

Topic 7. The human being and the society (II)

1. Society as a system.
2. Society as a process.

1. We all live in society. Society is the subject of social philosophy. But society is understood as the integral system with proper laws of function and development.

The society exists to guarantee of preservation and enhanced reproduction of human life, namely it guarantees the survival of a human. The nature forces people to live together because the reproduction of life is impossible out of society.

In Antiquity the appearance of society was explained by the natural human need of coexistence and the society (community) itself was considered as a part of nature.

In the Middle Ages the society concept disappeared and was replaced by the concepts of “state”, “country”, “the people”.

As the independent being sphere with its own features society appeared only in the New Time. In the basis of ideas about the society lay mostly historical causes. This was connected with the capitalism formation which had social character of economic and political governing.

Sociological problems were formed in the Enlightenment philosophical doctrines. Since this time history has been understood as a regular course of interdependent social processes.

At the beginning of 19th century society transformed into a separate independent cognitive object.

Hegel's philosophy of history became the first systematic social doctrine. He considered society to be the sphere of “overall interlacing interdependence”. Later in positive philosophy of A. Comte society became a peculiar subject and in 1839 a new science – sociology – appeared.

The main problem of philosophic realisation of society is the problem of society objectivity: does the society exist objectively, independently of the cognitive subject or do only separate people exist really and the society is only the subjective abstraction?

Most philosophers admit that society is the system which exists objectively, which has its certain characteristics and which is not only the sum of separate individuals.

The content of the society concept is also a philosophic problem. The definition may be as follows:

Society is the system of relations between people which appeared as a result of their joint life activity.

The systematic analysis of society appeared in 19th century in the doctrines of many thinkers: Comte, Marx, Durkheim, Weber. They considered society to be the integral sum total of interconnected elements and moreover the society was considered to be the system and the process.

The basic elements of society as a system are the spheres where the

joint life action directed at the preservation and the enhanced reproduction of human life is realised. These spheres are based on the main kinds of human activity: economic, social, political and spiritual. So a certain kind of activity is connected with the corresponding social sphere.

Economic sphere is the economic activity sphere of society where the material goods are created.

The elements of the economic sphere are: material needs, economic goods satisfying the needs, economic resources (sources of goods production), economic subjects (separate people or the whole organisations).

The basic element is the economic subject.

Social sphere is the sphere of formation and operation of relations among social human groups.

The elements of the social sphere are: social groups (social communities), social contacts, social institutes (the forms where the most important social contacts are realised), social norms (the rules of social behaviour), values of social culture.

The basic element is the social group.

Political sphere is the sphere where the relations of power and subordination among people are realising; it's the society governing sphere.

The elements of the political sphere are: political organisations and institutes (state, political parties, social organisation, mass-media),

political behaviour and political culture norms, political ideologies.

The basic element is the state.

Spiritual sphere is the sphere of creating and developing spiritual values.

The elements of the spiritual sphere are: spiritual needs as a source of spiritual activity of the society, spiritual values created by the society, realisation means of spiritual production, subjects of spiritual activity (separate people, social groups and organisations, the whole society).

The basic elements are the spiritual values which exist as the ideas and are embodied in language, works of art, etc.

There are several kinds of spiritual activity so each of them has its own sphere. The main kinds of spiritual activity are moral, law, religion, science and art.

Morals are the sphere of moral human norms existence.

This sphere is ancient.

The elements of moral sphere are: moral norms (rules, examples of behaviour), customs (concrete behaviour forms), social opinion (people's behaviour estimation).

The basic elements are the moral norms.

The functions of morals are: regulative and pedagogic.

Law is the system of behaviour norms established and protected by the state.

Law appeared only together with the state and it is obligatory for

execution. It is close to morals but law norms are formally defined, have a single meaning and fixed in the official documents.

The elements of law (legal) sphere are: the sum total of legal norms, juridical activity forms (legal practices), law consciousness (people's notion about law and its realisation).

The basic elements are the law norms.

