

## Phenomen of asymmetry in the dialogue of civilizations and cultures

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this article is to analyze asymmetry as the qualitative characteristic of the dialogue of cultures and civilizations. The author examines the asymmetry of dialogic interaction as a multidimensional phenomenon being studied now by representatives of different areas of scientific knowledge, but having no definition in the humanitarian field boundaries and specifications. This article's thesis states that the asymmetry is a qualitative characteristic of intersubjective dialogue, including dialogue among civilizations and cultures, based on non-equilibrium positions of its subjects, their status and resources.

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**Keywords:** asymmetry of the dialogue, dialogue of civilizations and cultures, the imbalance of the positions, reduction of the dialogue, complementarity in the dialogue.

### Introduction

Contemporary academic literature treats asymmetry as a "lack of symmetry" or "disorder", as well as "unlikeness", i.e. as the polar opposite of symmetry. However, the relationship of symmetry and asymmetry, of course, is much more complicated and multifaceted. It is more difficult because the world around us is missing the pure forms of both. It can be argued that these two categories are in absolute struggle and should be regarded as temporary states of the same object. In addition, due to the fact that the asymmetry reflects the objective reality existing in the temporary absence of balance, equilibrium and proportionality between the individual parts of a whole, the asymmetry is the basis and sign of evolution of each system and process in animate and inanimate nature. Accordingly, the asymmetry is considered a qualitative description of an object of the surrounding reality or subject / subjects of interpersonal interaction, the main content of which is the lack of equilibrium and proportionality.

In recent years, the asymmetries application to the interaction between civilizations, cultures and countries, was finally paid attention to. Given the fixed scientific interest in this issue, in the context of its political science aspect was formed "ideology of asymmetry" or "philosophy of multipolarity" with such sub-categories as "asymmetric conflict", "asymmetry of interests", "asymmetrical response", "power asymmetry", [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10] etc. Thus, according to L.Deriglazova, in international interactions, asymmetry should be understood as "lack of identity between the subjects and between the resources they own and statuses, tactics and strategies of international behavior" [11]. At the same time, according to the S.P. Pozeluev, asymmetry in

the political dialogue "can have different manifestations, but it is always an exercise of power" [12, p.88].

In the social sciences the concept of asymmetry is in its infancy and has no clarity, boundaries or specifications. In addition, the claim of the coexistence of symmetry and asymmetry in interpersonal interactions or interactions of civilizations and cultures as dialogue of their "personalized poles" requires specification. However, we emphasize that the notions of "symmetry" and "asymmetry" "are useful for analysis of the relationship parts of a whole and not to compare the individual elements of independent or unrelated entities" [13] (L.Deriglazova).

It seems that since the term "response" can be interpreted as one of the replicas of the dialogue, asymmetry should be seen as a characteristic of intercultural dialogue, in which as "in any synchronous state" it is possible, in the interpretation of Lotman, to fix "conflictual tension and compromise of divergent trends" [14, p. 601].

The presence of asymmetry in the dialogue is repeatedly recorded by the researchers of dialogue as opposed to assumed equality of its members. In semiotic aspect, asymmetry in the dialogue was considered by Lotman, who in the "Asymmetry and dialogue" stressed that the dialogue is a sign of rupture or asymmetry of the position of its members when they partially overlap. Russian classic of dialogics Bakhtin, noted that the dialogic relationship is a relationship between the "equal and equivalent consciousnesses". Thus, he emphasized that it is the interaction of subjects with equal rights to express their opinion and a specific decision on further dialogue, its effectiveness, etc. In this context, the affirmation of the contemporary American

philosopher S. Behanbib is that the dialogue has rather a "presumption of equality" than the actual equality is clear [15, p. 10]. All of the above convinces us that during the analysis of a dialogue we should distinguish between the wrongfully declared equality of dialogue participants and their inherent equality that can be implemented in a variety of formats.

