

BUBER'S DIALOGIC PRINCIPLE AND THE BASE OF HUMAN RIGHTS POSSIBLE INTERFERENCES

Simion Belea*

Romanian Academy, Iasi Branch, Carol I Blvd., no. 8, 700506, Iasi, Romania

(Received 4 April 2012, revised 5 May 2012)

Abstract

The aim of the present paper is to identify the possible interferences between Buber's dialogic conception regarding the human being, seen from the perspective of the rational world between 'I' and 'You' and the base of human rights, in the sense of respecting the dignity and the value of every human being. The idea of the space between 'I' and 'You', in which the dialogic being of a person fully reveals its authenticity, initiates discussions in different domains, including that of the base of human rights, for the purpose of establishing some terms of reference and promoting the authentic values in a knowledge based society. As in Buber's philosophic anthropology, a person communication with its fellow does not represent a secondary manifestation of its being, but it is imminent in every human being; it is in this way that the human rights lie on the principle of conscience autonomy and have a personal value just because they belong to a human being. The fact that I can know myself only in relation to others, may prepare the background of a new European humanism, based on the acceptance of the dialogue and on trustful relationships. Keeping in mind the fact that 'I' is not a primordial gift, but it can be accomplished only in its relationship with 'the other', a society based on the meeting and cooperation philosophy can be created, in which human rights are being respected, and relationships and dialogue constitute the base of human existence.

Keywords: human rights, dialogic principle, relationships, European humanism, cooperation philosophy

1. Human rights from the relational-valoric perspective

From an evolutionist point of view, the history of Human Rights is connected with the history of interpersonal behaviour. It is impossible to determine an exact date for the origin of these rights. We can say that it is strongly connected with the humans' conception about the world and the 'human-God' relationship, as both concepts create moral and conduct rules that govern the inter-human social relationships [1].

* E-mail: simionbla@yahoo.com, Tel.: 004 0721986176

When it was proclaimed, a realization projected in the future was expected: in its preamble, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was presented as being ‘the greatest aspiration of human being’, ‘a common ideal which was to be realized by all people and nations’, aspiration which aspects its recognition and protection by a generalization and international adoption and especially by a judicial positivization [2].

As we know, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights encloses an: ‘open’ list of fundamental rights: from the classical rights concerning the civil and political freedoms, to the economic, social and cultural rights like the right to work, the right to health care, the right to education. In this Declaration, for the first time, there are enclosed foresights referring to the relation between states, to the principle of the inviolability of human rights and to the dignity of human rights. The importance of the Declaration does not lie only in its original form but especially in its direct effects namely in the international right of human rights (an organism of legal norms which constrain the states to adopt behaviours of promoting and defending human rights) and the release of a cultural revolution process at an worldwide anthropocentric level [3].

Thereby, we have to mention that the judicialization of human rights cannot be kept to distance from the idea of justice which is related to values like human dignity and equality, based on preaching the humanist conceptions in the centre of which the concept of human fraternity, tolerance and human being’s equality were promoted as principles [4].

Human rights represent such a sociology of contemporary life which means that these rights involve facts, phenomenon, processes, social relations, mentalities, spiritual states [5].

At its origin, the Declaration was presented as a solemn ‘recommendation’ which engages the states from an ethical and political point of view as well as from a strict judicial point of view. Even though the international code of the human rights binds the states to recognize human rights and to obey some control forms and in some cases forms of international jurisdiction, it cannot fathom the individual conscience. From this perspective, the education for the human rights has a very important role in the transcription of universal values regarding justice, freedom, equality, in concrete behaviours and the building of living based on a community spirit and not an individual, isolated feeling.

This is more and more necessary, as at an ethical level, the increased globalization and the undifferentiated uniformization risks of losing its ontological base ‘fundamentum in re’, real consistency of what it is important and has meaning in life, the differentiation and classification of values. This conception can produce a polarization between the positive absolutism, the absolute relativism and the indifference towards anything [6]. In this context, the affirmation of an ontological fundament based on the value of relation, communication, dialogue and listening is important. The horizontal, interpersonal, intergenerational dimension of the relation has to be bound with

the vertical dimension, directed towards the depth of the mystery of personal and cosmic life [6, p. 75].

The human person achieves manifests and knows itself by relating to other people. The need of relationships (the need to be recognized and to recognize itself) is one of the radical needs of the personal, group and collective existence. If this relationship need is not satisfied, there can appear conflicts not only to an individual level but to a collective one.

There are plenty of contemporary situational contexts which set us in a continuous but compulsory alteration in which it is always necessary the understanding, changing of behaviours and adaptability. Thereby, the alterity as a dimension of social being gets new forms: the perception of differences and seeing them as a good thing and not as being a source of conflict, ideologically speculated, gives us another way of understanding inter-human relations from the perspective of equality and diversity. On the one hand, we are referring to people's equality in dignity, in front of the law, like human beings with rights and responsibilities, and on the other hand we mention the importance of recognizing the differences as a reality which can grow up richness through valorisation [5, p. 17]. The development and the diversification of the needs assumes a valoric pluralism, which is seldom invoked in respecting the rights, needs and values of the other. From here comes the need of conciliation between the principle of the equality in rights and dignity and that of the valorisation of differences. The right to difference and respecting the differences, their valorisation, is associated with the right to resemblance, as unifying principle in social life [5, p. 20].