The functions of law are: regulative, pedagogic and protective.

Religion is the spiritual sphere based on the faith into the existence of super-natural forces.

It is also an early spiritual form.

The elements of religion sphere are: religious belief (religious doctrines and experiences), religious acts (cults), religious institutes and organisations (churches).

The basic elements are the religious belief.

The functions of religion are: worldview, pedagogic, regulative, normative and psychological.

Science is the sphere of rational cognition of the world.

This sphere is the youngest one.

The elements of the science sphere are: scientific knowledge united into a system, scientific activity, science methodology.

The basic elements are the systems of scientific knowledge (theories).

The functions of science are: cognitive, worldview, practical.

Art is the spiritual life form based on the figurative perception of

the world.

The elements of the art sphere are: art images embodied in the works of art, the creation of artefacts (artistic work), artistic notions.

The base elements are the art images embodied in the works of art.

The functions of art are: aesthetic and pedagogic. Besides, art is a peculiar form of world cognition (with the help of art images).

2. The society never remains the same, it is always changing. So the society shows itself as the process that is the consistent change of its state. Therefore social philosophy studies the social-historical process.

The social-historical process is the consistent change of the society state.

If social events compose the irreversible series of causes and consequences and have the direction, we can speak about the society development. To characterise the direction of development the concepts of progress and regress are used.

Progress is the forward bottom-up development which means the transition to the most perfect forms.

Regress is the descending development which means the return to the previous social forms.

No direction is basic. Here everything depends on the social development criteria.

Progress criterion is the index of society development level. However there is no unified opinion here.

There is also the concept of “social development factors”, namely its moving forces. There are objective and subjective factors.

Objective factors are: economic (material production), natural (environment state), demographic (social resources) and scientific-and-technical (science and technology state);

Subjective factors are teleological conscious actions of separate people and the whole society.

In philosophy there are many factored and one factored progress theories.

The main forms of social development are evolution and revolution.

Evolution is the process of gradual changes.

Revolution is the abrupt transition from one state to another.

Revolutions can be social, political, scientific and technological.

Social revolution is the social order type replacement.

Political revolution is the power form replacement.

Scientific revolution is the overturn in scientific knowledge, a great scientific discovery and the world picture replacement.

Technological revolution is the productive forces replacement (as the production revolution of the 18th-19th centuries when the hand work was replaced by the machine; or the scientific-technical revolution of the 20th century when science became the main productive force).

There are several most wide-spread models of the social-historical process.

In the religious model the criterion of development is the level of Christianity, but in philosophy the criteria are different sides of social life. First it was the development of spiritual culture (in Hegel's doctrine it was political freedom), later Marx insisted on the priority of the material side of life.

In the 20th century K. Jaspers created the "axially time" doctrine which belongs to the 5th century B.C. It was the time of Buddha, Socrates and Confucius who made three greatest philosophies of human problem.

In modern social philosophy there are two theories of progressive direction: formation theory and the theory of growth stages.

The followers of progressive doctrines keep to three basic principles:

- 1) history develops progressively;
- 2) the criterion is the material sphere;
- 3) West is the ideal progressive model.

The author of **the formation theory** is Marx. There are five basic formations: primitive social, slave-holding, feudal, capitalist and communist.

Formation is the stage of social development which is based on a certain way of production. The way of production is the sum total of producing forces and productive relations based on property relations. The contradiction between the producing forces and the productive relations is solved through the class struggle. The development of

formations is the objective process independent of people.

The theory of growth stages is one of the most widespread from all not-Marxist ones. It was founded by American philosophers and sociologists (W. Rostow, etc.).

The stage of growth is the period of social development connected with a certain level of production, technical and scientific development. There are four stages:

- 1) pre-industrial society (occupied mostly with agriculture);
- 2) industrial society (the beginning of machine production);
- 3) post-industrial (deals with further development of science and production);
- 4) future post-post-industrial society (information society of the 21st century).

In this conception the criterion is the state of science and technique.

