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Polyvariant Character of the Russian Moral Culture

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The paper justifies the idea that the Russian society faces not only the process of destruction of the national ethical culture but rather destruction of habitual conception of the national culture. Differentiated approach to the problems has enabled the author to come to such a conclusion. On the basis of this approach the author concludes on the polyvariant character of the national moral culture. Traditional moral culture, aristocratic moral culture (that started to transform into “intelligent” mode of morality in the second half of the XIX century), pragmatic (business) moral culture and the system of nihilistic morals and behavior have been presented in the paper as these variants. On the basis of the cited ethical/axiological studies the author presents the systems of ethical values of each of currently functioning variants. It is suggested that without organization of ethical/cultural education in the social conditions being formed nowadays it is impossible for a human being to form consciously an optimal version of the individual moral culture.

Keywords: ethical culture, morality, mores, society, personality, traditional culture, aristocratic culture (intelligence), pragmatic (business) culture, Russian nihilistic mores, conscious choice.

It is fairly accepted that the moral culture of each people is one of its most significant social values. Its effects on maintaining of the human community integrity and on the ennoblement of human interrelations are rarely doubted. Over the centuries moral culture of any society was developed on the basis of aggregate social experience, positive outputs of which took the form of customs and traditions. As it was not once mentioned in the history of culture, “the notion of good and evil were elaborating ... not on the basis of what was good or evil for an individual creature but on the basis of what was good or evil for the whole genus” [4, 77]. However, as years passed by the formation of human individual

moral culture became more and more difficult, this required specialized scientific research.

In the conditions of traditional societies perception of moral culture by a human being did not require special attention of scholarship. The moral norms content was apprehended by an individual just as any social value; that is through the medium of spiritual, sensible cognition in the process of observations over repeated visualizations of culture in the other people behavior. The Russian philosophy used to outline that “in real life the point of value is occurring in inseparable connection with the existence” [5,7]. Any deviation of human behavior from the commonly accepted standards

was practically impossible as the direct social control of the ambience gave the suction for each act that did not comply with concepts of morality. Thus, traditional society secured for its member a possibility to feel and comprehend the generally accepted differences between good and evil, to adopt the requirements of morality and moral means of their realization in one's behavior, mandatory for everybody.

In post-traditional societies the situation has changed considerably. Though the significance of moral culture for functioning of society and for human vital activities has not decreased (it has even increased due to emergence of increasingly destructive terrorist techniques and environmental accidents!), it becomes more and more difficult to take advantage of ennobling effects of moral culture. The way of its perception prevalent in the past is not easily practicable now as the society has formed and practices coexisting contradictory understanding of the preferable behavior. Supporters of traditional morality are often to demand emphatically reproduction of its norms in reality but their efforts increasingly rarely can be admitted successful.

Reduction of effectiveness of the moral culture traditional perception has actualized the necessity of scientific analysis of this culture. Cultural studies have faced the task of differentiated comprehension of real morals and manners typical for a society. It seems the most productive to the author to reveal the character of the moral culture interconnections with the relative phenomena: ethics, morality, and mores. Analysis of the studies of ethics enables the author to present it as "basic spiritual establishment formed in the society on the basis of experience in interaction of individualities and aimed at preventing the mankind against self-destruction" [6.31]. Ethics is an imperative system of principles and criteria of assessment for

human deeds. It forms moral-psychological purposes for people aimed at good and prohibitions to evil. Morality, just as ethics, is a spiritual establishment. But the matter of this spiritual establishment is composed of "the mankind-developed conceptions on *contents* of human properties necessary for realization of norms of human behavior to be approved by the society" [6, 46]. Morality is forming human conceptions about social norms of behavior, adequate to the ethical prescriptions. Ethics and morality can be correlated as developed in the human mind requirements to people's behavior (ethics) and means to fulfill these requirements (morality).

Human behavior adequate to ethics and morality express itself in mores, and they are socially accepted norms and forms of human behavior. In them, in particular, ethics' commanding character and morality's content comprehended by the given social community realize themselves. Thus, ethics and morality can be expressed as spiritual prerequisites of the moral culture functioning, while mores can be expressed as its practical visualization. The approach suggested by the author enables to present moral culture as a specific system of ethics, morality and mores. It presumes to interpret directly and indirectly observed customs on the basis of the forming concrete/historical understanding of ethics and morality by diverse cultural groups. In this, the determining criterion of behavior's morality becomes rather the degree of compliance with moral principles than the degree of its habitualness. This enables to understand, at least, two problems that are relevant to the contemporary society. The first one: is it really moral culture or just habitual notions of it that are being destroyed. The second problem: is the habitual method of mastering the moral culture sufficient for moral self-cultivation.

