

OPINION

A New Approach to Understanding the World

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Abstract: The 'new approach' provides a paradigm for the treatment of socio-ecological systems. For this purpose, the method of teaching must be given equal weight alongside the type of decision making. Its conceptual framework has five kinds of questions corresponding to a fivefold knowledge. This new framework helps the individual to develop self-respect and, through a better appreciation of his own strengths and limitations, to recognize false theories.

There are two basic ways of understanding life:

a) as observers: describing life without leading it; and

b) as participants: organizing life and looking for ways in which to influence the life situation.

A consequence of this is that 'to know' and 'to be able to' appear to be contradictory to each other. This leads to misunderstandings typical of the 'technical society'.

It is necessary to bridge this gap and to find channels for communication between the two human types mentioned above: the observer and the participant. In this way, the contradiction between 'to know' and 'to be able to' can be reduced.

The two human types - the observer and the participant - are expressions of two different world views. We have to make the world view clear before talking about, for example, practical aspects of the utilization of computers for teaching.

When preparing a choice of alternatives to make a decision, the following questions must be answered:

- a) What is the problem?
- b) What do we want?
- c) What are the alternatives?
- d) How do we compare them?
- e) How can we reach a solution?

This indicates that five kinds of knowledge must be produced and combined, namely: factual, denotative, explanatory, instrumental and conceptual knowledge.

The answers to these questions will produce an adequate process of decision making and will reduce the need for rational 'prayer-books'.

The industrial society is based on the concept of productivity. It is therefore necessary to answer the following questions:

- a) Productivity for increasing the production of what?
- b) Production with what purpose?
- c) Increase of productivity at what ecological and human cost?

The answers to these questions will make it clear which kind of development we have chosen, which is a result of the world view that has been adopted.

It is necessary to think of a world based on pluralism of values and openness. Such a world can be achieved if answers are found to the following questions: What is the problem? What do we want? What are the alternatives? How do we compare them? and How can we reach a solution? as presented above,

However, these answers must be regarded as provisional constructs which will help us in reaching a state of adequate decision making. Provisional constructs will help us to think accurately and to act efficiently without becoming absolute 'truths'. The scientific-technical way of thinking should not destroy openness.

The consequence of what I have said for the purpose of this opinion is a call for finding ways of reducing our dependence on computer technology. This means that we have to understand that computers are instruments to help us and are not ends in themselves.

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Biographical notes

Bilyana Papazova is a scientific worker at the Institute of Philosophy, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Her views on education and training are based on her interest in human ecology and the possibilities of environmental assessment, manage-

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