CIVIL SOCIETY: THE VALUE DIMENSION OF FUNCTIONING AND DEVELOPMENT

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Summary: the article is devoted to the study of the value principles of the functioning and development of civil society. It is emphasized that modern civil society is developing on the basis of the indisputable primacy of the material values of life over its spiritual foundations. The opinion is substantiated that civil society can successfully develop only in the conditions of coordinated influence of law and morality on public relations.

Keywords: civil society, law, morality, human rights and freedoms, spirituality, rule of law, justice, equality.

Any society, including civil, is formed, functions and develops within a certain social reality, which objectively contains certain value determinants that belong to the material and spiritual sphere of human existence. The material values of social development are always associated with the activities of people aimed at creating the necessary material goods (goods, works and services). At the same time, this activity of people and their associations or material relationships in society, within which the real processes of human life function, namely, the whole set of material conditions of their existence, is inextricably linked with intangible or spiritual values of society, which provides teleological substantiation of any relationship in society, namely comprehension, understanding and evaluation by individuals of the conditions of their existence and attitude to it. In the modern scientific literature it is noted that «the factor of unity of material and spiritual in society is the main in understanding the nature of the emergence and maintenance of stability and succession of society» [1].

In the stated context, the study of the issue becomes especially relevant related to the definition of the values of the formation and development of civil society in terms of spiritual and material values that underlie the functioning of its institutions and entities. In addition, the current complex and contradictory realities of Ukraine's development and the world community, strengthening the process of atomization of society, etc., require rethinking primarily philosophical and theoretical approaches to understanding the nature of civil society in terms of its spiritual and material value component.

It should be noted first of all that the concept of civil society in modern socio-humanitarian doctrine is represented by an extremely wide range of relevant
definitions. Without considering the specific definitions of «civil society» provided by many domestic and foreign scientists, we note that civil society should be understood primarily as a society of people (individuals, personalities) capable of a high level of self-organization and self-regulation of their behavior and activities on the basis of social solidarity in various relationships between them. In any case, the issue of formation and development of civil society cannot be considered outside the human context, which raises the issue of the relationship between the spiritual and material foundations of social transformation in general [2; 3; 4]. As we can see, the primary element of civil society, its foundation, is the individual, not the relevant public associations or organizations, just as the primary element of the legal system is the «rule of law» and not the institution or branch of law. In this case we are talking not just about society, but about its special civil status, which arises in the process of historical development and is determined not only by the level of socio-economic, political and cultural development of the state and relevant spheres of society, but also the spiritual condition of the individual his moral consciousness.

Thus, regardless of the specific approach underlying the understanding of the nature and essence of civil society, its primary and most important element is a person who develops, shows personal activity or carries out certain activities within certain regulatory parameters. Even if in the understanding of civil society based on the approach according to which it is interpreted through the system of social relations that exist outside the state [5; 6], or the system of public institutions [7; 8], or a certain mechanism of relations between the government, society and individuals [9; 10], etc., its immediate basis will always remain at the level of specific individuals or persons, as any interaction within society or form of organization of joint activities of people is impossible outside the human context.

Turning to the modern humanitarian discourse of civil society, one cannot fail to notice the fact that it focuses mainly on the study of those factors or principles of its functioning that are expressed in a developed market capitalist economy based on the priority of private property, formal legal equality, human rights and freedoms, in particular, freedom of enterprise, etc. At the same time, all these principles of formation and development of modern civil society are considered mainly as those that are able to effectively influence the quality of life, well-being and prosperity, able to ensure a high level of law and order and social harmony [11; 12].

Thus, in the modern scientific literature it is emphasized that «the formation of civil society and the rule of law has a clearly defined economic basis. It is the evolution of market relations at a certain stage leads to the emergence of civil society as a kind of association of economically free and independent citizens, a union of autonomous, sovereign, free persons who are equal and own private property for their living conditions. The genesis of civil society, in turn, determines the emergence of the phenomenon of legal statehood. Civil society means the coexistence of free and sovereign individuals who, as a result of their private property, have economic independence from both the state and each other. The absence of these determinants means, accordingly, the absence of civil society itself as an objective basis for the emergence of the rule of law» [13].

