting modern science, but about seeking and discovering the meaning of life in the face of the changes taking place. The need to search for deeper philosophical roots to situate new technologies in relation to man and to try to orient him towards the values hidden in himself, his attributes and the possibility of realising them in interpersonal dialogue. As Martin Heidegger (1977) already mentioned:

The threat to man does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology. The actual threat has already affected man in his essence. The rule of Enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth (p. 28).

With regard to the technological developments we are witnessing, two insights emerge that are relevant to the considerations at hand. One brings to the fore the idea of the methodological incommensurability of the sciences

and, on the other hand, the need for a universal consensus that allows for agreement on such important issues as the development of technology and its impact on the functioning of society.

The dialogical paradigm

The attempt to adapt the notion of ‘paradigm’ for the needs of philosophy is a methodological duplication of the proposal inspired by the sciences and, what is worth emphasising, mainly addressed to them. A certain attempt to schematise paradigm shifts in relation to philosophy was made by Jacek Filek, according to whom it is correct to distinguish three traditions of thought in the history of European philosophy. A brief characterisation of each period is word-for-word, indicating the main area of philosophical inquiry.

The first word in ancient philosophy: *I am* – defines the primordality of being; Aristotle is the representative of this style of thinking. The leading thought is the study of objects existing independently of the subject, but also the independence of cognition from the subjectivity with which the Self is equipped.

The word that symbolises Cartesian philosophy, also known as the second philosophy, is: *I am*. This is a clear shift towards the analysis of the structure of the subject. Whereas in the case of the first philosophy metaphysics led the way, in this case the role of the first philosophy is taken over by epistemology.

A third philosophy representing a dialogical style of thinking proposes a word: *you are*. The main experience of this philosophy is the recognition of the ‘You’ as primary in relation to the ‘I’, and this in turn causes both metaphysics and epistemology to give way to ethics. A philosophy emphasizing the importance of the thou is represented by, among others, Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig and Emmanuel Levinas.

In this context, as Jacek Filek (2001) points out, especially in relation to the philosophy of responsibility, it is the word ‘you are’ that opens us up to the Other, because we say explicitly: ‘You are’. It is this kind of philosophical reflection in which ‘You’ becomes the meaning of action. When we lose the ‘You are’, in place of the ‘You’ comes the ‘it’. It is safe to say that *is* will be secondary to *you are*. Before I was *you are*, which means that it is not possible to reach the full absence.

In this context and in view of man’s increasing dependence on new technologies, one can speak of a recurrent and dynamically changing need to

update the dialogical paradigm, to establish a place for 'you are'. It seems legitimate to confront new developments with the dialogical approach to human relations that has existed for decades. It is fair to say that the dialogical project has not dominated social discourse but has become part of the process of creating social understanding and continues to do so through the, more or less successful, proliferation and even fashioning of the word *dialogue*.

The proposal that is contained in the philosophy of dialogue concerns the prominence and emphasis on the role of the interpersonal encounter as a key element in the search for the meaning of humanity.

The foundation of the philosophical current presented here is phenomenological transcendental reduction, as a method constituting human being in the role of a transcendental subject. The form given to the phenomenological method by its creator, E. Husserl, made possible the path to the search for communion with the other in terms of the relationship of the transcendental subject with the *Other*, seen in its development in the philosophy of dialogue. *The possibility of experiencing the other is postulated by the philosophy of dialogue to be the most source experience available to man, which is why it can be called the first philosophy* (Krupa, 2020).

The current of dialogical thought draws inspiration from the philosophical achievements of the 18th century – in the observations on the role of You in the creation of the Self presented by the German philosopher F. H. Jacobi and J. G. Hamann in the philosophy of speech negating the solipsistic concept of the Self, in the views of J. G. Fichte – in the intuition of primordial unity. The continuation of the philosophy of the Self took place in L. Feuerbach for whom finding the unity of man with another man has the dimension of realising the essence of humanity itself (Krupa, 2020). It is this philosopher who is most often regarded as the precursor of dialogical thought.

To present a dialogical paradigm is to pick out from the background available to the philosophy of dialogue/philosophy of encounter those common aspects that characterise and most strongly bind together the dialogical current presented by authors postulating together a style of ethical thinking, as one that recognises, emphasises and affirms the uniqueness of the human being, its primacy before recognising its frailty. In simple terms, it can be called a philosophy of encounter in the context of hope⁵. Despite the common views that unite the representatives of a given philosophical direction, one should bear in mind the conventionality of such summaries. For it is difficult to find a common denominator for representatives declaring their willingness to belong to a certain thought project, although each

interprets in their own way. We are faced with an even more difficult situation when a representative, generally associated with a dialogical current, declares independence and wishes to remain outside a given philosophical current (Baran, 1991). Another example is a radical change of views, an approach that is too broad, too general or too narrow – a failure to incorporate the multifaceted nature of a given issue in one's work.

