

УДК 167

Methodological Features of Investigation of Identity of Collectivistic Society in West Philosophical Theorizing

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Received 15.06.2011, received in revised form 20.11.2011, accepted 19.01.2012

According to the classification of societies in the nature of their sociality, one differentiates two types of the society – collectivist and individualistic societies; and it is insufficient to accept the distinctiveness of societies for solving the problem of identity. It is also important to take into account how exactly the identity of a particular society is presented in the main philosophical traditions of theorizing (of metaphysical and dialectical). This article presents the special knowledge of the identity of a collectivist society in the context of the dominant Western metaphysical tradition in theorizing (represented nominalistic and realistic methodological tradition) as an example.

Keywords: individualistic society, egoism, freedom, nominalistic methodological tradition, realistic methodological tradition, representation.

A socially-philosophical research of specificity of life in a collectivist society developed historically in the West within the limits of metaphysical tradition of theorizing. The study of Emile Durkheim is indicative of this tradition.

The researcher identified two fundamentally distinct types of society, on the basis of each there is a special solidarity – mechanical and organic. In line with the arguments of Emile Durkheim, mechanical solidarity is based on kinship, the similarity of individuals and it has an instinctive nature. This kind of solidarity generates the “segmental” (archaic) the type of society. Thus, the researcher gives all grounds to name this type

of a society also a collectivist one, specifying: “[In the case of mechanical solidarity], what is called society, there is more or less organized set of beliefs and sentiments common to all the members ...: it is a collective type” (Durkheim, 1996, p. 137).

Indeed, Durkheim was among the first Western theorists who came to understand the collectivistic specificity of one of the types of the society which he singled out, that is why in some cases he used the term “a collective type” of society. This proves the following words of the researcher once again, describing the “segmental” (archaic) the type of society: “... not only all the members ... are individually attracted to each

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other because they are similar, but they are also tied to what is the condition of the existence of this collective type, i.e. to a society formed by their union. Citizens do not only love each other ... but they love and their homeland. They love it ... taking care of it to outlast and prosper ... Hence the solidarity, which is emerged from the similarities, directly links the individual to society ... This solidarity ... harmonizes the individual movements of the individuals "(Durkheim, 1996, p.114). Thus, we assume that the principle of collectivism specifies this type of society, and the type of society can be rightly called a collectivist one.

Meanwhile, following the tradition of metaphysical theorizing, it leads to the fact that the researcher begins to reveal the specifics of a different type of society – “organized” (capitalist), based on the division of labor caused by organic solidarity, but he finds it is not possible for “segmental” (archaic) societies to be viable. In this regard, the thinker writes about the “capitalist” society type the following: “This social type according to its principles is so different from the previous one that can be developed only to the extent that the latter [segmental] archaic [type of society] disappeared” (Durkheim, 1996, p. 190).

Hence, the term “segmental (archaic) the company” appears as a theoretical fiction in Durkheim’s works, and in this case his allocated “collectivist” features cannot claim to be true, and they act as nominalistic arbitrary description of a given society, convenient to prove E. Durkheim’s theory of the division of labor. In other words, the question of the existence of the researcher in the social reality in its own particular collectivist society is of secondary importance.

Collectivist society as a “closed society”

Bergson and Popper introduced such concept as “a closed society” into science. Bergson writes

about “the closed society”: “A closed society is a society, whose members are closely linked, are indifferent to other people, are always ready to attack or defend, in short, they are required to be in operational readiness. Such is a human society, when it comes out of the hands of nature” (Bergson, 1994. p.288). In turn, Popper writes of a “closed society” as follows: “... tribal or collectivist society will be called a closed society” (Popper, 1992, p. 218.). Defining the “closed” society as collectivist, Popper tries to justify this statement as follows: “A closed society is similar to a herd or tribe that is a semi-organic unity whose members are united by half-biological bonds – kinship, common life, participation in public affairs, the same dangers, pleasures and general misery” (Popper, 1992, p. 218.).

The definition of Bergson’s “closed society” is presented as a collectivist one, what, in particular, indicates the level of cohesion of its individuals (individuals “are closely linked to each other”). On the other hand, a “closed society” is presented as a society that is “out of the hands of nature.” And if you consider each society as unique, it turns out that another society, distinguished by the philosopher as an “open society”, should have its own basis of formation and it also should have its own nature. But from Bergson’s point of view, “open society” is a society that unites mankind in general and replaces the “closed societies.” Therefore, it can be argued that collectivist specific “closed society” is presented not as an image of social reality, but as a purely theoretical description, the abstract with respect to real-life collectivist societies, allowing revealing the concept of “open society” in the right way.