As W. Beck points out, «only those who have housing, stable employment and, consequently, a secure future, are or can become citizens capable of learning
democratic rules of conduct and filling democracy with life. The simple truth is: political freedoms do not exist without material security [14]. The above shows that civil society, as well as a stable democracy, cannot function effectively without a proper level of economic development of the state, able to provide the majority of citizens with an adequate level of well-being.

Agreeing in general that civil society can function and develop effectively when there is freedom of market relations, when the system of rights and freedoms of citizens is properly ensured, and not just declared, when appropriate material preconditions are created or put into practice for achievement of civil harmony, etc., according to the author, one important caveat should be made, which is that all these characteristics or parameters of a developed civil society can in no way be considered self-sufficient or such that a priori have independent priority, because such conditions, the importance of the spiritual component of social development, which is completely absorbed or made dependent on certain material factors, is leveled.

It should be noted that the fact of primacy of material values over spiritual ones in modern conditions is indisputable, because no matter what activity a person carries out, his success in any field is essentially measured by a single criterion – income or profit, namely material prosperity. Other criteria for the success of human activity are defined as secondary or as having no self-worth, if the main and highest prerogative is not satisfied – the highest possible level of profitability. In this way, human behavior and activity gradually turns into a pursuit of new material goods and sensual pleasures, which means the actual conquest of spiritual or ideal components of human activity by narrowly utilitarian and constantly changing material (sensory) human desire [15; 16].

Of course, the fact that a person seeks to ensure high standards of material well-being is quite normal and necessary, because such interests stimulate civic activity, force a person to constantly improve their intellectual level, improve their activities and search for new relationships with other entities. At the same time, this fact does not mean that a person who strives for success and prosperity has the appropriate level of spirituality, the content of which gives everyone the opportunity to systematically understand the specifics of personal activities in terms of the overall contribution it provides.

Indeed, in modern liberal-democratic realities, it is believed that, for example, intelligence, agility, desire for innovation, activity, professionalism, sociability, organizational skills, etc., increase the efficiency of any activity, and therefore are extremely important for man and society. According to the author, one can agree with this, but on one condition: if all these business and personal qualities correspond to the highest spiritual goals, expressed in traditional moral imperatives. The latter is due to the fact that it is moral or, accordingly, immoral aspirations, interests and goals that determine the ways to achieve the results of the relevant activities. In other words, the main question in the process of any behavior and activity is not how a person manifests his relevant qualities and skills, but why he shows them, what values he recognizes as the most important or highest in his life.

Given what has been said in the scientific literature, it is not unreasonable and quite correct to say that «liberal democracy seems to say to the individual: you are
free, but it refrains from answering the question: why am I free? When asked about the meaning of freedom, most people limit its content to the need to meet personal needs. At the same time, since for most people personal needs are limited to the state of material well-being, a civilization built on the development of means of satisfying these sensory-material needs will inevitably have a materialistic character, in which spiritual forces dissolve or collapse [17].

It should also be noted that the destruction of the spiritual foundations of civil society, at first glance, is not obvious, because from modern discourse do not disappear such important values of spiritual life as, for example, freedom, equality, justice, responsibility, assistance, universality, morality, religion, etc. At the same time, in the stated context, according to the author, it is necessary to make one important methodological reservation, namely: an integral feature of the concept of «spirituality» is that it finds its direct expression in the unifying principles of functioning of society, manifested in moral tradition, concentrated in the relevant rules and images. We emphasize that moral tradition as an attribute of spirituality is an integral condition for the positive existence and development of society, as it is designed to preserve «social memory» or «cultural succession» in society, a spiritually meaningful relationship between generations through a complex system of models and stereotypes of human behavior and activity, moral practice of the people, the results of which have reached the modern socio-cultural space as an invaluable spiritual and moral experience [18; 19; 20]. This means that spirituality as an extremely complex state of internal (mental) human life, which is expressed in the subjective experience of surrounding events, including the life of man himself, as well as in the assessment of these events, including in terms of their compliance with traditional moral principles of social development, has a single absolute, metaphysical basis, which is not subject to relativization, even in connection with the really functioning of the constantly changing surrounding social reality.

