

Dynamics of Axiological Tendencies in the Era of Global Transformations

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Abstract—This article is devoted to one highly relevant problem of social philosophy, the issues of transformation of axiological tendencies emerging at the stage of radical change of the entire social space. Under conditions of dominance of innovative technologies and acceleration of the growth rate of integration processes, the necessity of development of new value orientations in organization and functioning of social structures is actualized. We consider a series of values-based tendencies intrinsic to the modern period of society development and study factors influencing the structure and dynamics of value-related attitudes. The purposefulness of “re-formatting” value paradigms in order to overcome crisis processes and provide conditions for the development of novel approaches to constructing future models of social evolution is substantiated. We highlight the significance of humanistic and moral orientations as the axiological base of a new strategy of development of the contemporary society.

Keywords—value-based orientations, material, humanistic and moral values, hierarchy of values

I. INTRODUCTION

The newest stage of development of modern social processes is characterized by the significant aggravation of the integral system of crises: economic, political, anthropological and others, which are defined as “global challenges”. The crisis of values is the most crucial challenge of modern times, which results in the weaker role of fundamental values and foundations of sustained functioning of the society as a whole are destroyed.

Radical transformations in all spheres of life of the modern society lead to the change of worldview orientations and re-evaluation of former hierarchies of values. Today, the mankind faces the multi-variant value-based choice. Today, as never before, issues related to re-thinking of value paradigms and search for new value-based strategies, which determine the vector of development of the social system, become a priority. Pitirim Sorokin, the prominent thinker of the 20th century, stated that the presence of the holistic system of values is the necessary condition of social structures’ stability. The decay of the value foundation and value orientations will inevitably bring about the crisis, the catastrophic destruction of the social order and social stagnation [1].

Besides, the significance of the axiological problematics is justified by the acute demand for urgent solution of problems, emerging at the stage of high-tech modernization of the

contemporary society, under conditions of dominating the newest technologies in the system of social relations and essential changes in the sphere of the human-socium and human-technics interactions. Acceleration of growth rates of integration processes and the multi-times increase of the innovation flow actualize development of new value-based meanings and tasks in different areas of human activities. Paying attention to the significance of axiological strategies and their enormous impact on further areas of social development, many scholars agree that which future would be chosen by the mankind depends, in particular and eventually, on configuration of value systems which determine the process of human decision-making [1–3].

At the current stage of development, under conditions of the fast-changing world, the matters of the search for new value hallmarks have the decisive significance in order to overcome crisis processes and the way-out to the trajectory of sustained development. Issues of the choice of new areas of development and of the search for a response to “global challenges” are in the center of the philosophical discourse [3–6]. Devaluation of traditional values and the turn to consumer-like orientations in the system of social relations urges the review of axiological dominants and development of new hierarchies of values. So, the research into questions related to transformation of value-based tendencies under conditions of the global change and to the singling-out of factors determining axiological changes becomes relevant. With the significance and role of value paradigms concerning the development of new strategies of social evolution, issues of the nature and specificity of value changes demand the multi-fledged, complex analysis of the essence and causes of the value crisis and seeking ways to leave it.

In the context of the presented problems we stage the objective of this study as the social-and-philosophical analysis of dynamics of axiological tendencies of the contemporary society and looking for reasons of value transformations.

II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The methodological base of the study is comprised by works of foreign and Russian philosophers, social and cultural scientists. The authors rely on the integrated methodology, including the social-philosophical, socio-cultural, axiological, and systemic approaches. General philosophical and general

scientific methods of analysis, synthesis, and analogy were used.

III. RESULTS

The initial point of this study is analysis of the condition of the contemporary society, within the framework of which the reorientation of value-based goals and value paradigms occurs. Inter alia, let us characterize the current stage of evolution of the postindustrial society. It is generally accepted that this period should be called information society or the “knowledge society”. According to founder of the concept of the postindustrial society D. Bell, the new stage of the social development would have brought the mankind to the progress due to grandiose achievements in science and technics, to the construction of the “knowledge society”. Bell believes this period already emerged since the characteristic features of this society were quite evident: first, R&D increasingly become the source of innovation (moreover, new interrelations between science and technology develop in view of the central place of the theoretical knowledge); second, the progress of the society, measured with the increased share of the GDP and the rising part of the labor, to the more ambiguous extent is defined by successes in the field of knowledge [7, p. 288].

Contrary positions concerning this matter are in place, according to which the knowledge society is not the reality yet but it is only one of abstract opportunities [8]. At the same time, not all is so simple. Actually, the scholars answer to the question “what is the modern society?” in different ways. For instance, Ulrich Beck postulates that the modern society is the society of risk [9], Jean Baudrillard, the society of simulacra’s [10], Zygmunt Bauman, the consumption society [11], and Erich Fromm, insane society [12]. Let us not immerse into polemics on this theme but stress that our interest is most general axiological tendencies, which are intrinsic to the current stage of social development, independently on the fact how the researchers would call it.