In order to make it easier to grasp the specificity of the dialogical paradigm, it is worth outlining the dividing lines drawn by its selected contributors. The current inspired by the Judaic tradition was represented by Hermann Cohen (1919), Franz Rosenzweig (1921), Martin Buber (1923), Emmanuel Levinas (1961) – the last-mentioned author presents an oeuvre set in post-war realities, taking into account the experience of the Holocaust, which is significantly reflected in his work also described as a philosophy of intersubjectivity (Krupa, 2020).

Representatives of the philosophy of dialogue inspired by the Christian tradition were Ferdinand Ebner (1921), Gabriel Marcel (1927), Eberhard Grisbach Gegenwart (1928) Joseph Tischner, *Philosophy of Drama* (1990).

In considering the philosophy of dialogue, the theme of religious inspiration should be included as one of the elements common to the direction under discussion. Other common, though not always evenly presented, views may conclude:

– the variety of forms and meanings of experiencing the Other, whose richness is already contained in the very experience of presence. The experience of the Other is not reducible to myself, it is primordial, in E. Levinas's terms it consists in 'giving oneself over' and 'surrendering' to the Other. It transcends cognition itself. In summary, the experience of the Other:

- a. is primary to experiencing things;
- b. is more than cognition;
- c. confronts me with the indeterminate – a mystery;
- d. opens up to transcendence;
- e. opens up to intersubjectivity;
- f. creates me and co-creates a participant in the dialogue;
- g. curbs the inclinations of my imperialist-prone I am;
- h. creates a community (Walczak, 2008–9).

The dialogical question itself and the attempt to answer it in an axiological context play an important role. The *face-to-face* encounter is direct and suggests openness. The relationship is reciprocal, we get to know another person and at the same time let ourselves be known. It is worth emphasizing the importance of being aware of being known, followed by fear and the desire to hide oneself. The order of cognition is based on immediacy:

The relationship with You is direct. Between the I and the Thou there is no conceptuality, no knowledge, no fantasy, and memory itself changes as it moves from the particular to the whole. Between the I and the Thou there is no goal, no desire or anticipation, and longing itself changes when it moves from dream to phenomenon. Every means is an obstacle. Only where all means have disintegrated does the encounter take place (Buber, 1992, in: Gadacz 2009).

This immediacy offers the possibility of proximity or rejection.

From this perspective, it seems crucial – according to G. Marcel – to allow the Other to be: ‘I let you be’. My gaze towards *the Other* should perceive what is autonomous, free, unique in him. Each ‘You’ that I get to know has its own autonomy and represents diversity. The interpersonal space is complex and difficult to describe and express in words. It is therefore succoured by the aforementioned metaphor of the face-to-face encounter and, at the same time, its literalness. It may seem that the idea of phenomenology is not compatible with addressing social issues. And yet, directing attention towards the subject of consciousness is linked to the intentional character of the acts of said consciousness; objects are not excluded from it, much less social relations (Jędrzejewski, 2006).

The requirement for dialogue is to awaken the need and ability to speak and listen. We get to know the other by listening, which, according to Levinas, is simultaneous and as important as speaking. In this understanding, dialogue must take place on the same level. In dialogue, it is impossible to ‘rule’, to ‘instruct’, to ‘deprecate’, to ‘declare’.

The above features of the philosophy of dialogue form a kind of filter to separate the world of technological progress from the difficult to grasp but ever-present pattern of relationality. Overlooking it seems to be an attempt to escape, the reasons for which may vary, but they may concern everyone: ourselves, our surroundings, the community in which we have come to live. The *Other's* participation in my life confronts me with my self, while mediation can gradually weaken this process, or sometimes distort or nullify relationships. The consequences appear, among other things, in attitudes towards relationality as a process of mutual, creating interactions between persons. In extreme cases, alienation can occur, which is the antinomy of dialogue (Sipinski, 2008).