There is also a **civilisation approach** to the social development. There are several doctrines which differ from the progressive directions of social development. In contrast to formation theory and the theory of growth stages civilisation doctrines consider history as non-progressive; the criterion of development is the spiritual sphere; every culture is unique so there are no ideal models of development.

Civilisation is a very polysemantic concept. It simultaneously means 1) a synonym of culture; 2) a certain stage of social development characterised by the presence of urban settlements, the state and a written language; 3) a social-cultural type with a certain

religious system.

Because of the complexity of the civilisation concept different thinkers understood it variously: N. Danilevsky called it “cultural and historical type”, O. Shpangler – “high culture”, A. Toynbee – “civilisation”, P. Sorokin – “socio-cultural super-systems”, N. Berdyaev – “great cultures”.

N. Danilevsky revealed 12 self-contained civilisations (cultural and historical types). They didn't cross and existed in an isolated way.

Civilisation as the final stage of culture was suggested by the German philosopher O. Shpangler. In his doctrine, culture is the creation and civilisation is repetition, reproduction and replication. Civilisation is the decay and the death stage of culture. O. Shpangler singled out 8 basic cultures: Egyptian, Indian, Babylonian, Chinese, Greek and Roman, Maya, magic (Byzantium and Arabic), Faustus (West-European). As the ninth generating culture he marked out Russian-Siberian.

A. Toynbee expressed a religious feature of civilisation. Religion plays the productive role in the culture development. Toynbee proceeded of the culture multiplicity fact. His theory permits to consider different cultures which could coincide with the society boundaries (as the Chinese civilisation) or could include several states (as the Moslem civilisation). Civilisations of Toynbee represent mostly a cultural community variant.

Generally no doctrines of society development can be considered as

sufficient one. The universal scheme of historical process does not exist yet.

Topic 8. Philosophy in modern world

1. Society and nature. Contemporary global problems.
2. Modern technical civilisation. Philosophy and contemporary world.

1. In philosophy nature first of all correlates with society because it is the natural condition of human existence. Society reveals as the segregated part of nature; this part is the condition and the product of human activity. Nature always played the big role in human's life because the man has biological base of his existence though he is super-natural one producing complete social life forms. There is permanent interconnection between human and nature which is the necessary condition of human and society existence. The character of this interconnection is changing on different stages of historical development.

Nature is the sum total of natural conditions of human and society existence.

Nature always was the object of philosophical interpretation. In antique philosophy cosmos was the indivisible unity of nature and human; the philosophy it self was cosmocentric. The medieval Christian philosophy understood nature as the last link of stairs leading from God to man and from man to nature. The man developing his spiritual forces was due to rise over the nature. In New

time nature first became the object of scientific analysis. The nature was accepted as the object of human practical efforts application on the base of the laws opened by the natural science.

In 1868 French scientist E. Reclus introduced the “biosphere” concept to sign the Earth animate cover, the animals and plants layer. In XX century when the human activity obtained the grand scale the “noosphere” conception was created, the sphere of reason which transforms the planet. Russian thinker V.I. Vernadsky and French philosopher T. de Chardin came to the conclusion that the interconnection between human and nature achieved the new level. Now on our planet the new process takes place: the transition process of upper planet layer – biosphere, occupied by the live substance, into the new geological state – noosphere, the area transformed by reason and human labour according to his aims and needs.

Noosphere is the nature and society interconnection sphere where reason becomes the basic determined development factor.

The first indications of biosphere quality worsening as a result of technical civilisation development appeared even at the close of XIX century. At XX century mankind was forced to refuse of the opinion that nature is simply the source of the raw material. It was understood that planet and its animate cover are the united system.

Nature is more and more included in human activity but also it is needed in defence of him. So the main aim of noosphere conception is to define the scientific and moral principles of nature and society

harmonic relations achievement. The society and nature interrelations have complete and contradictory character and also depend on the culture type. Today two kinds of culture are defined: eastern and western or traditional and innovative.

