

Stodola, Jiří

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Jiří Stodola

THE IDEA OF UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE LIBRARY.

ITS EPISTEMIOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND ETHICAL BASIS. A NEED FOR A PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH.

Zajímavosti z oboru

Abstrakt:

Článek se zabývá potřebou výzkumu v oblasti epistemologie a etiky pro teoretické ukotvení myšlenky všeobecného vzdělání a univerzálně přístupné knihovny. Intuitivně chápané právo na vzdělání a s ním spojená myšlenka univerzálně přístupné knihovny potřebuje v dnešním globalizujícím se světě nové promyšlení, aby odolala útokům relativizujících filosofických koncepcí. Ukazuje se, že obě spojené myšlenky vyžadují jednak ukotvení epistemologické, jednak ukotvení etické. V článku je navržen možný filosofický výzkum, který by umožnil nově legitimizovat, jak myšlenku všeobecné vzdělanosti, tak myšlenku univerzálně přístupné knihovny.

Klíčová slova: *všeobecná vzdělanost, univerzálně přístupná knihovna, epistemologie, etika, výzkum*

Abstract:

The article deals with a need for a research in the area of epistemology and ethics for the theoretical anchoring of ideas of general education and universally accessible library. The right to education and the associated idea of universally accessible library (both intuitively understood) in today's globalizing world are needed to be newly thought out in order that to be able to resist attacks of the relativistic philosophical concepts. It turns out that these connected ideas require epistemological and ethical anchoring. In the article, there is designed a possible philosophical research that would allow newly legitimize, as the idea of universal education, so the idea of universally accessible library.

Keywords: *general education, universally accessible library, epistemology, ethics, research*

1 Introduction

We live in schizophrenic times. On the one hand, there is sought for unification and standardization in many areas of practical activities, on the other hand, there is shown a theoretical aversion to universal concepts. This is a reason, why the idea of unification, which is politically and economically supported (for example the idea of universal cataloguing rules in the area of library and information science), is in opposition to the mass extended theses about uniqueness of each experience, about inability to grasp the world in universal categories, and even about unnaturalness of such efforts (Postmodernism). Due to this fact, all efforts to standardization and unification, which are intuitively perceived as useful, loses its theoretical underpinning.

The idea of universal education, which has its origins in a medieval conception of university, together with the idea of widespread education, which is associated with the efforts of Enlightenment philosophers, and also the idea of universal and universally accessible library (Gessner, Naudé, Otlet, Lasswitz), related to the previous ideas as a means to an end, suffers from that schizophrenic situation. On the one hand, there is called for necessity of a general outlook and approach in education and for common standards that should be able to ensure universal access to education (universal learning design), enabling access to education for everybody (from mainstream society, despite different ethnic and linguistic minorities, to people with a different type of disability), on the other hand, the fragmentation and utilisation of education continues and certain conceptions refer not only to culture cross and totality of efforts to universal and universally accessible education, but also to their principal impossibility.

2 The social need for the research

The values that emerged from the traditions of the European civilization are currently under the influence of the globalizing world in the process of crisis, which has two sources. The first source comes from the confrontation with the values of other cultures, which confrontation necessarily takes place through the development of communication technologies. The second source is internal - European thinking has reached a stage, when it begins to doubt about itself as well as about the values, on which it stands. These values include the idea of universal and universally accessible education and the idea of universal and universally accessible library. In practice, these ideas are still considered valid and their implementation important, even when their theoretical foundations are in the process of a massive questioning. If our practical efforts had to stand on solid foundations, their theoretical basis would have to be again critically thought out and it would be necessary to confront them with the

views, which does not accept them. If we had not to insist on them in merely dogmatic way, or to reckless abandon them as illegitimate, it would be necessary to develop some mental effort, based primarily on intellectual honesty, even with the risk that what we intuitively consider to be right will prove false. Such a critical research the possibilities and rightness of efforts to creation of universal and universally accessible library should be a main goal of the future research.

3 The research aims

The future research should belong to philosophy and theory of library and information science and philosophy and theory of education. The research should focus on the epistemological and ethical basis of the idea of universal and universally accessible library, which must be regarded as a tool for implementing the idea of universal and widespread education. This idea requires an inquiry into its assumptions in two areas, which are identified by questions that we ask reality, especially because of although the necessity to implement this idea in praxis is without doubt, many modern philosophies permanently deny it (Postmodernism). The first is a Kantian question "what can we know?". The hypothetical possibility of universal library depends on answering this question. The second question is also asked by philosopher from Königsberg and it sounds "what should we do?". The question of whether the idea of widespread education associated with the idea of universally accessible library is right belongs to the category of previous question.

In answering the first question, it is important to analyze the possibility of human cognition, characterized as a reception of information, the possibility of grasping reality in general categories and the associated possibility of creating an universal system of knowledge organization, and last but not least, the capacity of various codes to transmit knowledge.

In answering the second question, it is necessary to look for deeper roots of universally declared rights to education and access to information, it is needed to ask, where have these rights their basis, how should we them correctly understood, and how can it be properly applied – these issues relate to particular area of information ethics.

The result of the research should provide answers to questions a) "is the idea of universal and universally accessible library at least theoretically possible?", b) "is it possible to find the latest reason for universal rights to education and access to information?"

4 The possible research structure

1. The idea of universal and universally accessible library. Historical overview and basic characteristics.
2. Epistemological assumptions
 - a. An inquiry into the epistemic value of knowledge. The issues of truth, objectivity and certainty of knowledge. Subjectivism, positivism, agnosticism, realism.
 - b. Knowledge as an information process. The concept of information in historical context. Information as a transdisciplinary term. Information as a unique concept for information science. Distinction of information, energy and material processes as a precondition for the possibility of knowledge. Monism and dualism.
 - c. A knowledge organization. Ontological structure of reality and information retrieval languages. Positivism, instrumentalism, postmodernism, critical realism. (Do our information retrieval languages depend on our sensorial or cultural ways of understanding reality? Is possible to create an universal information retrieval language?)
 - d. A communicability of knowledge. A relationship between information and code: a possibility of encoding identical information through a variety of codes. Language constructivism, postmodernism, realism. (Is identical information conserved through the process of the multiple translations?)
3. Ethical basis
 - a. Human rights. Legal positivism and natural law. (Does natural right to education and free access to information exist?)
 - b. The right to freedom of scientific research. Utilitarianism and deontological ethics. (Is ethical to do everything what we technically are able to do?)
 - c. The right to freedom of expression. Freedom of speech and censorship. (Is allowed to spread every true idea in public?)
 - d. The right to intellectual property. Copyright and right to free access to information. (How should we understand a relationship between information and its author?)

- e. The right to free access to information. Right to free access to information and right to privacy. (A danger of the misuse of information).
 - f. The right to education. The right to education and pragmatism. (Does every person have right to university education?)
4. Conclusion: The idea of universal and universally accessible library in the light of the previous investigations.

5 Research methods

A method of the research should consist mainly of the philosophical analysis. There should be present the various conceptions of the issues, their basic arguments should be explicated and there should be investigated, which basis is for each area most reasonable. In conclusion, the findings should be applied to the idea of universal and universally accessible library and there should be investigated what does it mean for this idea.

6 Conclusion

The idea of centralisation and unification is under the attack of relativistic philosophical concepts. This situation leads to the needs to newly think out the basis, on which these ideas stand. That's why a new philosophical research in the area of epistemology and ethics should start.

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