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APPROACH

TO OF THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE BASED ON HISTORICAL RESEARCH

ACERCAMIENTO AL CONCEPTO CULTURA EN FUNCIÓN DE UNA INVESTIGACIÓN HISTÓRICA

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ABSTRACT

This article is conceived regarding the thesis in development History of pre-university education in the province of Las Tunas from 1971-2020, which aims to present an approach to the concept of culture from the theoretical analysis of interdisciplinary relationships that are they establish between it and history, which are treated in the research as part of its theoretical frame of reference. Concepts addressed and defined from different approaches that make them controversial. History is understood as the science that studies the role of the masses and personalities in social development and reflects Marx's thought on it. In this sense, the dialectical-materialist approach inherent to the Marxist-Leninist Philosophy in its double character of theory and scientific method of knowledge, is the main way in the proposed objective and governs the processes of analysis-synthesis, induction-deduction and the historical-logical method. These allowed offering assessments on the relationship and importance of culture and history in the investigative process and it is concluded that these complement and interact organically.

Keywords:

Culture, historical research, interdisciplinary relationships.

RESUMEN

Se concibe el presente artículo a propósito de la tesis en desarrollo Historia de la educación preuniversitaria en la provincia de Las Tunas de 1971-2020, el cual traza como objetivo presentar un acercamiento al concepto cultura desde el análisis teórico de las relaciones interdisciplinarias que se establecen entre esta y la historia, las cuales se tratan en la investigación como parte de su marco de referencia teórico. Conceptos abordados y definidos desde diferentes aproximaciones que los hacen polémicos. Se comprende la Historia como la ciencia que estudia el papel de las masas y las personalidades en el devenir social y se refleja el pensamiento de Marx sobre ella. En este sentido, el enfoque dialéctico-materialista inherente a la Filosofía Marxista-Leninista en su doble carácter de teoría y método científico del conocimiento, es la vía principal en el objetivo planteado y rige los procesos de análisis-síntesis, inducción-deducción y el método histórico-lógico. Estos permitieron ofrecer valoraciones sobre la relación e importancia de la cultura y la historia en el proceso investigativo y se concluye que estas se complementan e interactúan de manera orgánica.

Palabras clave:

Cultura, investigación histórica, relaciones interdisciplinarias.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most addressed and defined concepts from different approaches have been that of culture. It is also one of the most controversial among those used by social scientists to carry out their respective research work. In the theoretical field, its relationship with history has been analyzed in scientific discussions that, apart from its successes or contributions, do not include all the wealth of possible reflections that can be derived from them.

On the other hand, History, recognized by Marxism-Leninism, as the science that studies the role of the masses and personalities in the social evolution; the development of concatenated events, processes and phenomena conditioned by causal, temporal and spatial relationships (Pestana et al, 2014), has close points of contact with culture (Lull & Neiva, 2011; Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2016; Rodríguez Ugalde & Solís Domínguez, 2019).

This article is the result of considerations on the concept of culture based on historical research. Its objective is to present an approach to the concept of culture from the theoretical analysis of the interdisciplinary relationships that are established between it and history as a science.

The thesis is shared that the concepts of culture and history are closely interrelated and inseparable concepts in the historian's practice. History is enriched from the study and understanding of cultural elements and, in turn, culture is favored by historical researches.

METHODOLOGY

The dialectical-materialist path of study was used, typical of the Marxist-Leninist Philosophy in its double character of theory and scientific method of knowledge, to achieve the stated objective and govern the processes of analysis-synthesis, induction-deduction and the historical-logical method that were applied in the study.

As previously stated, the concept of culture has been addressed by a multiplicity of authors and there are contributions from scholars of the theory about it. Based on an investigation of a historical nature, we can start from the definition of the British anthropologist Edward B. Tylor, who in 1871 conceived culture as *"... that totality that includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morality, law, customs and any other aptitudes and habits that man acquires as a member of society"* (Lévi-Strauss, 1992, p. 368).

The sociological trend, headed by Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, conceived culture as "a set of social phenomena" (Cucho, 1997, p. 24) and, later, a psychological approach described it as "what allows the individual to integrate a given society and expresses itself through typical and attitudes behaviors" (Cucho, 1997, p.24).

Malinowski, in the first decades of the 20th century, considered that culture was similar to a system in stable equilibrium in which each element fulfills a defined function. Later, in 1940, structuralist anthropologists, led by Claude Lévi-Strauss, spoke of culture as "that which obeys common construction rules that are universal mental structures of an abstract nature" (Cucho, 1997, p. 24).

