

CATEGORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE NOTION OF SOCIOLOGICAL PORTRAIT

Dulanbayeva Oygul Aslbek Qizi

PhD Student

National University of Uzbekistan Named After Mirzo Ulugbek,
Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Abstract: The article attempts to illustrate the notion of sociological portrait as a distinct sub-type of the more general notion of portrait. The general notion of portrait dissected into sub-types, and their descriptions are given. This provides opportunity to see the key aspects and characteristics of the notion of sociological portrait, which is one of the components constituting the general notion of portrait. Moreover, the comparative analysis of the types of portraits is also provided

Keywords: Portrait, historical portrait, self-portrait, artistic portrait, philosophical portrait, moral portrait, ideal type, fine portrait.

Introduction. Although the notion of portrait mainly used in the sphere of fine arts, it can be deployed to mean various social realities[1]. In sociology, the notion of sociological portrait is used to convey the typical and general characteristics of various strata of society: doctors, teachers, students, fans, and so forth[2].

If we look at the etymological origins of the word “portrait”, we come to the conclusion that it is actually one of the genres in fine arts. So, the word portrait, via the French word “portrait” means 1. a visual representation of a person or a group of people in fine arts like painting or sculpture; 2. the prosaic description of a character in literature. The origin of the word comes from the French *portraire*, which means ‘portray’ or convey and used very commonly in English.

If we look at the dictionaries published in various years, we can notice the change in the meaning of the word ‘portrait’. The Dahl Dictionary, published in Russian Empire between 1863 and 1866, describes the word ‘portrait’ as such; “Portrait is the genre in which the facial features, as well as the internal characteristics of a person is depicted on the surface”[3].

The 1898 Dictionary published by F. A. Brockhouse and I. A. Effron defines the word portrait as “a painted, sculptured or a photographic picture of a person, which is considered a masterpiece if it portrays the internal characteristics of a person as well as the external features”[4].



Research Methodology. In the course of the research, the following general and philosophical methods were used: historical, objectivity, abstraction, concrete, systematic analysis, comparative analysis.

Analysis and Results. The above-mentioned definitions emphasize the importance of the conveyance by portrait the external, as well as the internal features and the characteristics of a person or a group of people.

The notion of portrait, which was mainly used in painting art at first, gradually came into scientific and literary terminology of various spheres of art. The “Soviet Encyclopedia” defines the word portrait as such: “Portrait – is a genre in visual painting art, in which the external features of a person or a group of people are conveyed as their individual features. The portrait not only conveys to us a message of external features, but also portrays internal, moral or spiritual characteristics of the painted. It conveys the typical member of the public, a nation or a social class, and provides us with model of the period”[5].

Judging from this description, we can assume that portrait not only can convey one person, but also the group of people and it can convey external features as well as internal characteristics. This gives us a clue that the portrait can also be the typical image, the representation of a whole segment of society or a specific period in history. The notion portrait is widely used in the scientific literature on the history and the theory of art. The encyclopedia of art describes the term portrait as “the image of a person or a group of people in reality, and one of the most important criteria of which is the external as well as internal similarity of the work of art to the original model. It must also properly depict the period and the social environment to which the original model belongs”[6].

Based on the examples above, we can safely conclude that the word portrait mainly belongs to the sphere of fine arts, and refers to a genre in painting. It portrays the external visual and internal psychological features of the object being portrayed and it also seeks to convey us a message about a particular period. According to the definitions above, the portrait seeks to convey us a message about the external and internal features of the person or a group of people being portrayed as well as the period to which the object of portrait belongs and his or her occupation and character.

There are many definitions and descriptions of the notion portrait and the literary portrait is one of them. The portrait in literature is mainly used with the purpose of describing the character’s appearance, facial features, and behavior. Memoirs and biographical works can also be characterized as literary portraits. The literary portrait attempts to convey us a message “about the physical and mental features of the character, his daily life, his individual traits and the period to which he or she belongs”[7]. The works of Abdulla Kahhar, Oybek, Said Akhmad may serve as examples of a literary portrait in 20th century Uzbek literature.

Another important form of the notion of portrait is the notion of historical portrait. In this sense, the various forms of portrait assume an aspect of correlation. A. O. Boronoev in his comment on the chapter “Portrait of sociologists” of the “Russian sociology” writes: “The



purpose of this chapter is to create the gallery of individual characteristics of the thinkers who had an enormous contribution to the development of Russian sociology with their theoretical and methodological erudition". The works of P. Sorokin, P. Lavrov, S. Yujakov, M. Kovalevski,

M. Mikhailovski, and classical sociologists H. Spencer, O. Comte, G. Tard, L. Ward, G. Zimmer, E. Durkheim serve as examples of the given example.