2. New scripts of the relational life

We cannot deny the fact that in the contemporary society there are contextual and social tendencies which do not promote a significant relational life and which have a huge impact on life's perspective on the way of acting. The new worldwide scripts which have been noticed in the last ten years highlight the fact that not only economy changes but the way of doing politics and the social structures as well, the culture, the life, the way of learning and interlinking changes too [6, p. 71].

From these configurations, which characterize the innovatory processes from the last ten-fifteen years, we notice: 1) the economical-financial globalization and the globalized market; 2) the new technologies regarding informatics, robotics, telematics (with emphasize on 'virtual') [7]; 3) biotechnology (which allows interventions which seem to go beyond the common way of understanding the human and cultural interventions on the operative life (efficiency and success); 4) multi-culture (not only physic but virtual too, generative) ; 5) the religious climate between the lack of sense and the search for sense and the new forms of religiosity, fragmentation and relativism, indifference, insignificance, the reactive forms of fundamentalism, intolerance and racism [6, p. 71].

These present scripts highlight the weaknesses and the difficulties of the ‘post-modern’ western culture, marking defaults and false expectations of absolutism and political and civilization universality, based on the scientific-technological rationalism and the anthropocentric conception (‘homo copernicanus’) and almighty (‘homo faber suae fortunae’). These new scripts have contested and created a real crisis of the ‘solid western modernity’, the structures and the culture which have been consolidated by creating a new condition, that of the ‘fluid modernity’ or of the ‘liquid modernity’ (in which networks, fluxes, uncertainty, unforeseeable, confusion are predominant). This state offers on the one hand new opportunities in terms of freedoms related to the multiple economical, social and cultural restrictions existent in the past, but, on the other hand, they generate fear, profound concerning, emotional vulnerability, irritability and impulsivity, a low tolerance and resistance from a psychological point of view, both in the case of the individual and groups, or other social parts [6, p. 71-72].

In nowadays society, real relationships have the tendency to pass in a secondary plan towards the virtual relationships. These aspects can lead to a departure towards ‘the others’ as real people and a tendency more and more marked by to think, to live, to relate in a virtual way which distances from the real needs of the others [6, p. 74]. Though, we don’t have to forget that human rights are an expression of the individual and social needs and the need to relate, mutual respect and reciprocal opening have to be cultivated by an adequate education. Thereby, it is important to establish some guidelines for promoting the authentic values, guidelines which can be found in the philosophy of dialogue and inter-human relationships.

3. The philosophy of dialogue and human rights

The philosophy of the dialogue between ‘I’ and ‘You’, in which the dialogical being of humans fully reveals its authenticity, initiates discussions in different domains, among which that related to the fundament of human rights, with the aim of establishing some reference guidelines and promoting authentic values. The philosophy of dialogue and meeting, practiced by Buber brings original ideas about the issue of the human being, of the dialogue and of the interpersonal relationships, of the human-nature relationships and of the relationships between human and God. The central concept from Buber’s philosophy is the relation ‘I-You’, relation which allows the development of personality as well as promoting the respect and the openness of the one in front of the other by dialogue and communication [8].

In Buber’s philosophy the distinction between the phrase ‘I-You’ and the phrase ‘I-That’ is primary because it designates two types of fundamental attitudes of the human being towards the world and towards his fellow. The relation ‘I-You’ implies meeting and dialogue between free individuals which discover one another as ‘You’. From this perspective, ‘I’ is not an autonomous basic element, but only in its relation with ‘You’ it can accomplish its

individuality. Buber in fact does not start from individual's subjectivity, but from the dialogical relation 'I-You' which is primary. In change, in the case of the 'I-That' relations, the relations between individuals are impersonal, neutral and pure utilitarian. While the word 'I-You' can be said by the entire being, the word 'I-That' cannot be said by the entire being, being in fact two ways of to be, to do, and not only to say [9]. According to the literary theoretician A. Gavrillov, the cognitive-practical 'I-That' relation is necessary for making possible the achievement of the dialogue, meaning that people sometimes have to find themselves in the area of utilitarian and practice, disadvantaging the spiritual dimension [9, p. 196-197].

Thus, the way of dialogue 'I-You', generated to the social level, is reflected in the fact that the individual becomes a real presence not only when he is in a real relation with the others, perceived as equal partners of dialogue. His ideas correlate with a natural morality, in which the distinction between good and bad, love and closeness towards the fellows can constitute a premise which strengthens the fundament of the human rights.