For Claval (1998) *"Culture is the result of an unfinished process of construction of identities carried out by people. This process establishes the categories with which individuals and societies analyze reality, always starting from a local scale. At a time when culture is approached in terms of communication, the landscape retains attention because it supports representations and because it is the mark and matrix of culture. In the renewal of French cultural geography, ethno geography invites us to reflect on the diversity of representation and techniques with which people model space in their image and according to their values"* (p.1).

Finally, from its perspective of social system, Marxism conceived culture as the logic that runs through the social system and whose particularities are associated with the modes of production that *"condition the process of social, political and intellectual life in general"* (Zapata, 2000, p.145). Culture is considered theory, while Anthropology is understood as the *"discipline of the social sciences that marks social/cultural systems as its own domain for study and theorizing. As a science, anthropology reflects the empirical realities of the systemic order with which it deals"* (Boggs, 2004, p. 187).

The first thing that must be taken into account is that this extremely complex whole that is culture is inserted in the historical process, it is the result of historical practice. What is important in this case is to access the conceptual world of individuals and interact dialogically with them to decipher the meanings of the cultural fact" (Geertz, 1996, p. 334). Calduch (2003, p. 3) comes to define it as follows *"the different spiritual, historical and material elements that make up the consciousness or collective identity and the ways of life of the members of a certain society"*. (p.3)

From a culturist conception that defined culture in terms of "behavior models", it passed to a symbolic conception that began with Geertz (1992) in the seventies. Geertz (1992) by defining culture as meaning patterns restricts the concept of culture by reducing it to the realm of symbolic facts. He also states that culture is presented as a "web of meanings" that we ourselves have woven around ourselves and within which we are ineluctably trapped (Geertz, 1992).

With the contributions of Carlos Marx, the foundations of modern social science are enriched and an idea of culture is projected that defines human nature by the relationship

of the individual with his environment and with the satisfaction of his basic needs.

"In other words, as a fundamentally biological being, the individual needs to satisfy his subsistence needs; but contrary to the other species, to satisfy them, the human being is a laboring being: through production the human being produces and is produced" (Mendes, 2013, p. 5).

The concept of culture that Marx elaborates indirectly is historical and transformative. Individuals create culture and, in a reverse or dialectical movement, culture provides the conditions for individuals to create scientific, aesthetic, legal, or other systems of thought. In the words of Donham (1999), *"production is the privileged entry point of view to understand how individuals make their own history, although not exactly how they choose it"* (p. 58) That is why, from a dialectical materialist perspective, human cultures are much more than reified and static entities.

The idea is expressed in the preface of Contribution to the critique of political economy, Marx (1986), expresses: *"in the social production of their existence, men establish certain relations, necessary and independent of their will, relations of production that they correspond to a certain stage of evolutionary development of their material productive forces. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real base on which a legal and political structure is raised, and to which certain forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production of material life determines the social, political and intellectual process of life in general. It is not the conscience of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, it is their social existence that determines their conscience"* (p. 4).

When events distant or close in time are analyzed, interpretations are made, interpretations are interpreted and, as Geertz (1992) continues, we even have to explain explanations despite working on the basis of sources primary (speeches, letters, laws or personal testimonies).

This is due not only to the human, natural and social, personal-collective subjectivity, involuntary and unconscious of the different views and thoughts of the protagonists; it is also due to the multiple actions of these social actors and the various motivations and circumstances that led them to carry out their actions. The interpretation of reality is a social product, but as a cognitive process, it is inherent to the human being. It is the cause and consequence of the socialization process and is part of the potentials of the human being.

For Geertz (1996), science is interpretive and man is an animal inserted in webs of significance that he himself has woven. Culture is that warp and the analysis of culture must therefore be not an experimental science in search of laws, but an interpretive science in search of meanings.

What he seeks is explanation, interpreting social expressions that are enigmatic on their surface.

Other authors consider that writing history is interpreting the past. The historian recounts and is aware that he recounts. Each history book represents a fragment of the past and, at the same time, is given as a representation of this fragment of the past (Chartier, 1995). For decades, historiography has been oriented towards becoming an interpretation of the everyday, of the diversity given in a singular time and space. It advances towards the understanding of historical practice, of the historical fact, through the exposition of the witnesses, through their representations of the fact and their interpretations.

However, that does not mean that historical research does not have a scientific character. Certainly to address its object of study, it develops through principles and procedures of the scientific method; it is a Humanistic discipline since historians analyze and record individual and group events in society, the role that individuals play in institutions and fundamentally the meaning of events in the context where they arose.

In this sense, according to Chartier, historiography can only be scientific if it includes the possibility of establishing a set of rules that allow controlling operations proportionate to the production of determined objects (Chartier, 1995). In *Written culture, literature and history. Conversations with Roger Chartier*, the scientist again questions the scientific status of historiography, but announces conditions. Its strengthening depends, according to him, on the recovery of all epistemology of the coincidence between the facts and their representation in the historical account, the relationship, quite problematic, between practices and textualization (Chartier, 1995).