As for Karl Popper, he directly defines the “closed society” as collectivist, proving the validity of this definition with a number of available features of its life (“participation in public affairs,” “common pleasures and sorrows,” etc.). Meanwhile, being an advocate of “critical

rationalism”, he considers the main peculiarity of the “closed society” to be “irrational attitude to the customs of social life and, thereafter, the rigidity of these customs” (Popper, 1992, p. 216). Customs in such a society act as a taboo and they “strictly regulate all the aspects of life and the dominion over them. Taboos do not leave any loopholes. In this form of life ... people rarely got into position, making him doubt how to act. The correct path is always defined in advance ... It is defined by taboos ... tribal institutions that have never become objects of critical review ... based on the collectivist tribal traditions, such tribal institutions left no room for personal responsibility “(Popper, 1992, p. 217).

Attention is drawn to Karl Popper’s tendency of statements. With respect to the specifics of life “closed society”, he uses such terms as “herd,” “tribe,” “taboo,” “toughness.” Firstly, this initially suggests a rejection and aversion of such a society, its demonization (which is already given in the title of the book of the philosopher, “Open Society and Its Enemies”). And secondly, Ivin’s fair belief puts “a question to what extent the concept of a closed society is similar to the notion of collectivist society ...” (Ivin, 1997, p. 22). In this regard, we can conclude that, showing an “open society” as an ideal society of individualistic arrangement, Popper’s concept of “closed society” (“collectivist society”) has created an equally negatively idealized abstract notion of actually existing collectivist society. Ivin admits the possibility of such approach in revealing the specifics of a collectivist arrangement, as well as an individualistic one, “Collectivism may be theoretical, existing in the form of more or less developed project ... and practical, existing in a particular collectivist society” (Ivin, 1997, p. 9). Therefore, it is assumed that the identity theory of society and its real life can exist independently, which corresponds to the metaphysical tradition of theorizing.

Collectivist totalitarian society as a society

F.A. von Hayek singles out two basic types of social “order”, “conscious” and “spontaneous”, defining some features of arrangement of different societies. On the ground of the first one is collectivism, and as for the second type – we deal with individualism. Therefore, it is important to analyze the concept of the researcher that is “conscious order” in the context of the specific deployment of a collectivist society.

According to F.A. von Hayek, conscious order is created by the conscious human mind and act on a plan, which is worked out in advance, to achieve clearly defined objectives. In such societies, social order is a key feature of centralized planning, leaving no room for individual autonomy (the latter, as it has already been noted, is typical for societies of spontaneous order) and leads to the dictatorship of like-mindedness and totalitarianism. “The tragedy of collectivist thought – regarding the researcher – is that, by postulating the mind as the supreme factor in the development in the beginning, it leads to its destruction in the end as it interprets this process in a wrong way, which is the basis of motion intelligence. Paradoxically, the collectivist doctrine, advancing the principle of “conscious” planning, inevitably gives the supreme power to some individual mind, while individualism, vice versa, allows us to understand the value of a supra-individual social life forces “(Hayek, 1990, p. 110). In this regard, F.A. Hayek considers this specific manifestations of collectivism and also totalitarian to be communism and Nazism.

Thus, “totalitarianism” is the synonym of the concept “collectivism” for a theorist and that is why the collectivist society is presented as totalitarian. It turns out that a collectivist society is interpreted in a negatively way in the spirit of Karl Popper’s researches and is opposed to society with the individualistic arrangement. In this

respect, the question arises of how appropriate is the truth in such a negative interpretation of a collectivist society.

For example, Hannah Arendt states that the “totalitarian movements are possible, wherever there are masses” (Arendt, 1996, p. 414). In turn, he sees the cause of the mass (mass society) in individualism. “Social atomization and extreme individualization – proves the philosopher – had been preceded by mass movements, which in the past attracted much easier quite unorganized people, the typical” non-aligned “, who for some individualistic reasons always would refuse to recognize the social ties or obligations than sociable non-individualistically configured members traditional parties “(Arendt, 1996, p. 421). In this case, in contrast to views of F.A. von Hayek, individualism is associated with totalitarianism. Thus, using the term “collectivism” as specifying the particular society for the F.A. von Hayek, becomes a matter of (the concept) suitable interpretation, where a particular term does not extend to the name, but its real meaning is secondary and may be representatively described one way or another. The researcher, getting to know the collectivist society, follows nominalistic methodological tradition.