The historical portrait, in its turn, requires creative portrait, for in constructing the creative portrait of any thinker the importance of historiography, the historical approach to the object of study cannot be overestimated. Because, the historical researches assume the coverage of the experience from previous researches and also their historical and methodological optimization.

The historical portrait is in some sense, the portrayal of the biographies of famous people. The historical research and literary expression combine to create the perfect portrait-in-words of the person being portrayed. The historical researches of E. V. Tarli and B. S. Savchuk on the life of Napoleon may serve as an example of historical and literary portrait[8].

The "Great portraits of Antiquity" by the West German archeologist and art theorist Hermann Hafner is considered to be one of the most excellent examples of historical portrait and used as an encyclopedic textbook on the history and theory of art to day[9].

Moreover, the notion of "moral portrait"[10] is used to convey the morality, behavior, knowledge, and ethical orientation of a person. "In recent years, the presentation of information in the form of portraits is also becoming more common. For example, the study materials about the theory of culture and culturology is being issued under the name of "cultural portrait"[11]. An issue of the Moscow State University Herald (Vestnik) which is dedicated for the lives and works of accomplished philosophers is also called "Philosophical portrait"[12].

American journalist, sociologist Max Lerner, in his work "Development of American Civilization" mentions the "class portrait of working class"[13] and dedicates a chapter for this topic. The book contains an interview with Green Party leader in the chapter "Political portraits"[14].

Another form of the notion of portrait is "auto-portrait". The origin of the word "auto portrait" is goes back to the contraction of the words "auto" and "portrait" and means the self-portrait of the author. In auto-portrait the author tries to convey us a message about his or her own characteristics or features[15]. This definition can be applied to all forms of auto-portrait. The notion of "auto-portrait", just like that of the portrait, belongs to the sphere of art, however, according to I. S. Con, the development of this genre is the reflection of the social emanation of the artists, who are facing the enormous changes in their aesthetical principles and moral ideals. The works of philosophers, Montaigne, Jan Jacques Rousseau, and L. N. Tolstoy, in this sense, can be considered as examples of literary auto-portrait[16]. In addition, the notes, letters of correspondence and literary works of various poets, writers, philosophers, artists and social celebrities containing the self-reflection of the authors may also be considered as self-portraits.

Inability in judgment of reality and of the self may affect the objectivity of auto-portrait. In our opinion, this factor is present in all forms of portrait, including the “sociological portrait”. However, auto-portrait in sociology is judged to be a bit more real, because the questions for surveying the respondent are formed according to objective principles.

The analysis of the thoughts mentioned above illustrates that the notion of portrait, from the perspective of categorical analysis serves as interdisciplinary objects of study. Therefore, in the process of application of the notion of portrait in interdisciplinary researches, it is essential to keep in mind the multi-valued nature of this category. The purpose of the sociological disciplines is, in this sense, the illustration of the typical and general characteristics of a person’s life and activity, based not on the separate individuals, but on the social groups and collectivity.

The notion of portrait, in various spheres and traditions of sociology, is used for the purpose of illustrating the character and personal traits of a member of given society. A number of researchers consider the collective explanation of portrait, the social image of the person being portrayed to be one of the most important aspects of the notion of portrait[17].

Raymond Aron gives the intellectual portraits of many sociologists and philosophers, or to put it as he himself did “galleries” as instances for this phenomenon. R. Aron points out the main arguments, political ideals and views of many prominent sociologists. According to R. Aron, “a portrait requires a deep knowledge of the original source”, moreover he thinks that it is impossible to reconstruct the original in portrait totally, and that he considered his works as sketches, rather than portraits. Therefore, the social portrait never assumes final or complete aspect[18], and it always develops and becomes sketch.

There was never an agreement among intellectuals in creating the sociological portrait of social groups. For instance, according to V. V. Radaeva, who studied the problems of creating the sociological portrait of entrepreneurs and businesspersons, the notion of sociological portrait includes in itself both the individual traits and motives[19], therefore the registration of these traits as social facts poses before us many problems.

Many other intellectuals have noted the impossibility of creating an all-including and all-containing, perfect sociological portraits. For example, U. S. Borisova in her article “The sociological portrait of the teachers of SAHA republic” counts the basic traits of the sociological portrait as: the lifestyle, occupation, value orientation and labor conditions, and such factors[20].

Moreover, U. S. Borisova argues that it is impossible to convey the social image of a group with just one study: it requires a team of researchers with special equipment and a financial backup, and the coverage of the many external parameters, such as work efficiency, family budget, entertainment, and leisure time[21].

This argument of Borisova is especially important in creating the sociological image of young artists.



