

Personality and Society in the Dichotomy of Power and Freedom: Russian Contours

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Abstract. The understanding the place of personality in history, its relationship with power and society as a whole is considered in the paper taking into account geography, social and economic characteristics, historical spiritual origins of the North Caucasian ethnic groups. A retrospective journey into history and philosophy allows comparing the options of the human community developed by peoples and civilizations – the relationship of the individual with power, with the values of freedom, knowledge, experience of capitalism, liberalism, socialism, to search for the most acceptable for Russia and its regions. Much attention is paid to European experience, which managed to accumulate the achievements of upbringing, education and science. In our opinion, the relations of personality and society in European civilization are refracted by a through line of power and knowledge, truth and freedom, perfectly revealed in the philosophical work of Nietzsche and Foucault. Their approach is very critical striking not so much with its objectivity but with pessimism and nihilism. Modern societies are disciplinary, and appropriate procedures as an interrelated sequence of actions of power and society, form such a person, having the ultimate goal of establishing dominance over it. This is not carried out in an obvious way, but by many layers of socio-political and cultural acts of the state. The paper gives preference to a regional civil society with Eurasian basic values that have the character of ideological-forming, resistant to the twists and turns of globalization. They form the spiritual structure of peoples and allow them preserving their identity, which is the goal and task of historical progress. Not the search for some main universal ways of development, but the desire of peoples to sufficiently large, but local civilizations, to communities in which optimal harmony of personality and state, citizen and power, freedom and responsibility is possible.

Keywords: personality, society, power, knowledge, freedom, Eurasian civil society

1 Introduction

The international scientific conference “Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism” dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor, President of the Academy of Sciences of the Chechen Republic Gapurov Shakhrudin Aydievich states the methodological message for understanding the problems of the place of personality in history, its relationship with power and society in general. In domestic history, this problem was traditional – sovereignty, patriotism, civil society, these are the key words through which relations between personality and power are still relevant today.

2 Problem Statement

This paper explores the problem of the Eurasian understanding of the essence of power. The rejection of Western versions and norms of liberal democracy, the

broad participation of the population in managing their own territory while maintaining state principles and hierarchies of power structures, etc. are fundamentally important [1]. Perhaps R. Vakhitov is right to oppose Eurasianism to the Bolshevik concept of Soviet power, which gravitated towards Europocentrism [2], but it is impossible to bring the realities of this power closer to the now observed liberal democratic uproar of the Western authorities. No doubt the ideas about power, like many political, spiritual, ethical and other values, are subject to historical changes. The need to change the dominant values from time to time, including the public significance of power, was drawn to attention by more than one thinker.

3 Research Questions

The task of the study falls into several questions. At the end of the 19th century, trying to undermine the foundation of absolute European values, universal

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imperatives based on reason, Nietzsche sees evil in knowledge and science as instruments of domination and violence against a person and likens truth to a kind of delusion [3]. In the current situation of philosophers replenishing the shortcomings and weaknesses of reason with faith in God, Nietzsche went not only against God, but after Schopenhauer – to the will; in the will to power, Nietzsche sees even the meaning of a person's life. His doctrine of the superperson is intended to deny Christian values, proclaiming the death of God, and the superperson himself, with his aristocracy, nobility and benevolence, can establish new values for the "gray mass".

Ultimately, the desire for power, combined with pessimism and the elements of misanthropy in Nietzsche's worldview, was not something fundamentally new in understanding the meaning of human life. Three centuries before him, in his Reasoning, N. Makiavelli also expressed disbelief in the positive meaningful goals of a person, arguing that "all people are evil, and will always behave in accordance with their malicious nature". However, the arguments were addressed to the politicians of the Renaissance, who in the struggle for power completely violated moral rules.

Nietzsche's key ideas in interpreting the place of power in human life were picked up by M. Foucault. He built his philosophy on the rehabilitation of the unreasonable and insane in human life and discourse, on their consideration as an integral part of the mind, including understanding the key problems. Discourse, according to Foucault, translates the effect of self-legitimacy of power into knowledge of rules, norms, conventions, ethical and professional codes. As noted by M. Foucault, the "will to knowledge" has obligatory institutional support in society, due to the way in which knowledge circulates in society and in essence this will appears as the "will to power". The desire for force and power, believed by Nietzsche as the main human stimulus, in Foucault acquires the character of a domineering desire for truth.

In the process of establishing the unity of knowledge-power, M. Foucault not only states it, but also reveals the historical and universal conditions of its possibility. At the same time it should be noted that we are not talking about demonstrating the power of knowledge in culture and in society, or in general about identifying knowledge with power. "I think that in the eyes of readers, I am really the one", writes Foucault, "who said that knowledge is woven with power, that it is only a thin mask thrown at the structures of domination, and these latter have always been oppression, conclusion, etc..." [4] Truth, Foucault says, is not something that exists outside of power and has no power; truth has regular effects of power at its disposal. Each society has its own mode of production and functioning of truth.

