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The Russian Public Consciousness Metamorphoses in Conditions of Technogenic Sociocultural Reality

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Abstract

A problem of complex philosophic analysis of the Russian public consciousness transformation in conditions of technogenic sociocultural reality (processes of technological development, informatization, and virtualization, axiologisation of the technogenic and deaxiologisation of the humanistic) is the objective of the research. Special attention is paid to determining technogenic metamorphoses and structural and functional trends of public consciousness dynamics in Russia. Content and structural and functional technogenic public consciousness metamorphoses are reflected by conjugating philosophical methodology of research with the categorical apparatus and methods of social psychology, cultural-historical psychology and social cognitive science. The scientific novelty of research consists in revealing main technogenic Russian public consciousness metamorphoses as well as in determining the following structural and functional trends; a) an additional intermediate mechanism between a human and public consciousness has emerged; b) opportunity to obtain a ready-made cognitive product promote reducing cognitive and social human activity as well as rupture of the individual and public consciousness; c) information field grows, as well as its fragmentation, depending on the possibilities of access and individual preferences; d) information values of "novelty" and "speed" have changed not only the type of human existence, but the mechanisms of public consciousness functioning as well; e) for modern man escapism into zones of the virtual and of the irrational becomes more and more important, and this changes the ontological attributes of public consciousness.

Keywords: Metamorphoses, Public consciousness, Sociocultural reality, Technological development, Objectification, Manipulation.

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Introduction

The obvious technogenic nature of modern sociocultural reality raises questions about ontological status of culture, society, human (Khrapov, 2012; Khrapov & Kashkarov 2015; Khrapov, & Novikov 2013); accordingly, questions about the qualitative consciousness transformation become legitimate as well. If individual consciousness is structured by the neuro-physiological and cognitive framework of the human being, then public consciousness is fixed by social reality, the development trends of which in many ways determine the tempo-rhythm of its functioning (Khrapov, 2014). In parallel with this socio-cultural dynamics is being mediated by main public consciousness tendencies. Extensive processes of civilization technological development cannot go beyond public consciousness dynamics. Moreover, in many respects they determine its new reality and functioning mechanisms in the postindustrial era.

In our view, public consciousness technogenic metamorphoses represent its profound content and structural and functional transformations, caused by technogenic socio-cultural transformation. In the article we will focus on the structural and functional level of the problem. Taking into account the phenomenality of public consciousness, as well as the breadth of the subject declared, we single out a number of technogenic metamorphoses expressing its structural and functional transformation.

I. Technological development as objectification

The very term objectification, being used, immediately *leads* us to numerous discussions about the essence of the objective and subjective and problems of their correlation. In the context of our research objectification will be considered as a process of value, role and *specific weight* devaluation of the subjective in the social consciousness dynamics. In order to specify this problem, we will consider two main aspects.

First, we should mention objectification destructuring as a socio-epistemological mechanism of public consciousness. The vector of this destructuring is determined by many factors, the main one of which is a large-scale decline in the individual consciousness role in the process of objectifying socially significant information about the sociocultural reality in the public consciousness. In post-Soviet Russia, however, as well as all over the world, technogenicmassification and informatization processes have generated a consumer egocentric mind set among the main part of population, as a result private problems dominate and everyday life discourse absorbs public discourse, mass consciousness, and seeks to absorb public consciousness as well. Consequently, the content of public consciousness does not go

through the stage of individual reflection, but emerges as ready-made objectified knowledge, as a result of the activity of certain generalized social institutions (authorities, *social forces*, and mass media).

Secondly, objectification principles and mechanisms are rooted in the process of communication and information space constant growth, which on the whole, is objective (in the sense of its alienated opposition to everything subjective). Communication and information space institutionalization and overvalue in the public consciousness encourage people to extensively *connect* to it, to use its guidelines in their activities. The scale and civilizational significance of communication and information space allows us to consider it as a special type of virtual reality (Khrapov, 2015).

Information technologies are constantly striving to enhance the effect of virtual space reality; as a result, huge masses of the population perceive its reality as genuine. Communication and information space and its hypertrophied form, virtual reality, become *intermediaries* between sociocultural reality, individual and public consciousness. Individual consciousness can no longer comprehend everything that is happening in society critically, its *subjective* opinions and assessments become impossible, and, in case of occurrence, disappear in a stream of objectified information. As a result, the public consciousness content objectification becomes so powerful that it no longer expresses, but distorts the images and events occurring in the sociocultural reality.

And thirdly, objectification can be considered as desubjectivation, i.e. dehumanization of socio-cultural reality and public consciousness. In this regard, this problem can be addressed from the point of correlation of the subjective, as individual and creative and the objective as social, technogenic and standardized (N. Berdyaev, E. Fromm, H. Marcuse, V. Frankl, J. Baudrillard). Technological development processes were, in fact, a civilizational accumulator of objectification tendencies, which, in general, always existed, but they had never had such a powerful *support*. Mass media cultivate the values of consumption, hedonism, authoritarianism and aggression (Khrapov, 2010). Human more and more feels his weakness and defenselessness in front of *the Kingdom of Caesar*, mastered in high technology and destroying the last *islets* of traditional spiritual culture. The very idea of the independent thinking is being strongly pushed out from the individual consciousness.