In traditional societies human needed to adapt to the nature; he subordinated to its laws and rhythms. So in this kind of culture there was the ecological balance because the man didn't oppose himself to the nature, he was harmonic and proportional to it.

In western civilisation this balance was destroyed. Science considers nature as the object, only such approach allows speaking about the objective world laws. To achieve this effect it was necessary to exclude all the mythological beings which were the essence of traditional culture. The Christian civilisation was single what excluded God from nature. Even if God created nature he never existed there after this. Such understanding of nature made the possibility of science appearance. But the scientific-and-technical progress which became the special way of western culture development has led to the destruction of society and nature interaction balance.

Today mankind experiences the deepest crisis in its history. There are several dozens of pressing global scale problems. They are the ecological crisis and ecological disaster threat, the use of mass destruction weapon, the shortening of economical break between the population of most developed countries and the great mass of the poorest world population.

Ecological crisis is the ecological situation type characterising by the destruction of dynamic balance of “social-nature” system.

The essence of modern ecological situation is lead to three basic moments:

- 1) the very quick exhaustion of mankind natural resources;
- 2) the natural environment is polluted too quick what leads to the disaster consequences;
- 3) too quick increasing of population.

Two first of them were caused directly by the scientific-and-technical revolution. From ecological the crisis turned into the general (economical, social and spiritual) crisis of civilisation because modern ecological situation in the crisis included in it deals with the whole course of human civilisation development.

The most number of modern problems became the global ones. **Global problem** concerns to all the people (mankind) and can be decided only by joint (global) efforts. Among them are:

- the approaching ecological disaster deals with the environment pollution, the mineral resources exhaustion, the ozone holes appearance, the hothouse effect, the deforesting, the acid precipitations;
- the demographic crisis which is able to lead us to planet overpopulation;
- the economical crisis means the increasing of the break between the rich and the poor countries;

– the war danger.

The global problems attracted attention of scientists in 60-70th years of XX century when the Rome club was founded. It is the not formal organisation of scientists who applied the mathematical modelling method to the social-and-ecological processes investigation. The studies in this organisation put the beginnings of futurology and globalistic. Aurelio Peccei, the famous humanist, became the president of Rome club. The first world development dynamic model which was created caused shock. According to the prognoses the mankind will come to the global catastrophe at the close of XXI century. It was proved that if the existing rate of growth will remain in the first half of XXI century all the mineral resources will be exhausted; the environment pollution will become irreversible; the decay of agriculture and production will begin. In fact it was too similar to the world's end.

A number of scientists supposed different ways of crisis overcoming. But first all the problems must be investigated in detail.

Ecological problem. The western civilisation realised the way of scientific-and-technical progress which became the example to the most number of modern peoples and countries. But such technical civilisation as we saw leads to the predatory use and exhausting of all the natural possibilities of our planet. The biggest part of costs belongs to the developed countries but soon taking into account the wishes of other countries the costs of environment will more and more increase.

But this increasing is limited by the planet resources.

The energy planet resources are not endless. Moreover today the most part of population lives in cities so the energy consumption will increase.

More than one third part of our forests was already destroyed. It is one of the basic causes of ecological unbalance. The forest destruction is caused by the energetic needs especially of poor population which use the wood for heating and food preparation.

There are also the sweet water deficit, the destruction of ozone cover, the World ocean pollution, the exhausting of the soil and its transformation in deserts, etc.

For the improvement of the environment the giant sums are necessary. There is no another sources for life besides biosphere and its resources. But up to now human only produces and the decay function he leaves to nature though the assimilative possibilities of biosphere are exhausted.

The next problem is the **demographical** one. Now situation needs the shortening of population for ten times or the shortening of the human needs. The population now increases twice every 35 years. If such rate of growth will remain to the 2400 year people will fill up the entire Earth surface side by side.