According to V. Tonoiu, the world of the relation created by the fundament word 'I-You' implies: a) the life with creatures (in this case the relationship is not explained by speech); b) the life with people (the relationship is explained verbally, meaning we can give and receive the You); c) the life with spirituality (here, even though the relationship is mute, it creates a speech: we don't distinguish at You, but we feel the calling of giving an answer) [10]. Here we can notice the fact that the relationship is possible both in the presence of dialogue as well as in its lack. This does not represent for Buber a contradiction because for him 'the word' is an ontological reality, and the speech is only an exterior manifestation. 'The word' is identical with relation and relation is an ontological reality.

Thereby, for Buber, dialogue is not only a fact of speech or of knowledge, but rather a fact of living which is reflected in the relationships with our fellows. For fastening those presented up to now, as a conclusion, we can say that that in Buber's philosophy, being together with the others means the opening of the self and their recognition as unique human beings, sense which is found in the fundaments of Human Rights as well.

The universality of human rights itself implies a simple and elementary idea, meaning the possibility of the existence of a communication in a 'common' humanity, based on the recognition of alteration. If it weren't like this, individuals and groups would be closed worlds, incapable of achieving a real knowledge of the good. The objective knowledge of good and bad requires the ability to overcome auto-preferences, of going beyond the perception of our own good as a priority for the simple fact that is 'own'. This thing is possible only if we are capable to develop authentically and emphatic relationships [11]. The capacity of recognizing the good represent a sense donation act towards the other, and act of accepting alteration [12]. In this context, we have to recognize the right of the other to participate to the common dialogue (*a right of interlocution*), the right of expression being one of the fundamental rights which

has at its base the possibility of intercultural dialogue. The possibility of knowing the other as being different from us, of understanding him as being part of our history and of participating into a dialogue with diversity are some important aspects of human being [13].

From this perspective, the moments of crisis of a society and a community are nothing but a more and more articulate division between the inside and the outside world, between the world of 'institutions' and of 'feelings', in other words between the world of a 'You' and the world of an 'I'.

In conclusion, a philosophy of dialogue in which 'I' can know I only through the other's eyes, looking at me, appreciating me from outside, from the point of view of the other, can prepare the field for a new European humanism based on the acceptance of dialogue and trustful relationships. Taking into consideration the fact that 'I' is not primary given and it can be achieved only in its relation with 'You', there can be created the foundation of a society based on the philosophy of meeting and cooperation in which human rights are respected and relation and dialogue would be the fundament of human existence.

Acknowledgement

This paper was made within The Knowledge Based Society Project supported by the Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development (SOP HRD), financed from the European Social Fund and by the Romanian Government under the contract number POSDRU ID 56815.

References

- [1] I.M. Zlătescu, *Drepturile omului – un sistem în evoluție*, Romanian Institute for Human Rights (IRDO), București, 2008, 9.
- [2] I. Adinolfi, *Diritti umani. Realtà e utopia*, in *Diritti umani. Realtà e utopia*, I. Adinolfi (ed.), Città Nuova Editrice, Roma, 2004, 8.
- [3] A. Papisca, *L'impegno per la promozione e la tutela dei diritti umani: fonti normative, contenuti e strumenti*, in *Valori e diritti umani*, A. Agnati, A. Battisti, U. Cerroni, C.M. Martini, J. Mejia, R. Meneghelli, A. Papisca, L. Sartori and P. Vanzan (eds.), Gregoriana Libreria Editrice, Padova, 1990, 17.
- [4] L. Barac, *Elemente de teoria drepturilor*, All Beck, București, 2001, 17.
- [5] M. Voinea and C. Bulzan, *Sociologia drepturilor omului*, Editura Universității din București, București, 2003, 16.
- [6] C. Nanni, *Antropologia della relazione e formazione*, in *Formazione e comunità cristiana. Un contributo al futuro itinerario*, L. Meddi (ed.), Urbaniana University Press, Roma, 2006, 74.
- [7] F. Fukuyama, *L'uomo oltre l'uomo*, Mondadori, Milano, 2002, 7.
- [8] M. Buber, *I and You*, Romanian translation by Ș.A. Doinaș, Humanitas, București, 1992.
- [9] A. Gavriloș, *Criterii de științificitate a terminologiei literare. Vol. I. Principiul obiectivității. O mutație paradigmatică de la raportul subiect/obiect la raportul subiect/subiect. Eseu de epistemologie*, Academia de Științe a Moldovei, Institutul de Filologie, Chișinău, 2007, 195.

- [10] V. Tonoiu, *Omul dialogal*, Fundația Culturală Română, București, 1995, 14.
- [11] M. Walzer, *Nations and Universe*, in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values: Volume XI*, G.B. Peterson (ed.), University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 1990, 510-515.
- [12] V. Melchiorre, *Persona ed etica*, in *L'idea di persona*, V. Melchiorre (ed.), Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 1996, 149-162.
- [13] F. Viola, *L'universalità dei diritti umani: un'analisi concettuale*, in *Universalismo ed etica pubblica*, Annuario di Etica n. 3, F. Botturi and F. Totaro (eds), Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 2006, 187.