So, analysis of the state of the modern social reality allows one to single out some specific regularities of its functioning and reveal most important areas of development, including most strained aspects related to the reform of social relations. It should be noted that, on the one hand, social prognoses of some scholars have been confirmed and, in fact, the development of the socium based on scientific and information technologies, occurred. On the other hand, as far as in late 20th century, the new system of social relations was formed, in which individual consumption, mediated by the market, plays the key role. This type of the society is defined by modern scientists as the consumption society, in which the main task does not come to development of its members as consumers but, what is most important, consumption under such conditions becomes not the means of survival, but rather the means of integration in new social circumstances [13]. It is absolutely evident that the society where the “cult of consumption” becomes the goal whereas knowledge has not reached its special status can hardly be defined as the “knowledge society”.

The next distinguishing feature of the modern social development is the wide gap between ethics and economy. This means that the “way-out of markets from the broader context of social, cultural and political systems” has occurred [14]. In the

existing model of market relations, the consumer orientation takes the lead, and necessary conditions for implementation of most important moral tenets are not created, in particular, the principle of equality and social justice. The main goal of such economic development strategy becomes saving and profit, and there is no room for humanistic imperatives and ideals. Besides, the absence of moral horizons facilitates only unrestricted consumption which in present turns into the uncontrolled stochastic process. This, in turn, may lead to catastrophic consequences. Thus, according to E. Toffler, the new world faces serious social problems; most important out of them are not “problems of justice, equality and moral” but they are problems related to survival [15].

With the above-said, the statement saying that the global change which occurred in the social world order have led to transformation of value-based meanings of human existence becomes increasingly justified. Today the style of life and tempo of life have radically changed. The fact is evident that the mankind has made the unprecedented breakthrough in scientific technologies, gene industry, novel means and methods of communication and other fields. State-of-art technologies, penetrating all spheres of human activity boost global change, acutely restructure rules and condition of vital activity, its goals and objectives.

At the same time, one should note a series of other sorrowful changes which are inherent to the current stage of development such as commercialization of all social space, including spiritual space. And, as the consequence of this negative dynamics, most important value components like spirituality and moral gradually lose significance in social relations at all levels. In the renewed social space, the dominating value tendencies are moral relativism, pragmatism, and consumer orientation.

Apart from it, one should note that the situation of the modern world under globalization is characterized by not solely transformations related to scientific and technical “breakthroughs” and advances, which change the interrelation of the man and society. These changes are evident. But today globalization mounts an offensive to the change of the man per se, his hierarchies of values and value-based attitude to the world; consequently, impinges deep meaning-forming foundations of his existence.

The example of such destructive factors negatively affecting the human inner world is, of course, the dominance of the above-mentioned, threatening tendencies, among which material principles and beliefs took the lead recently. At present, it is undoubted that one should seek the source for the solution of global social problems in the re-thinking of basic notions existing in the axiological sphere; in the eradication of causes which altered the development vector of value orientations; and in correlation of common value-related concepts in accord with the new social reality.

If the history of social development in the past epochs allows one to cognize certain directions and tendencies which to some extent lead the mankind to flourishing, the nature of the contemporary social development is such that one has to state the presence of uncontrolled, destabilizing factors which are highly likely to bring about irreversible destructive

consequences. One can attribute to the latter the progressing tendency of consumption.

It is widely known that the consumer orientation as the value paradigm formed already in the last century and gradually, having come to this age, wholly took up the man busy mainly with the consumption of pleasures. Recently, it has become hypertrophied and turned the man into the “consumption machine”: “fierce passion to consumption lost any relation to true human needs; if formerly consumption was the means to achieve the goal, i.e. happiness, by now it has turned into end in itself” [12, p. 181].

We should make a separate point at moral relativism as no less destructive value orientation of the modern era. The specific feature of the current times is, undoubtedly, the development of a new scale of values dominated by moral relativism together with the consumer orientation that is one of the best manifestations of the presence of the value crisis under conditions of the modern global world. The negation of the Absolute Values is the basis of this ethic principle. This moral stance has deep historic roots which were developed at the early stage of formation of moral philosophy. However is it today and under conditions of global changes when the “reassessment of values” occurs while value contours are amorphous that moral relativism gains unlimited domination. Former interpretations of notions of Good and Evil either are leveraged or are changed for the opposite. Such state of affairs leads to the loss of value hallmarks and, hence, to value chaos.