Freedom was reduced to the right to buy what is *necessary*, to perceive the information which is *provided*, to vote for someone who is better promoted in mass media. The principles of objectification as alienation are transferred to the entire sociocultural reality. The communicative and information sphere itself contain alienation intentions, since communication, unlike interpersonal communication, is an information exchange at a distance

that can be stopped by any of participants. Transition of greater part of interpersonal communication into the information technology (telephone, internet) root social alienation, devalue in the public consciousness values of spiritual intimacy, mutual aid, and civil solidarity.

II. Technological development as public consciousness manipulation

Without going into criticism of socio-political systems, we should note that in many respects ersatz-elitization tendencies and hypertrophied polarization of the public consciousness levels are caused by deformation of the value matrix and new high-tech manipulation means, i.e post-industrial era attributes.

The information value as such, and not even value of its content, results in metamorphic situation when the Russian public consciousness attention is being focused on meaningless discussions between representatives of these elites and about themselves. The popularity of this or that person, his belonging to an elite group is not ensured by what he really represents, but by how often any information about him/her emerges in mass media which is the main sphere of public discourse nowadays. Modern man's dependence on mass media has become an obvious and even physiological need (otherwise such things as sensory hunger, oppressed mental state emerge, as the sociocultural reality does not seem so attractive and colorful). As a result, everything that is shown and said in mass media is perceived as something significant; consequently its manipulative potential grows many times, and this is being widely used by ersatz elite.

Pop culture figures convince the population that they can sing and create a cultural product, industrial corporations that their products are the best and the most environmentally friendly, politicians that their programs are the most realistic and meet the people's interests, etc. Human consciousness turns out to be in a stream of diverse, vivid, often contradictory discourses (remember the periods of political elections), at the same time he feels the need for true information, for certainty, right choice and decision. He cannot satisfy this urgent need for two reasons: first, the ersatz elite, who are the main social manipulation actors, are absolutely not interested in this, and mass media and political technologists, who are financially dependent on them, use all the power of information impact; secondly, anthropogenic society mass culture caused an extraordinary reduction in the critical function of all types of consciousness. Visualization, extensive information flow, values of hedonism, consumption and modern man's infantile mind-set practically deprived him of the ability to

think independently. As a result, a colossal socio-cultural mechanism for manipulating all types of consciousness has been formed.

In our opinion, manipulative impact on public consciousness can be defined as: a purposeful process of changing system of knowledge and beliefs about a certain social element (s); the process is hidden from its hosts and is directed at forming behavior that contradicts their original motives, that is not realized by them as such, and that responds to the purposes of this influence. We believe that this mechanism consists of the following main components:

- Ersatz-elite, which is manipulative influence customer;
- Significant social element which is the goal of manipulative influence (popularity, access to power, financial gain);
- Mass media as executor of manipulative influence;
- Information and socio-psychological technologies as a means of manipulative influence;
- «decritical» mass consciousness as object of manipulative influence
- Specific behavior of social subject as result of manipulative influence (voting for one or another candidate during elections, purchasing one or another product etc.)

In our opinion it is necessary to mention two peculiarities of the manipulative influence of the ersatz-elite on the mass consciousness. Firstly, the «mass consciousness» concept, which is used as an integral construct in a scientific discourse, is presented with the diversity of mass group consciousness types in a sociocultural reality: regional, age-related, gender, professional etc. As a rule, the manipulative influence is focused on a specific audience, thus on a specific consciousness type, except for the situations of the federal elections and the advertising of general necessary products. This specificity has been easy to consider during the era of technogenic mass culture (e.g. to use famous singer, who got his or her popularity due to the mass media, as an agitator during the elections etc.) Secondly, the process of manipulation simplifies the daily life context of the sociocultural reality, where an individual realizes his or her life activities using stereotypes and standardized behavioral attitude.

The manipulative activity of the ersatz-elites, which are expounded by the majority of the population as elites, intensifies the polarization between the elitist and mass levels of public consciousness, because people appear for subjects and objects of social communication, distracted from each other with high technologies. Informative focus of culture, setting new social dynamics temporality, has led to a «splitting» of a modern Russian consciousness in the sense that the society is differentiated depending on the possibility of the information access

and awareness that strains the problem of social and legal inequality, as well as leads to the existence of parallel (unrelated) types of mass consciousness: those, who possess more copious, less copious information or has absolutely no access to it. The deformation of socio-gnoseogenic and social ontologicistic plans of the post-Soviet Russian public consciousness lead to the crisis situation, when on one side it falls down to the mass and group level, and on the other side has its equalitarization, when it is being formed and is functioning under the control of small groups by means of high technologies and values, often used for public opinion and behavior manipulation.

III. Technological development as disfunction of sociomnemonic mechanisms of the public consciousness

The technological development processes go through all levels of human, culture and public genesis. Their immensity and universalism, connection with an axiological crisis, lead to qualitative, unfortunately, often destructive transformations of social and spiritual life. Under such conditions the deformation of sociocultural cooperation traditionally formed systems is inevitable. These influences especially vividly appear in the violation of social memory and public consciousness connection mechanisms, because the technological development dramatically changed the sphere of social cognition and awareness.