At XVIII century the Earth population was nearly 800 millions. In 1820 the population reached the 1 milliard number, in 1927 – 2 milliards. The third milliard was fixed in 1959, and the fourth – 15

years later. In 1987 the population was 5 billions, today we are more than 6 billions. According to the modern prognoses at the close of XXI century the population will stabilise on the level of 12-15 billions but the problem will not be decided. The increasing of population is caused first of all by the poverty of the developing countries.

The first problem of our planet is **misery**. The inhabitant of developed country uses food and resources for 15-20 times more than the inhabitant of developing country. The well-provided part of population must refuse of the superfluous consumption to achieve the certain balance in economic sphere.

The **economic inequality** means that from 6 billions of world population 1 billion is so called “gold billion” with the high life level and the rest 5 billions which are much differed of the first one. According to Z. Brzeziński in 1998 three the most rich men in the world had the private means which was more than gross inner product of 48 less developed countries together. Americans spend 8 billions dollars a year on the cosmetics; at the same time 6 billions dollars could be enough to give the primary education to all the world children, etc. This situation leads to the destabilisation of the world and may cause war conflicts.

War danger means first of all the danger of self-destruction. The war in contemporary conditions can be turned into the thermonuclear war and lead to the death of civilisation, death of billions of people,

social and biological degradation of survived. In spite of this every year different countries spend nearly 1000 milliards dollars on the weapon and war goals. The overpopulation of the planet and the misery of biggest part of its inhabitants can provoke the use of mass destruction weapon and the destruction of the world.

The most of scientists today consider that all the global problems are essentially cultural, that we must change our values and stimuli. The future civilisation must be ecological where the all the balances (fuel-and-energy, of mineral and raw materials, demographical, ecological also the whole disarmament and humanity as the values system) must be restored. So the future alternative civilisation is the low-energy, high-stable, ecologically pure, completely demilitarised and truly human one.

2. In philosophy history the think of civilisation's crisis and end was repeated often. This mind exists in conceptions of Danilevsky, Nietzsche, Toynbee, Spengler, Weber. After the Second World War the crisis didn't pass, it became the form of universal global problems. All developing countries try to achieve the level of developed countries so the crisis becomes the crisis of modern human.

The modern stage is called differently: scientific-and-technical revolution, technological revolution, informational, computer, etc. what marks that the process essence is new post-industrial developing stage. It is mostly relates to the western civilisation but can be signed

in other countries.

In this situation philosophy established the appearance of informational society and informational man. There are different prognoses about the human's future. J. Fourastie supposed the possibility of "scientific society" creation which will be free of political, social and religious antagonisms. D. Bell characterised the future society by the new social structure based on the knowledge and qualification. Such society will be governed by the organisers of science and techniques and the defining develop factor of social life will be the scientific centres. These and many others conception meanwhile can be considered as the utopias but in the complete contemporary situation the society can choose only one way from two possible: the unity of all the people for the preservation of life on the Earth or the fight for the resources to provide only some country. The last way presupposes the increasing of political and economical oppositions between the whole civilisations. Such conflicts were considered by S. Huntington as the possible future scenario of world development taking into account that the relations between civilisations are conflict on principle.

In spite of tremendous achievement of modern western civilisation people's life didn't become safer, happier, wealthier and more successful. Human needs the overestimation of contemporary world values system. In this situation the strengthening of fundamentalism positions is not accidentally because its essence is the fanatic striving

to change the person and the society according to highest metaphysical ideas and commandments. So many of philosophers, politologists and sociologists consider that fundamentalism is one of the biggest dangers to world community.

The reality of informative society and new threats and dangers which it brings for man and mankind force to look for the stabilisation mechanisms to guarantee the minimisation of the possibilities of unpredictable processes and phenomena. In spite of all the successes in science and techniques the main hope of mankind is the human itself. It is important to define new development horizons for immediately decision of global problems. We must revise the interaction between the cultures and civilisations, between the religions and moral conceptions, between the political and economical doctrines. The mankind can survive only under the conditions of violence exception and the providing of existential rights of each man and of biosphere on the whole.