False understanding of relativism as moral freedom provokes manipulations with the value-based world outlook of some people by the others. In the situation of the absence of objective criteria of fundamental ethical concepts in the social space, the development of value orientations is affected by destructive factors and false values. Only understanding of the objective and universal nature of social moral norms would allow us to oppose to manipulations of various types both at the level of single personality and at the level of the whole society.

However, one should agree with a viewpoint of some scholars that globalization can create favorable conditions for consolidation of objective moral principles. The thing is that issues of union of people to solve various global problems require thorough development of new value-based structures of moral values which are of the objective nature. First of all, it is necessary in order to preserve national cultural values as well as to provide condition of establishment of morally health society.

These value-based transformations could not but take a toll on changing the individual value system. Modification of the social model of development, along with the constantly facilitating flow of modernizations of different levels, produces the controversy of social and individual value systems, as a result of which the modern man proved to enter the complex intertwining of social challenges, in the value labyrinth, “where he has to navigate in the complex, vague mesh of individual, social, panhuman and other value systems” [16, p. 59]. The permanent “struggle for survival denudes the man of the notion of generally valid life-meaning values” [17, p. 22]. Eventually, the latter significantly complicates processes of human

integration in modern social circumstances and, of course, paves the way to other value hallmarks, including false ones.

Thus, under the existing conditions of the controversial mesh of economic, political, and social crisis processes, one has to state that today’s mankind faces formerly unknown circumstances and the uncertainty of the future strategy of social evolution. Proceeding from the above-described characteristics of the contemporary society, the issue of the social progress and building of the society where the man would be at the top of the hierarchy of values, and of the development of conditions “for implementation of principles of freedom and justice” in the social sphere remains open. The reality is such that, having reached colossal opportunities in scientific technologies, the world is still full of controversies and conflicts. One may only say confidently that the reality of the modern high-tech world is like that: “that it has not wearied to demonstrate that it was and remains unpredictable for our logics and our scenarios” [18, p. 23].

Thus, let us stress once more than the say is about a principally new stage of the social development which has such specific features as instability, controversy and stochastic nature, etc. This situation, undoubtedly, facilitate the mold of pragmatic and hyperrational thinking, whose structure has saving and the consumer behavior as most important value principles. This is indicated by a clear bias of the modern social development to material values. The danger of the situation is that the economic and geopolitical might, regretfully, is not the panacea from spiritual degradation under conditions of the current total value crisis.

Inter alia, one should pay attention not only to the fact of change of value orientations but also reveal causes of such transformations. As the study shows, the major causes of such significant changes can be found in globalization processes per se. Globalization is the very complex and multi-level process which subjects the single man, society and all world space to deep transformations. In the first order, these changes touch upon value orientations because it is them which comprise “pivotal nodes”, crucial hallmarks of human activity forming its goals and meanings.

Thus, one should once again stress that the crucial source of cardinal changes in the value-based architectonics of the society is the phenomenon of globalization per se. Extending globalization processes which result in new information technologies, biotechnologies and other achievements, of course, lead to the progress in the field of scientific technologies. And it is evident. Inter alia, the reality of the modern world whose specific feature is the essential extension of global transformation flows helps single out other specific characteristics of social processes. Thus, for example, the permanent growth of the scope of technical innovations reflects also the continuous process of activation of social transformation. Today it becomes very visible that this growth has reached some acme, some critical verge. In other words, the quantity of innovations does not turn into quality but solely opens to the mankind the whole spectrum of new problems related to negative congruencies of the technogenic breakthrough.

Contours of the contemporary global world are such that they demonstrate acute changes taking place in the material domain of the human existence. The problem worsens by the fact that the growing material component saturates all spheres of human existence infringing the spiritual and moral component of his existence.

Finally, there is one more important moment. Last decades convincingly demonstrated that today is the time when globalization processes reach the incredible scale. There are multiple objective foundations to state that we are living through the most complicated historical period. Modern social reforms were marked not only by the scales of distribution but also the depth of influence, which is most important. The man proves most sensible to such type of influences as his vital principles: meanings, goals, and values are subject to grave transformation. It was noted above that modification of the man per se occurs, and the most important spiritual-moral constituent of the man, his basis changes, which is the basic value system defining the man existence as such.

The above analysis gives grounds for the statement that the “correlation” of the very idea of globalization is necessary. If initially, the globalization project suggested the development of the future man with new personal qualities, able to make decisions and answer to global challenges, in practice, it looks somewhat otherwise. Currently, we find that the development of the consumer-man occurs (to put it more accurately, it already occurred), whose main goal is the pragmatic, utilitarian approach to the ambient environment, himself and other people. However, it is only part to the problem. Another, covert part is the development of a new man, of the future man. Scientists are deeply concerned with this new image of the man; some call him “the man without face” and the others, “the modal man”. Who will he be? Only Time can answer to this question.