The social memory and public consciousness functioning connection is determined by socio-gnoseogenic nature of these phenomena. Social memory appears for the accumulator of the information, that is significant for the society, expressed textually or graphically and fixed in ideal (individual consciousness and unconsciousness, contents of public consciousness and unconsciousness, meaningfulness cultural artifact) and its tangible medium (neurophysiological human mechanisms (thalamus), information database, books etc.) (Otutskiy, 2014). In other words social memory covers all information, which was significant some time ago and the information, which is urgent now (the content of individual and public consciousness, culture and daily life). Social unconsciousness is a major part of social memory content, because the deactualization and cultural and historical filtration mechanisms convert insignificant information or the information, which can't be reflected by public consciousness to the irrational sphere (e.g. information about sexual relationship, as it was before the mid 60s of the 20th century). Intentionality of the public consciousness constantly sets it off functioning in important information layers; nevertheless it can't be mediated with the context of modernity, which is being formed by itself, in most of the cases due to the fundamental elements of social and cultural life (e.g. habitualization systems, language systems). Thus, the public consciousness appears for the highest rational level of the

sociocultural space, based on the social unconsciousness, mentality and social memory. That was the system of social consciousness in a traditional society. What changes has it gone through during the postindustrial era? A lot of things have changed dramatically enough, and it allows us speaking about disfunction of this public consciousness aspect.

Firstly, the public consciousness began to lose its socio-gnoseogenic positions. The public discourse is an informational source of the public consciousness and it becomes more syncretical and transfers to the virtual sphere. Subsequently people get to know the sociocultural reality around them in a quite local way: with the help of mass media, Internet, that certainly don't have socio-gnoseogenic mechanisms of interconnection with the social memory, because in general they are artificial phenomena in terms of social memory and spiritual life.

Secondly, enormous informational layers of public consciousness are formed exactly in the virtual zones, this process leads to the distortion of sociocultural reality visualization. As a result there is the violation of the interconnection of the public consciousness and social memory, enormous layers of which are just being erased (e.g. knowledge about the Great Patriotic War in 1941-1945 of the majority of the students are often superficial and absurd). The mass media has no clear interpretation of the history (e.g. many American movies and computer games distort the historical events, their periodization and main characteristics).

Thirdly, mechanisms and the means of social memory storage are materialized and technologized more (CDs, computer memory etc.). Along with the distinct advantages (quality and big amounts of storage) it forms a negative side as well - the value, the public consciousness memory are lost, people estrange themselves from family and society memory in general, and therefore people disrespect their culture and their nation history.

IV. Technological development as irrationalization

Strange though it might sound, but today in a high tech century, total irrationalization of public life and consciousness is happening. Enormous layers of unconsciousness actualize in a social memory, which is connected with a variety of factors. In particular, technogenic mediation of the irrationalization of the public consciousness turns up when the majority of the population takes the technology irrationally. People don't realize its functioning, they just believe in it. For many people the faith in the unlimited technological progress replaces the faith in God. Public consciousness irrationalization is a result of total universalization of all technogenic, informational, utilitarian - of all the things, which are scientific and rational. The desacralized culture can't lose the necessity of something sacral and transcendental, because it

is immanent to human existence, the theme, that was brightly described by C. Jung (1990) and J. Habermas (2005). These tendencies cause the retroactive effect of «spiritual antagonism», sulk the irrational zones and irrationality reaches the public consciousness and the daily life context in a more metamorphosis and paradoxical way, then it does in a situation of the traditional interconnection.

The colossal expansion of social unconsciousness in the prejudice of the public consciousness correlates and at the same time enroots many tendencies of technogenic culture, fixing the value of emotionally sensuous and irrational things. The vivid form, emotional extremity (joy - sadness), are shown by the mass media as signs, that replace the critical estimation of events and reality facts. Modern infantile person would easily believe in provided information than to think, to estimate and to make decisions by himself or herself - that's why he or she easily believes in quasi myths and all he or she gets from the mass media. The public consciousness is full with products of total remythologization and irrationalization and in this regard it is obviously losing the function of realization.

In conclusion

Thus, technogenic character of modern sociocultural reality raises a question about a technogenic nature of public consciousness, happening because of the human technological development. In our opinion, structural-functional tendencies of these processes occurred in the following aspects: a) there was an additional intermediate mechanism (technogenic sociocultural reality), occurred between a human and public consciousness, technical capability of which is significantly higher than their own; b) the possibility of receiving a new finished cognitive product (result of other subject or technical facility activity) decreases human cognitive and social activity and leads to the breakdown of individual and public consciousness; c) the information field of sociocultural reality and public consciousness increases and fragments itself, depending on the access capability and individual preference, by means of human value attitude to technical facilities of memory forming, transfer and storage; d) informational supervalues of «originality» and «efficiency» have changed not only the human existence type, but public consciousness functioning mechanisms as well; e) escapism in virtual and irrational zones is becoming more significant for a modern person, that changes public consciousness ontologic attributes as well.

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