Considering the impossibility of creating the all-including and perfect sociological image of all social groups, there were attempts to create a social image of wide segments of societies or societies as a whole. The example for these attempts is the research complement named “The ordinary citizen of the Soviet Union” published in 1990’s. This book draws on the widely distributed and proliferated sociological surveys. The book contains arguments, that despite the national and religious differences, there is a typical and general features or characteristics that define a soviet man, and distinguish them from the members of other societies. According to the author of the book, it is impossible to know any society without knowing its socio- anthropological bases, and its dominant features[22].

The close notion to the category of sociological portrait is the notion of psychological portrait. the discipline of psychology gives us several methods of creating or revealing the psychological portrait[23]. The psychological portraits of such social groups like teachers or students are created with the assistance of scientific observation and psychological studies. The psychological portrait includes in itself such features, as the temperament, character, skills, orientation, the levels and the structure of intellect, emotionality, will and self- control[24]. We can also notice the negative attitude towards the notion of “sociological portrait” in sociological literature. For example, according to G. S. Batygin, “is a sociologist conducts a number of researches but cannot reveal the object of the study, the phrase “sociological portrait” will come and rescue him”.

As we conduct a categorical analysis of the notion of “portrait” it is impossible to omit the notion “social” or “sociological”. Although there is no agreement as to the exact meaning of the notion, it is remains to be one of the most central notions and categories of sociology. According to a Russian sociologist, G. V. Osipova “the term social is the outcome of interrelation and cooperation of various individuals”[25]. Another Russian sociologist V. Kharcheva provides with a more complete definition of the notion of the category “social”. She defines the notion social as “immanent feature of the individual and the society, and it forms in the process of socialization and integration of the same individual into the social relations. It stands for the meaning of relations formed as a result of the role of various individuals, subjects, groups and communities. The term social also stands for the lifestyle of people and the interrelationships among them”[26].

The absence of the complete definitions of the social portrait of artists, on the one hand, is the proof for the wide scope of the problem, and the scattered character of the study in this sphere on the other hand. In addition, the definitions of this notion in various sociological literatures are also testimonies for the conclusions mentioned above[27].

Russian sociologist V. B. Motorin in his article, “The social portrait of fire fighters” reveals his theoretical approaches to the problem of defining the notion of social portrait. According to him, the social portrait is explained as one’s representation about himself and his self-assessment. He, therefore approaches to the notion of social portrait in terms of labor relations and the requirements of a job, or occupation, and its present condition serve as a

prominent features of a given social portrait. The social portrait focuses the general and typical sides rather than individual and unique sides of the object being studied. Social portrait implies the assessment of the object of the portrayal according to the generally approved judgments and representations[28].

Drawing on the contemporary categories of the discipline of sociology, we can safely assume that the notion of social image of artists and writers are formulated within the framework of such categories as “ideal type”, “status”, “role”, “stereotype”, “prestige”, “self-assessment”, “self-control”, and “lifestyle”.

Max Weber’s concept of “ideal type” is also important in defining the notion of social portrait. The concept of “ideal type” strikes as an ending note of the logical views of Max Weber. The theoretical structure of the concept of “ideal type” includes the method of understanding and the rational assessment of the scientific material and it assumes the full representation of the object of the study before the study of it begins. The concept of ideal type is related with the analysis of causality by means of dividing it to parts, and it enables us to reveal the historical individuality. In this sense, the concept of ideal type is close to the method of studying the whole through the parts.

Max Weber’s concept of ideal type reflects all of his theories. In this sense, the categories of “understanding” and “value”, and the theory of bureaucracy are construed as ideal types. For instance, the understanding the man and his role in the unified system of value enables us to understand his final purpose. The tendency of ideal type is closely correlated with the concept of human essence and activity[29].

Conclusions And Suggestions. In this sense, the formulation of the social image of the youth is considered as the registration of ideal type, and the notion of type, in this regard, should be distinguished from one another. Studying of the social image of the youth through the phenomena of status, roles, and value approaches brings us more closer to the solution of the problem. The approach of status and roles enables us to analyze the status and the role of an individual in society. The value and normative approach, in their turn, give us clues about the inner world of an individual. Therefore, in order to create the social image of the creative and artistic youth, we need both of these approaches.

In addition, the social image includes in itself a number of parameters, such as value motives and judgment. As with every typical individual, the judgment of creative and artistic individuals depends on standardized, stable, and emotionally straight representations. The social image of artists comprises such parameters as material security, leisure time, and lifestyle. The creation of the social image of creative and artistic youth resembles the creation of sociological auto-portrait, because during an interview or the process of filling out a survey, the artist assesses his or her own image.

To sum up all the mentioned thoughts above, it is safe to say that, the formulation of the social image of the creative and artistic youth, and revealing the general and typical features



of them requires the definition and description of the life styles, and activity characteristics of the creative and artistic youth.

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