Nevertheless, it is quite evident that under new social conditions, a new image of the man has developed, for whom the most crucial value and goal is to “make a success” while qualities of the personality are not demanded [14]. However let us be no so pessimistic as there is hope that the man has enough forces and reason to reflect the critical nature of the situation and the possibility to make the radical decision.

In this complicated socio-cultural situation, one should concentrate efforts on implementation of social relations based on the harmonic combination of material and immaterial, scientific and ethical modalities. It is undoubted that under such conditions, one of the major tasks is the formation of a new type of the man of future, for whom socially valid value-based goals and life meanings will not be consumption and pragmatism, but constructing and creativity.

The new system of value-based coordinates. Thus, the study of the dynamics of value orientations in the axiological sphere at the modern stage of social development evidences significant transformations of not only its hierarchical structure; changes touch upon also conceptual content. The new world order will replace the former one. The modern world emerging on the verge of new geopolitical relations, new means of communications, new values and technologies urges new ideas as well. But what that world of new ideas will look like? It is

hard to imagine that values of human life, equality and justice will come to zero in future.

At the same time, such apprehensions are not ungrounded, and the view of the new global world order is not quite clear. This can be explained by the action of different factors, among which the most important are the deepest crisis of traditional value systems and dismantling of the axiological sphere of all social space. “The crisis of the value system, degradation of conceptualization can be provoked both by ambiguity of the attitude to past and uncertainty of future. Tomorrow must not be simply described but also clear, foreseeable and controllable; moreover, the mere tomorrow is not enough as one should have a more distant look, be oriented towards faraway goals and understand remote effects of our actions” [6, p. 29].

In the beginning of the new millennium, under conditions of the fast-changing social space, there is no doubt that the system of basic values is losing its ability to perform its main function – provision of stability and sustainability of social processes, and its leading stance is weakened to a big extent. At the arena of economic and political refurbishment of the socium, processes of commercialization of all socially vital spheres, including “commercialization of the spiritual space”, do prevail. In such circumstances, the acute need in rethinking such transformations and development of the new value-based “system of coordinates” which would limit the influence of the processes accompanied by destabilization and dehumanization of man-society interactions.

It should be stressed that the specifics of current modernization allows for a confident statement that the mankind has reached the critical state, the dangerous verge, the way out of whose limits is open to many hazards related to irreversible processes. One may presume several ways of the situation development: ramping and chaos, uncertainty, and blind alley or the way to sustained development. Here, it is crucial to concentrate efforts on the development of new strategies to overcome crisis processes. In the first order, it pertains to axiological approaches in all spheres of human activity.

Opposite to the widely accepted pragmatic thinking is the value-based thinking, whose qualitative content would be wholly determined by new value-based meanings forming nonpragmatic attitude to the ambient world. The new value-based “system of coordinates” whose sheaths are moral, spirituality and humanism, shall be the conceptual basis of such thinking.

Thus, in the current situation of social uncertainty and loss of clear hallmarks, we must perform the radical turn to the review of world-outlook and methodological approaches to the solution of major social problems. In this case, the priority is the value-related choice of the strategy needed to overcome the crisis. It follows that the future model of social development must be defined by the degree of development of spiritual, moral and individual properties of the personality.

Only in the society where the human capital plays the crucial role and the spirituality of the man relies on “new dimensions and new means of manifestation”, the value of the

man will gain the new status and the “knowledge society” will become real.

Beyond dispute, strategic areas leading to the formation of the society with the harmonic combination of technical innovations, ethical problems and economic goals should be combined with new value dominants. When solving the above problems, the specific role belongs to the emergence of new worldview basics of social development. Clearly, images of future projects of social evolution are most diverse and heterogeneous both in terms of their content and tenures of implementation. But all of them are merely probable. Inter alia, it is doubtless that the best social reforms and ideas of future scenarios will not be put into life without the reliance on fundamental moral principles, without axiological shifts from consumer and pragmatic orientations to humanistic paradigms [19].

IV. CONCLUSION

Taking into account the above-said, let us stress that it is highly justified to address issues related to axiological aspects of social development in the modern times. Research into the current stage of social development indicates the sharp aggravation of the controversy between economy and politics, science and ethics, the man and environment that, undoubtedly, leads to the rise of destabilization of social processes on the whole. Analysis of the transformation dynamics of axiological tendencies shows that their conceptual content is determined by the impact of global integration processes. Therefore, the priority task is the change of the vector of social development towards the formation of new value meanings.

Under conditions of new social technologies and search for most efficient means of resolving the controversies between material and spiritual, must and existent, ideal and real, one should rely on axiological models of social development based on humanism, moral and spirituality as fundamental value-based aspirations of existence of the man. Such strategy of development must be actualized in the nearest future because future is the result of the choice which we make today.

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