Approaching history from the perspective of social representations obeys the purpose of marking distance with the traditional historiographical method and methodology and, above all, with traditional political history. Therefore, all our efforts go against traditional political history, which is the history of political events (Chartier, 1995).

It is not a matter of annulling the event as a historical fact since, since the origins of historiography, action, historical practice has been its object of study and must continue to be so; but the scientist is not allowed to approach the fact in its spatiotemporal singularity. It is only possible for him to make it his own to the extent that the actor and/or witness relate it, explain it, interpret it.

It is what Chartier calls the practical relations of representation, while reflecting on the two dimensions of representation: what represents something and what is represented by something. But he warns about the risk of dissolving the practices within their representations, which necessarily forces us to rethink the very concept of representation

and to re-articulate the relationships that we have discussed between representations of a historical narrative and the social practices that are they give through this production of representations (Chartier, 1995, p. 23).

When we rely on historicism as a principle of scientific knowledge and research, which involves the study of phenomena in their development and in their connection with the historical-specific conditions that determine them, we can examine the phenomena as a product of a certain development historical. The opinion of Pérez (2001) is considered accurate when he expresses: *“By selecting certain facts from a great mass of them, the historian begins to organize and interpret them, and ends by explaining them. As he analyzes and explains the localized factual material, he understands it better ... The investigation begins by studying the specific circumstances, the place and the time in which the historical event occurred and clarifies the role that it can play in a general process of socio-economic development of the corresponding historical stage”* (p.15)

As Cánovas and Chávez (2002) refer, *“to periodize is not only to divide universal, regional or national history for its study, with more or less order, but on the contrary, it is necessary to specify the fundamental stages through which a given period has gone through historical process or a personality under study”*(p.9).

Consequently, when determining periodization, dividing lines are established in the historical time of the object under study, marking lapses in its development that are distinguished by sufficiently important features to make them qualitatively different from each other.

For its part, historical research has the following characteristics according to Bárbara et. al. (2014)

- a. This type of research depends on data observed by others, rather than by the researcher himself.
- b. These data are of two kinds: primary sources, derived from the observation and direct recording of events by their author; secondary sources, whose author reports observations previously made by others. Primary sources are first-hand evidence and should be used preferably.
- c. Sources must be subjected to two types of criticism: external criticism, which determines the authenticity of the document; and the internal critic, which examines the possible motives, prejudices and limitations of the author of the document that may have determined him to exaggerate, distort or omit information (p. 5)

We agree with the statement that history should be rigorous, systematic, and in some ways exhaustive, that it should not be an undisciplined recollection of inappropriate and unreliable information. Culture and history should go hand in hand because even if one tries to theorize

about the supremacy of one or the other, the truth is that they are closely related.

An example of the above can be evidenced through a selection of terms used in the theory of culture and in history.

Enculturation: process in which the individual is cultured.

Acculturation: cultural change forced or imposed by conquest or invasion.

Deculturation: loss of own cultural traits due to the imposition of others.

Enculturation: Integration of the individual into another culture through acceptance and dialogue with members of that culture.

Transculturation: formation of a new cultural quality

In other aspects it also has similarities as it is in the methodological one because both require the development of the scope of action, participant observation, case studies, life stories. They are based on techniques and instruments for data collection: diaries, genealogies, descriptions, photographs, videos, etc.

Perhaps the error of current historical researchers is in the form and style of writing, which is why it is considered that they are not capable of transmitting the message to the reader with clarity and coherence. No constituting bedside-table books to which to turn as a form of distraction.

Saving the part that remains, we must clarify that the intention of these investigations is to safeguard the identity of the nation, region or locality, with the social sciences being their most effective weapon. “The investigations developed in the social sciences define stages, analyze groups and societies with scientific methods. There is no human activity that is alien to the social sciences, and its study will always serve as a starting point to achieve transformations in society (Cárdenas, 2007, p.105).

CONCLUSIONS

Cultural analysis is still very topical today, culture as a subject of study has been expanding its researches, ranging from the social as an object of analysis to other topics that cover various issues such as the subtlety of popular life, politics of sports, professional capacity or the social construction of science.

The relationship between culture and history, as we have handled in this research, complement each other and interact organically, since they constitute parts that should not be separated in any historical investigation.

When analyzing the educational reforms carried out in the country, in the context of which the evolution of pre-university education in the province of Las Tunas takes place, the close relationships that exist between the concepts of history and culture are taken into account, as one of the

fundamental ideas of the investigative process developed by the author for the critical study of this evolution.

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