The study of the Russian moral culture phenomenon conducted by the author has allowed us to make a conclusion on the fact that “in current conditions several types of moral values have been formed that can claim the status of various versions of the Russian moral culture” [7, 319]. Nowadays aristocratic, pragmatic and nihilistic systems of ethics and morality insight by various social groups function in the Russian society.

The existing traditional moral culture defined and continues to define the value of an individual in accordance with the extent of its usefulness for the society. In this context it is no wonder that in the last century 60s there was a discussion: who must be saved first from water, a physicist or a lyric poet? As physicists in the USSR of that time were considered more beneficial for the society persons than lyric poets, many participants of the discussion considered that a physicist should be saved first. In the traditional Russian moral culture self-sacrifice was welcomed as voluntary service in the interest of the society, with such its highest manifestations as heroism, unselfishness, modesty, willingness to patient overcoming of any suffering for the sake of maintaining of common good. These qualities helped people of the traditional society to comply with the main demand of the moral culture: that is to be like all others, they were the main criteria of people's self-esteem. The traditional system of values was based on the principle of authoritarianism. Authority of age or hierarchic status determined the whole set of undoubted norms of moral behavior: respect to the older from the younger, responsibility of the older for actions of the younger, implicit obedience and humbleness of the younger in respect of the elders' command. “Render honor and bow to those who are elder than you”, that was a percept of Domostroy [3, 20]. This principle made impossible any open conflict in everyday

life. On the background of humbleness the authoritarianism inevitably were transforming into Fuhrerprinzip. The cult of Leader as the highest earthy authority stimulated emergence of the whole spectrum of the necessary properties: loyalty, trustworthiness, consistency. Centuries-long system of the moral culture would be incomplete without inclusion of such a value as patriotism, which should be constantly proved by a person in its behavior. The traditional moral culture system faultlessly functioned due to existence of so-called order and unconditional obedience of each person to its demands. The order was understood as the knowledge and fulfilling by every person of its moral duties and the public opinion's most severe sanctions in respect of every infringer. The order secured the necessary level of public labor, warranted preservation of family and mutual assistance.

When completing the description of the traditional moral culture image one could not miss to mention the character of relations between a person and surrounding people. For the traditional moral interrelations faith of a person in the possibility of help from other people, hope of a person for this help and people's love of any person as a creature of God were typical. This is an approximate vision of the traditional moral culture based on the ethical/axiological analysis of historical documentation, fiction literature and observations of human interrelations. However, in spite of tremulous reproduction in literature and even in life the traditional culture attractive values, no one of its followers managed to intensify, at least to a small degree, contemporary people orientation to the traditional moral ideals. Traditional moral culture, so familiar for all Russians, continues to exist but the sphere of its application is considerably decreasing. Cultural groups predisposed to performing type of activity remain the subject of its reproduction. Over the past centuries the

traditional moral culture became a launching pad for development on its basis other versions of moral culture: aristocratic (intellectual/creative), pragmatic (organizational/entrepreneurial) and nihilistic customs.

Aristocratic moral culture started to develop in the historical conditions when society could afford comprehension of human existence. The process of comprehension of any phenomenon by human mind is possible, first of all, provided that there are conditions for development of its individuality. Therefore, gradually a system of moral values different from traditional habits and manners has developed within a social group of people with predisposition to intellectual/creative activities. Within the aristocratic customs human labor is not considered as a compulsory share in common labor but it is corresponding to an initiative pursuit of a person itself to *experience pleasure resulted from the process of artistic or scientific comprehension of the world*. Studying, ornamentation and ennoblement of the universe became the meaning of life. For the sake of truth, it is worth mentioning that results of intellectual/creative activities of people become, as a rule, useful for the whole society.