Foucault considers such an order of organization of social life caused by the "specifics of discursive practice" [5]. The discursive order of truth is realized mainly due to differentiation, distinction, selection, sorting, in which the establishment of such an order will mean the manipulation of the probability of events within the discourse. Nevertheless, the subject

comprehends (at least in this way) and builds a meaningful situation. But the problem of society is also that this not very optimal order of truth is universalized, is perceived as a synonym for order in general. On the contrary, all other, and not only alternatives, are classified as a mess. So, the concept of "reasonable political regime" is relative enough!

From the essence of all these and other arguments of Foucault, we understand how he reveals the cultural situation of violence against truth unfavorable for public progress and, conversely, the ordering of very dubious truth of social violence through power. The French philosopher essentially advocates a kind of offensive nihilism that denies being alien to the individual through a change of values. He places hope on the noble function of power – aspiration for genuine truth. But the task of speaking truly is endless work: respecting it in all its complexity is a duty on which no government can save unless it wants to force subjects into slave silence [6]. The real spiritual atmosphere in society, one way or another, determines the specific historical meaning of human life.

4 Purpose of the Study

Our excursion into Foucault's concept is understandable. The purpose of the study is the problems of power and personality scientifically detailed in European culture, while its educational spirit and the dominance of scientism in it present this problem in a link between power-truth, knowledge-power. But Foucault is not only not delighted with the variety of forms of manifestation of public administration, the same modern Western civilization causes particular concern to the author of the Archeology of Knowledge – he calls it "inquisitorial", since this civilization is dominated by a socio-political situation, when schools, barracks, and psychiatric hospitals are built as a prison and the task of educational and cultural institutions is reduced to a total suppression of individual freedom [7].

We will talk about freedom later. Here we should note that the Inquisitor civilization has its historical origins. They lie in the depths of European philosophy. The cynicism of the cynics, in the fight against which reason and the enlightenment of Platonism imposes the power of knowledge, according to Foucault, closes into the historical tradition of violence and domination over the person, the distortion of genuine human existence. The entire European chronology of real power structures is evidence of this, although the historical roles of tyrants and dictators are differently evaluated in culture.

The ordinary consciousness does not know why, in reality, a real ideological battle plays out around truth in culture and in the public consciousness, according to Foucault, although the problem is not to change the consciousness of people, or what is in their heads, but to control the most political, economic or institutional regime of the production of truth. Foucault exposes the cause of the causes in the politics of the modern state. That is why, Foucault believes, nothing is more tenuous than a political regime indifferent to the truth; but there

is nothing more dangerous than a political system that purports to prescribe truth.

5 Research Methods

We consider the approach of considering issues in the categorical grid of the Eurasian concept methodologically correct. No doubt this cannot be distracted from the value transformations that tend to erode in the era of globalization. Nevertheless, in the system of ideological values of Eurasian civilization, around which there is a worldview struggle, the problem of power is quite substantial. The social ideology, which should be based on Eurasianism, is formed around several key ideals that form a “solid core” if the terminology of the prominent methodologist of science I. Lakatos is used. Other values will serve as a “protective belt”, a means of strengthening and protecting the core. Key ideals do not appear as any rituals or customs, they are deep, borrowed from the ontological basis of human spirituality – reason, creativity, will, emotions, morality, freedom inherited by generations as sociocultural codes, archetypes of collective consciousness. Besides, they must be sustainable in the era of globalization, since they appear not only essential for the culture of the region, but also globalizing and civilizing, as well as ideological-forming – expressing the theory, philosophy and methodology of the Eurasian spirit [8].

6 Findings

Power and violence in society is a relevant problem for Russian reality. Usually it is solved by the majority of people simply – they either become submissive supporters of the government, enjoy its benefits without a twinge of conscience, or become active oppositionists or meekly opponents of the regime. It is with this that the special role of the intellectual is connected: its conscious position is correlated not only with its socio-class specificity, not only with the specificity of its living and working conditions, but also with the specificity of the policy of truth “in our societies”.

For thinking people the attitude to power of the famous writer Daniil Granin is instructive: “you have to reckon with the authorities, sometimes the authorities want to convince and correct something. This rarely gives results, but still sometimes it gives... I am not a conflict person, I am a writer, and this is the main thing. Either you need to conflict, turn into a dissident, or write and work. But the soul still cannot put up with nonsense, disgrace, nasty things, lies, sometimes the soul is indignant” [9].

Philosophical moods of power-knowledge are perhaps far from an epoch-making phenomenon. Foucault himself witnessed authoritarianism, liberalism, and social democracy... But the American Trump-Biden political show in the late 2020 – early 2021 finally upset the upset apple carts of supporters of both. Truth and justice have gained a mocking meaning in their mouths, they have been humiliated and reduced to a paltry,

unyielding furious power struggle on the Capitol Hill. Respect for the identity of those who described themselves as liberal and libertarian, a moderate and unrestrained apologist for freedom, also failed the test of time. Life without power, violence, obsessive control of society – humanity does not have such a practice! The slogan: long live freedom! is quite attractive, but has many pitfalls.