Collectivist society as self-defined society

Panarin made a demonstrative summarizing conclusion in regard to specific applications of the above indicated a collectivist society by Western theorists. “What we really are denied today – says researcher – is the existence of a singular identity There are attempts to show our specific character in a purely negative way – as traditionalism and backwardness, barbarism. This happens despite the fact that social science has not acknowledged it with only civilized West for a long time, admitting many of coexisting

civilizations on the Earth. Today, more or less educated people do not say that China and India are barbaric countries on the grounds that they are different from the West “(Panarin). As you can see, as an example, the researcher is paying attention to the destructive approach of studying societies of Russia, China and India, which are objectively defined as a collectivist society type.

Fedotova’s attitude may be considered equally indicative: “The West does not understand the realities of other nations, complicated and enriched with their own history” (Fedotova, 2005, p. 18). In this case, the dominant methodology in the West metaphysical knowledge society does not require understanding while taking into account the real features of its life and in its relation; that is why, Western theorists are right, following this methodology. Meanwhile, there could be seen some premises in the West in enlarging the specifics of a collectivist society, not as something directed or declared, but as an image of social reality, taking into account the objective conditions and subjective factors of its(a collectivist society) life style.

I.G. Herder distinctively shows the interaction between objective conditions and subjective factors in the formation of collectivist specificity of an Old Russian society by example of the Slavic peoples’ life style principles which have laid the foundations in the Old Russian society. The first ones were linked to the availability of large areas undeveloped land, mainly located in rigorous climatic conditions, while the latter formed from the distinguished features and traits of Slavic peoples: diligence, charity, hospitality, obedience, disapproval of robbery and burglary. Within the scope of available objective conditions the work of the Slavic peoples was shown as following: “The Slavs settled in the lands abandoned by other people, – says the researcher, – ... they cultivated the land and used it, ... their calm, quiet

existence was blessed for the lands on which they settled. They loved farming, loved to raise cattle and grow wheat, they knew many home crafts “(Herder, 1977, p.470).

I.G. Herder also attributes the features of Slavic life style to specific geopolitical conditions. According to the fair statement of a thinker, “the misfortune of the Slavs lied in their position to their neighbors, on the one hand, they were so close to the Germans, on the other hand, they were open to the raids of the eastern Tartars, who ... made them go through a lot and suffer so much.”(Herder, 1977, p. 471). Evidently, such a position, causing the necessity of repelling the permanent military aggression, also affects the characteristics of society and largely explains, for example, the reason for absence the high dynamics of social changes, typical for Western societies. And what Western theorists considered to be “backwardness” and “underdevelopment”(in the light of theory of cognition as a theory of representation) is arbitrarily presented in having absolutely different quality – as a real feature of the lifestyle in the society, making it unique in its own way.

However, the direct opposite of Slavic peoples is German (Germanic) peoples, whose main need was the war caused by the desire to conquest, to get a profit, according to I.G. Herder. Therefore, in comparison with the Slavs “they were engaged in farming and cultivated land not diligent enough” (Herder, 1977, p. 467). Under the influence of favorable geographic and climatic conditions in Western Europe, the activity of

German peoples has led to the fact that, according to the researcher that “they, and none other than ... conquered, cultivated and reconstructed in their own image the major part of Europe [Western Europe] ... Geographical location of the Germans among the other European nations, their military alliance, and their tribal nature is the basis which leads to culture, freedom and independence in Europe “(Herder, 1977, p.469).

Conclusions.

Firstly, the identity of a collectivist society is revealed by the Western theorists in strict adherence to metaphysical methodological traditions that are nominalistic and realistic and adequate to his theory of knowledge as a theory of representation. According to both traditions, the real life of a collectivist society and its theoretical interpretation is not dependent on each other. Secondly, according to the theory of knowledge as representation theory, the specific life of a collectivist society is opposed to the specifics of the life of an individualistic society, and is considered a priori to its position (an individualistic society) superiority. Therefore, this specific character is either demonized, i.e. positioned as something negative (“totalitarian”, “closed” society), or presented in a condescending sense of “underdevelopment.”

Thirdly, the identity of a collectivist society is nothing more than a theory for the Western researchers or it is attributed to a given society (nominalism) or declared for a given society (realism).

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Методологические особенности познания идентичности коллективистского общества в западном философском теоретизировании

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Отталкиваясь от классификации обществ по характеру их социальности, в соответствии с которой различаются коллективистский и индивидуалистический типы общества, доказывается, что для решения проблемы идентичности общества недостаточно признания отличительности обществ. Важным также является учет того, как именно преподносится идентичность определенного общества в рамках основных философских традиций теоретизирования (метафизической и диалектической). В настоящей статье в качестве примера показаны особенности познания идентичности коллективистского общества в контексте господствующей на Западе метафизической традиции теоретизирования (представленной номиналистской и реалистской методологическими традициями).

Ключевые слова: идентичность, общество, коллективизм, номиналистская методологическая традиция, реалистская методологическая традиция, теория познания, репрезентация.