The aristocratic moral culture system of values has attached high significance to such human qualities as their need for friendship and ability to be friends умение дружить, need for admiring восхищаться other person's individuality and ability to notice and appreciate the latter. P. V. Annenkov stressed that, for example, for N.V. Gogol "even the extent of respect for people was determined by the extent of their expertise in some particular matter" [1, 56]. Predisposition of an individual for intellectual creative activity involuntary creates in subjects of other versions of moral culture who are not familiar with specific features of intellectual creative activity (and, not infrequently, in

creators themselves) the appearance of their idle and, consequently immoral life. In this variant of the moral culture any display of practicality or prudent endeavor to succeed in some activity could be unlikely assessed high, as only concentration of a person's attention on the process of creation and accompanying it high spirituality were admitted moral. Pride is a distinguishing value of this moral culture as well. It is understood as an intention of a person not to burden other people with its troubles, not to exploit their good attitude. By the way, patriotic pride for one's Motherland is gradually supplemented with cosmopolitanism, i.e. a need for admiring everything that is worth of admiring in the whole world. A person's protective attitude to surrounding people and its assurance in their integrity and honesty stimulated it for display of magnanimity. Moral ideals in conscience of people adherent to this kind of culture took so exquisite and attractive character that there were no necessity to control each other's behavior. Self-esteem and continuous endeavor to self-improvement did not allow them to behave lower than their moral ideals. If the above mentioned values were supplemented with the characteristic for this type of culture possibility to display the feeling of love between parents and children, between male and female, faith to predominance of good qualities in people and hope for their preference of good deeds, as an output we receive the basis for description of the aristocratic moral culture image. Together with appearance in XIX century the social group of intelligentsia the aristocratic moral culture gradually commenced to be perceived as intelligence.

Very little in common with traditional and aristocratic variants of moral culture were revealed in the pragmatic moral culture image. The name of this moral culture version is not free from causes for

debates, because pragmatism traditionally was considered in Russia as an antipode of morality, being in contradiction, for instance, with such its characteristic as unselfishness. Omitting the description of dramatic effect of pragmatic variant of moral culture, its ideals and norms formation in Russia, it is expedient to analyze them from the point of view of their usefulness in respect of the process of maintaining the society's integrity. Service of an entrepreneur to business and aspiration to getting a profit and retaining on its efficiency are the determinative values of the moral culture pragmatic variant. Such an attention to oneself at first glance could be assessed infrequently as egoism which traditionally considered immoral in Russia. But – only at first glance! Provident attitude of businesspeople to keeping on their efficiency gradually was forcedly acknowledged in common opinion as moral, because such an attitude optimized economic conditions of modern society existence. Without entrepreneurs' prudence it is impossible to secure many conditions of the society social integrity maintaining. These conditions comprise organization of providing the society with necessary quantity of commodities and services; charity that gradually replaces mercy which is constantly diminishing in human relations; discharging of the great amount of taxes to the state budget in order to realize public social policy, etc. Cooperation in the moral culture pragmatic variant becomes a high value for the purposes of development of material production. Without idealization of pragmatic habits and manners arising from cruel violence, the moral value of such qualities created by them as indefatigability, consistency, honesty of people in respect of work and honesty in business relations as a derivative of caution should be mentioned. The value of compromise, trust, first of all, in its own power and capacities, hope

only for oneself, and love, certainly, for oneself should be referred to as the pragmatic culture preferences. An attempt to rehabilitate egoism within the moral assessments' system (T. Hobbes, M. Weber, N. G. Chernishevsky, M. M. Petrov and others) was, obviously, a necessary stage in people's reflection regarding inevitable (in the conditions of a new kind of activities) redefining of the moral values content. In the moral culture pragmatic variant the value of self-control is increasing, an ability to listen and hear an interlocutor is forming. The most significant argument in favor of rejection to consider the said norms of human behavior moral values is the fact that entrepreneurship intensifies social inequality. This argument can be refuted as the very idea of social equality is an utopia because as early as at the moment of birth people possess incongruous potential of physical, mental, intellectual and other sides of development of a person.

Discussion of the nihilistic customs system is much more problematic. Due to the particular body of reasons these customs began to develop in the Russian society about a century and a half ago. Their contemporary followers do not doubt that namely nihilistic habits and manners are the true manifestation of morality. To verify or deny their opinion it is necessary to imagine the aggregate image of nihilistic customs. As the notion of a nihilist for the most of Russians is associated with the generally known image of Bazarov, the reservation should be made that the image of a nihilist created by I.S. Turgenev has nothing in common with the essence of the Russian nihilism (Russian nihilists were not one shocked with the fact), that in terms of its content was far from its European model depicted by I.S. Turgenev. Russian nihilistic mores initially took shape under influence of such a concept of morality where good was seen in absolute terms and, hence, according to nihilism ideologists,