Indeed, freedom appears to be the most important meaning-life value, the dream and hope of peoples and individuals, which is emphasized by more than one philosopher. The general message here is as follows. The absence of external obstacles and the ability of the individual to overcome doubts, laziness and fear for choosing directions and actions to achieve a life goal is generally recognized as freedom. Freedom is not absolute, not purely subjective, limited by circumstances and factors. At the empirical level, it can come down to limiting oneself from unnecessary worries, bustling traditions and the ability to tactfully move away from the obsessive vectors of labor coercion, power, social structures... A person's freedom depends on his abilities, on his social and economic situation, is governed by moral imperatives and laws. In addition, freedom without responsibility can easily turn into arbitrariness and permissiveness.

We can talk about freedom, so to speak, of the highest standard. As K. Jaspers noted, this refers to freedom, in the name of which “an individual sacrifices his frozen empty freedom”, to freedom, “which can be won only together with others”, which “arises only with a change in the person” [9]. M. Keligov draws attention to the fact that in the understanding of K. Jaspers the search for the meaning of life “should be sought primarily in the work of people” [10], referring primarily to the freedom of thought.

Other representatives of existentialism continued to defend a special reverence for freedom, and J.P. Sartre considered human freedom to be the main subject of philosophical research. Even today, philosophers are almost unanimous in the high value scale of freedom in culture, identifying it with the very meaning of human existence: “Free development”, says Yu. Gulyaev, “in our opinion, is the root value and meaning of human existence” [9]. The same high assessment and a specific historical approach are shown to the interpretation of freedom by the famous domestic philosopher V. Mezhuev. Comparing freedom with labor in his free time, he notes: “...freedom, if it really exists, means the right of an individual to manage the time of his life at his own discretion and for the purpose of his own development as a whole person” [12].

For centuries the meaningful theme of freedom in the history of humankind is now going through hard times and is still far from adequate philosophical interpretations. As a result, the interpretations of freedom and human rights chosen in different eras, civilizations, religions and peoples now create essentially unimaginable chaos in socio-political development, mostly with a negative vector. The decline in the cultural level threatening Russia's existence is a consequence of the state's refusal to “create political,

legislative and economic conditions favorable for cultural development”, turning art into a service when “the consumer is always right” [13]. Such a situation in society disorients people from their life goals adequate to the essence of a person, pushes them to its meanings, far from the genuine routine and cultural foundations of personal formation. The saying is quite true: “As soon as a person has all the freedom in the world, he becomes an animal”. The notorious human rights cultivated and cherished in the West are “chimera and false movements of European civilization, as the famous Russian cultural figure Andrei Konchalovsky categorically put it. – It is a huge dictatorship of lies... When a person receives all rights, he, roughly speaking, descends into inhumanity... What are the duties? It's culture! In my opinion, he continues, liberal European thought leads to an abyss only because it fetishized rights. This is the way to hell” [14].

7 Conclusion

We can agree that for Americans, civil and personal freedoms have always come first. For us, Russians, who grew up in a system of paternalism, they just always found themselves on the periphery... [15]. One cannot but agree with the conclusion of a very thorough monograph by V.G. Fedotova: “The main enemy of democracy, the cancer tumor of Western societies – libertarianism, the demand for unlimited freedom, which destroys social solidarity and norms” [16]. It seems to us that freedom within the framework of liberal democracy is associated with selfishness, individualism and rationalism, reduced to permissiveness, it has no “ceiling”, while in the mentality of Eurasian peoples it is organic in unity with truly human spirituality, responsibility, not only for its fate and the fate of its neighbors, but also for the fate of its people, humanity and the world. This freedom is understood not only by collectivism – the aggression of rationalism and scientism is weakened at heart in it.

One of the supporters of liberal values in Russia I.K. Pantin complains: “The priority of values of freedom over wealth disparity turned out to be alien to the domestic tradition, our historical past, and the Russian mentality itself” [17]. We can argue here: we will sooner or later deal with wealth disparity, other economic and social issues, but putting values alien to our peoples, especially libertarian freedoms and human rights, as a basis for solving problems is to condemn our country to the loss of civilizational identity, deprive people of the genuine meaning of life.

Thus, Russian contours in the relationship between personality and society, in the dichotomy of power violence and freedom are viewed through a maze of alternatives to paternalism, totalitarianism and liberalism. It is not for nothing that the real history of our fatherland tested us with these alternatives – since Russia, especially Dagestan and the North Caucasus, are intermediate civilizations, although definitely gravitating towards Eurasian. In this regard, the task of science, a real international scientific conference, is to take into

account the factors of globalization of values, real social and cultural transformations in modern societies, the historical trends of post-Soviet countries, the traditions of their peoples to develop the foundations of regional civil society, with its system and hierarchy of specific basic values.

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