The reason for the asymmetry of dialogue is that when the minds of the subjects are equal, the dialogue has a mismatch from the very beginning, and hence a possible clash of views, attitudes, perceptions of the other side and the expected outcome of the dialogue itself [16]. "Dialogue - a clash of different minds, different truths dissimilar cultural positions constituting a single mind, a single truth and common culture" – written in relation to that by LM Batkin [17, p.184].

Asymmetry is related to the fact that the subjects of the dialogue make an unequal contribution to its development and effectiveness. Characterizing the initial mismatch, psychologist LG Dmitriev says that the asymmetry of the dialogue is produced by "nonequilibrium mental states of subjects' interaction" [18, p.18]. Meanwhile, the "I" turns out to be not available in the dialog function of "Other", as it is the "Other" that supplements "I," and adds "integrity" to its image. Sometimes asymmetry is determined by the characteristics of one specific subject of the dialogue, creating his own individual profile of asymmetry. In this case, it may reflect, for example, the disparity of intellectual characteristics of the subject of dialogue and his social status, which also contributes to the formation of proportionality in this kind of interaction.

Unmeasurable, i.e. asymmetric, is the degree of speech activity of the subjects or the shift of the speech center in the dialogue process. This process is a constant change of activity and passivity of its members, that is the constant change of roles "speaker" and the "listener", as well as the fact that in the dialogue, as we mentioned earlier, each subsequent statement stimulated by the previous one. According to MM Bakhtin, in the dialogue as its active beginning acts the answer as a "manifestation of a particular understanding." Such disproportionality demands an understanding that "one must be prepared for possible difficulties in arranging contacts" from the personality of flexibility in the dialog interaction [18, p. 23]. Demonstration of the flexibility of the subject of the dialogue becomes complementarity included in the process of interaction, meaning recognition or concession different perspective. In addition, reduction dialogue, i.e. absence (final or temporary) response cues can be an extreme consequence of complementarity [19, 20].

Furthermore, the asymmetry and the disequilibrium of the dialogue are the consequences of the fact that each interaction – is a primarily change of state of the interacting subjects, that may not be the same for each of them. In other words, between the subjects of the dialogue "there is no and cannot be an equality "(Novikov LN) which allows us to confidently state that the equality of the subjects of dialogue does not imply the equality of their "sound."

Thus, the dialogue is asymmetrical due to deep differences between "I" and "Other", the initial asymmetry status of participants, including the disproportionate psychological positions posed by participants in the dialogue at each other, and sometimes due to asymmetry of the characteristics of one and the same subject of dialogue.

A special role is played by the asymmetry in the dialogue among civilizations, cultures and countries as in an interaction of complex systems, where we can often find the master and the follower, dominant and subordinate, the one determining the development of the specific situation and the one who takes this situation, etc [21, 22, 23]. As noted by V. Bibler, cultural dialogue is a dialogue between different cultures of thinking, different forms of understanding, which refers to the duality of the truth itself [24, p. 299].

The difficulty lies in the fact that in this interaction the roles and the statuses of its subjects do not remain constant, which complicates the process of dialogue and gives the asymmetry of this kind of dialogue additional features. However, as stressed by L. Deriglazova, correct use of the term "asymmetry" requires that "the relationship between the subjects studied using the concepts of symmetry/ asymmetry, were constant, organized and structured" [25]. We see that the above characteristics can be extrapolated to the dialogue of civilizations and cultures, because it is also carried out by specific individuals in direct or indirect form [26].

### Summary

We note that the asymmetry of the dialogue is determined by both subjective and intersubjective (anthropological, social and cultural) factors, and functional features of the dialogue itself, its structure and theme. In this context, an important question is whether it is possible and necessary to overcome any asymmetry in the intersubjective interactions of various kinds, including the dialogue of civilizations and cultures. The position we see as correct states that a priori impossibility of achieving equality of entities interaction, and hence the inability to overcome the asymmetry does not exclude the

possibility of achieving a balanced relationship between people.

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