At the beginning of XXI century the mind about the turning-point of mankind became common. All the events of XX century (two world wars, unprecedented cruelty, social and moral chaos, a number of global problems, etc.) marks the contradictions connected with the new global (planet) civilisation forming.

The crisis of western world was considered in detail by Spanish philosopher J. Ortega-y-Gasset. His famous book “Rebellion of the masses” analysed the development of west world during XIX-XX

century. These two centuries brought the victory to democracy, parliamentarism and the unknown development of techniques. The cities population doubled. There were created the unlimited sources of riches and comfort. But the moral demanding, the responsibility for the present and future, the respect to the labour and moral values were forgotten. This historical phenomenon was called “rebellion of the masses” and the society – the mass society. This society includes the culture manifold of different peoples and it is partly able to define its destiny.

Certainly it is necessary to define the dominative one in the world. Today the domination of the West is undoubted. It changed the history and its “western values” are very attractive to the biggest part of the world. But even now the rivals from the East (Japan, China) may complicate the relations in the world. The particular place belongs to the Islamic countries where the modernisation is going very painfully.

There is the weakness of western civilisation itself. C. Levi-Strauss wrote: “Western personalism separated the human from the other universe leaved him without defence. The man believing into the boundless of his possibilities is condemned to the self-destruction”. Modern culture tries to return the unity of human and nature. The opposition of the object and the subject, the nature and the man what characterised the New time mind is denied now. The human doesn't know how to overcome the ecological crisis and the basic cause lies not in nature but in moral values and ideas. The humanity principles

must relate not only to the human but also to the nature. Traditionally the man was the main value. Now we must pass to the **ecohumanism** what supposes the careful attitude to the nature. If earlier the man was the centre of universe (the anthropocentrism principle) then now every live being, the biosphere itself must become the highest value (the **biocentrism** principle). This principle supposes the change of human consciousness generally.

Today even the man needs the safe because the level of external interference in his biological state became unlimited. In philosophy the new directions appeared: ecological ethics, bioethics and medical ethics which decide the questions of the attitude to the dying persons, to the newborns with incurable hereditary diseases, the questions of abortion and of the right to death (euthanasia).

The world stands in front of the choice: to die or to find new possibilities and perspectives. The “mass culture” is born and simultaneously the unique of man’s life increases. The culture of XX-XXI centuries destroyed the traditional forms and strives to adopt new values. Philosophy helps it creating new cultural paradigm. Modern philosophy made the human and his problem the first ones. The man, the sense of life, the person is the dominative problems in philosophical culture of XX century. Even the “being” category is considered anthropologically (not the ontologically) through the categories of human existence, “existence”. The special existentialism direction developed the problem of the man as the unique

phenomenon. Even the academic philosophy turned into the philosophical-and-artistic essay. In the middle of the XX century in theories of H. Marcuse, E. Fromm, F. Frank the traditional values was revised and it was insisted on the perspective of the culture humanisation.

Analysing the modern culture the investigators marks that it became the **mass culture**. It certainly suggests its primitive character. The mass media are averaging the information and the culture wholly what leads to the appearance of “world village” where all the information becomes the hearsays. Ortega-y-Gasset made the conclusion that the book culture turns into the screen culture. The last one characterises by the dominating of image but not the logical concept. The screen culture gives the widest possibilities in perception but it can't from the dialectical logical thinking. Also this culture has the playing character what corresponds to the philosophical concept of “post-modern”.

The education occupies the big place in modern world. The base of educational process is the world-out-looking program. Today the humanitarisation of the education became the prior task. How we are teaching is important the same as what we are teaching. The methodology of teaching forms the certain philosophical views about us and the surrounding world. The humanitarisation of education needs in the special philosophical direction – education philosophy. Philosophy must play the adaptation role, must promote the humanities values forming, and must realise the social therapy

function. The studying of philosophy allows avoiding the rectilinear perception of complete universe problems and relations between people. Philosophy not only gives the sum of knowledge but it is the knowledge personally necessary. It looks for the answers and teaches to put the questions correctly.