Investigating the phenomenon of spirituality, some modern researchers of the theory and philosophy of law rightly emphasize that «the highest mode of spirituality is «superconsciousness», which is the ability of man to comprehend the transcendent principles of his existence, to go beyond his «I» into the superpersonal, is beyond direct sensory perception and ordinary mental propositions. In contrast to the vitality that keeps a person below, near the boundaries of animalism and the constant danger of her falling into the abyss, spirituality prevents such disruptions and forces her to strive upwards. It does not allow individual freedom to become permissive and offers individuals to correlate their needs, interests, motives with the universal ideals of good, truth, justice, beauty. Spirituality gives an individual the opportunity to realize the self-worth of his «I», the significance of his inner world, to understand his uniqueness and at the same time involvement in the universal principles of existence, presented in the form of universal values of culture and civilization. Without spirituality, which informs the individual «I» of the sublime system of worldview, neither a sensitive conscience, nor free will, nor moral and metaphysical intuition, nor religious faith, nor a mature legal culture are possible» [21, 22].

Based on the above, it seems obvious that the dominance of material values in the development of civil society over its spiritual foundations leads to the fact that the basic spiritual concepts, principles and goals of human life gradually lose their absolute
unifying principles and become a kind of «consumer thing», which can and should be consumed only to please personal material and sensory interests and needs. Spirituality, thus, loses its objective metaphysical foundation, depends only on intersubjective communication, on the possibility of compromise in each individual life situation, subject to essentially limited material and sensory desires, motives and interests of individuals. This is pointed out by some modern researchers, who note: «reliance on convention, compromise, treaty implies that the fundamental goals of civil society – freedom, equality, universality, justice, responsibility – are not classical metaphysical-substantial, but political content saturation, which is not set in its specificity as a timeless predicate of natural law, but are formed on the basis of intersubjective dialogue. This functional content of the goals and values of civil society presupposes their mutual limitation, transformation, broad horizontal interpretation, construction, infinite detail, contextuality, temporary normative certainty, multilevel nature and legal concretization, while maintaining the legal binding nature and inadmissibility of the opposition of individual and social interests» [23].

Thus, the modern individual or man as a primary element of civil society, increasingly confined to the personal «I» and seeking to reject any objective normative restrictions on their interests and desires, gradually conquers his life with narrow-utilitarian egocentric aspirations, which, given the objective dualism of material and spiritual, real and ideal, absolute and relative, subconsciously acquire for him an absolute unambiguous character.

Thus, human rights and freedoms, as well as such basic principles of formation and development of civil society as free market, justice, equality, rule of law, etc., in their abstract understanding and interpretation, can not be considered the spiritual basis or component of civil society, since taken abstractly, all these concepts and «good intentions» are indifferent in terms of the objective dichotomy of good and evil. In other words, the detachment of the content of these concepts from a specific historically determined socio-cultural environment, an integral element of which is a certain moral and religious coordinate system, means that they can be used and serve to achieve common and individual boon (good) and contribute to social destruction in their various forms of manifestation (evil). After all, abstract freedom as an eternal value and fundamental essential characteristic of man, the ontological basis of his life, can be addressed or used to achieve the highest good and boon, and the lowest and most obscene evil.

In view of the above, we can conclude that the process of functioning and development of civil society in modern global transformations, which are directly manifested, in particular, in Ukraine, requires new scientific research related to determining the basic principles or factors of its proper provision. The events of recent years, including those taking place in the developed democracies of Europe and America, indicate a crisis of relations and interrelationships that take place between the various institutions of civil society, that is, in general, between individuals and their associations in various spheres and spheres of life. One of the most dangerous manifestations of such a crisis is a significant increase in conflict potential in public relations due to further stratification of society into a narrow circle of rich and super-rich persons on the one hand, and the vast majority of low-income citizens on the other, forced to worry only about their physical survival.
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