anything containing at least a smallest element of evil must be destroyed. In an effort to totally annihilate evil Russian nihilists have perceived struggle and uncompromising stand as optimal moral values for achieving this goal. Atheistic mentality typical for Russian nihilism has focused their attention on the value of human aggressiveness, on admiration of the suppression force. Romanization of these states has led to devaluation of value of life of any human being. Nihilists considered an ability of a person to conflict one of the highest manifestations of the moral culture, and this was an expression of a person's dissatisfaction with life. One of the highest, from the nihilistic point of view, values was considered self-worship. A nihilist put oneself in the place of the God expelled from the soul, and only oneself, as S.N. Bulgakov, a philosopher and a theologian, mentioned, was considered the only source of morality and the truth [2]. Concentration of a person's attention on the search of demerits in other people and in any situation became the most dangerous consequence of the nihilistic mentality. The derivative of this was a need to express one's indignation in respect to everyone on any occasion.

Due to inexpediency to work till the complete extermination of the world evil, an euphoric inertia of idleness commenced to form in the nihilists' mode of life. It was supported by disregard not only to wealth, but just to elementary material security as well. They interpreted poverty as a symbol of high morality. It is impossible not to mention simplification, impoverishment and militarization of language, as well as, wider use of obscene language elements in the nihilists' communication, predominance of imperative mood in the process of communication. To complete the nihilistic mores' image one should note distrust

to anyone, hopelessness regarding everything in this world, scornful attitude to one's Motherland as determinant features for a nihilistic state of mind. Impossibility of love either between parents and children or between man and woman became an effect of the nihilistic mentality, as searches of faults in each other, obviously, just empty one's soul.

Subjectivism in comprehension of morality has led nihilists to actual rejection of it. Intelligentsia, according the authors of "The Milestones" (Izgoyev A.S., Struve P.B. et al), was a subject of the nihilistic customs development at the turn from XIX to XX century. I would like to propose some qualification to this matter to disprove the statement that all the intelligentsia preferred the nihilistic habits and manners to all others: the most part of it diligently and efficiently worked in intellectual spheres (education, medicine, art, science, etc.) In compliance with the conducted studies, only radical left part of intelligentsia related to the nihilistic mores' followers [7, 250-318]. Out of all the system of nihilistic pseudo-values, only good intentions agree with moral criteria, while the means and outcomes of their realization are immoral. Hence, nihilistic mores do not meet the moral culture criteria.

In conclusion it is necessary to note that, alongside with the traditional moral culture, its aristocratic variant (intelligence) and pragmatic mores have developed and became necessary for society. As for the nihilistic model, which destroy both a society and an individual person, it represents pseudo-culture. Coexistence of several variants of the national moral culture and more complicated conditions of their perception by people actualize the necessity of purposeful competent assistance to young people (schoolchildren and students) in conscious comprehension of the existing positive moral values and neutralization of the nihilistic mores'

perception as values. Intentional perception of moral culture for valuable socialization in the conditions of pluralistic coexistence of its different variants becomes insufficient. It must be complemented with the possibility of conscious choice by a person of one's individual moral orientations on the basis of comparison of value characteristics of each variant of moral culture, deliberate rejection of the nihilistic

mentality elements, and formation of tolerant attitude of every person to all positive versions of moral culture. Stabilization of the humane relations between people is possible in the post-traditional societies not only on the basis of reminding to the society of significance of moral culture for every person but rather on the basis of its awareness on creative potential of each moral culture variant.

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Поливариантность российской нравственной культуры

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В статье обосновывается мысль о том, что в российском обществе не столько идет процесс разрушения отечественной нравственной культуры, сколько разрушаются привычные представления о ней. Прийти к такому выводу автору позволил дифференцированный подход к ее рассмотрению. На его основе автор приходит к выводу о поливариантном характере отечественной нравственной культуры. В качестве вариантов в статье представлены традиционная нравственная культура, аристократическая нравственная культура, начавшая перевоплощаться во второй половине XIX века в интеллигентность, прагматическая (деловая) нравственная культура и система нигилистических нравов. На основе проведенных этико-аксиологических исследований автором представлены системы нравственных ценностей каждого из функционирующих в настоящее время ее вариантов. Предполагается, что без организации этико-культурологического просвещения в складывающихся социальных условиях невозможно осознанное формирование человеком оптимального для него варианта индивидуальной нравственной культуры.

Ключевые слова: нравственная культура, мораль, нравственность, нравы, общество, личность, традиционная культура, аристократическая культура (интеллигентность), прагматическая (деловая) культура, российские нигилистические нравы, осознанный выбор.