Dialogue in the context of technology

The path towards the *Other* or *the Other* is not merely an ethical project, but in the deepest sense a personal and moral one. On the way

to meeting in the modern world, technology is appearing, which not brings only a number of positive solutions to facilitate the meeting (instant messaging, online connections), but also problems that require to assess the risks and to postulate the necessary changes (difficulties in establishing direct contact). In the light of evolving AI, we are faced not only with the need to identify the nature of emerging dangers, but also to observe the scale, or even the accumulation, of dangers in relation to the rate at which they appear. The dialogueists' proposed understanding of the phenomenon of encounter allows us to assess the direction of new technologies in exemplary aspects:

1) Experiencing the subjectivity of the Other in technological mediation. The 21st century appears to be the one in which there will be a further intensification of interpersonal contacts in media mediation (Szpunar, 2008). The era of mass media has been followed by the era of new media, which offer the possibility of active content creation and fast daily interaction (Guzdek, Petryk, 2012). The unleashed communication potential through widespread access to *immersive* tools reduces face-to-face contact (Szpunar, 2008). The phenomenon itself is not a breakthrough, as it can be achieved by reading a book or listening to music, but it is not as destabilising and addictive as new media technologies designed to capture attention and make the recipient a "voluntary slave". His or her confrontation with the media world requires a resolute, conscious attitude that may exceed his or her mental capacity, which is burdened by a large amount of stimuli.

2) Personal authenticity in a media environment. The experience of authenticity is increasingly linked to mediality, which influences the ways and forms in which it is experienced. The constant confrontation with mediation is also a challenge for the search for identity. According to Waclaw Branicki (2016, p. 20): "the first element is the conscious act of recognition, which makes the content an abiding conviction. This is the basis of the constitution of personal identity. If the conviction is confirmed in the act, then personal authenticity is created". It is impossible to separate from this issue the issues related to the dialogical understanding of participation in and taking responsibility for human relationships. In considering authenticity, it is important to understand the importance of awareness, self-reflection, the way we experience and process information, and the impact that new technologies have on many aspects of life.

3) Limitation of human autonomy. The widespread enthusiasm for new possibilities is justified, as in the history of the world there has probably not been such widespread access to

knowledge and so many opportunities for development. Nevertheless, with the full accessibility of new technologies and the fact that people are being deprived of basic thought operations, worrying phenomena can be observed, especially in the perspective of long-term social change. Excessive contact with the media causes the destruction of key resources for self-determination, such as memory, perception, creativity, imagination, critical thinking, which in time will translate into the way decisions are made in socio-political life.

Among other things, a system of behavioural addictions is being disseminated and the so-called leaching of the will described by Shoshana Zuboff (2020, p. 520) is being introduced. "You don't see violence here, just a constant flushing out of the will, that will which determines self-determination, spoken in the first person, which is the living sanctuary of private, intimate life, the promise of public freedom".

Within the views proposed by the philosophy of dialogue, one can discover the so-called deposit of humanity (Guzdek, 2012) and the need to grow and develop.

In this sense, the dialogical paradigm is helpful in identifying attributes of human uniqueness that are difficult to translate into the language of new technologies characterised, for example, by the need to achieve faultlessness/certainty or the principle of mathematically captured description.

Conclusions

In dialogic reflection, it is difficult to count on a sudden turn in relation to technological issues. Perhaps there will be some kind of transformation of thinking about human relations transferred into social space. It can be expected that the popularisation of dialogical thought could raise awareness of the complexity, richness and importance of interpersonal relations, and that the creation of new or constant confrontation of co-presence tools with the meaning of relationality will make it possible to recall the primacy of the person over technology (Krapiec, in: Rakowski 1994).

This is one attempt to draw attention to the avoidance of discovering the meaning of life in the dimension of face-to-face relationships, which is the most challenging. In this context, representatives of the philosophy of dialogue are on a mission to remind us of relationality, which, perhaps not only through technology, we easily forget.

N O T E S

¹ There are four functions of science: descriptive, explanatory, predictive and evaluative. These constitute the universal cognitive value of science.

² The Greek word *parádeigma* is translated as ‘example, pattern’.

³ Such an attempt was made, among others, by W. Sady in his article: Kuhn kontra Fleck a Maxwellowska rewolucja w elektrodynamice, *Przegląd Filozoficzny – Nowa Seria* R. 19: 2010, No. 2 (74), pp. 103–130.

⁴ In this context, it is noteworthy that there has been a lively discussion around Kuhn’s proposal. At this point, mention should be made of Imre Lakatos’ proposal about the development of science within scientific research programmes. It is a sequence of theories that are united by having a hard core – an immutable, set of assumptions. In addition to the hard core, research programmes contain rules for making modifications.

⁵ The context of hope and hope itself appear in the works of the Polish philosopher J. Tischner as a definition of the nature of man. According to his views, inspired by the work of G. Marcel, hope is the right perspective to discover the truth and the axiological dimension of human life.

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