

IMPORTANCE OF MATERIALISM INCREASE AS DESTABILIZATION FACTOR OF HUMAN AXIOLOGICAL SYSTEM

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Abstract

Change is a part of our reality. It determines progress in numerous spheres of human life. At the same time, it obliges to conformity. However, it is a state which generates a feeling of confusion, insecurity, and lack of stabilization. It determines one's need of embedding in norms which put off the feeling of responsibility for behaviours causing a dissonance in the person's moral sphere. Therefore, the culture leaves an empty space into which a contemporary person inscribes a dominance of materialistic and individualistic values, which successfully supersede pro-social and moral values, contributing to a peculiar chaos in the axiological-normative system that has its' effects on social processes and relations.

Key words: *materialism, individualism, values.*

1. Introduction

When faced with omnipresent socio-cultural changes, a person appears as an element of a wider plan which they co-create and to which they are strongly subjected. Depicting those changes is at the origin of understanding the human behaviour which is subjected to the axiological system. Adopting such a perspective, one can ask what constitutes the highest value in a person's life. Irrespective of the cultural diversities, the answer would always be the same - 'life' is unquestionably the overriding value. It contains a family element which not only gives a chance for the economic stability, but which also is a niche facilitating the human race to persist. It ensures the development of the new generations, namely the process of adapting to life in a society in accordance with the present axiological-normative system whose foundations are inviolable. Nevertheless, the present day comes with something else or even something in return. It is a representation existing in the youngest generation concerning a widely understood human life space as a space that can be estimated in terms of economics. Everything has its price. It generates a danger of degrading life values to the materialistic and individualistic sphere. Even more so as young people who are brought up in peaceful times, during a relative economic and political stabilization are searching for individual understanding of the world that is known to them and which represents their point of view in perceiving this reality. They search for this image in everything surrounding them. They separate themselves from other people's needs. They focus on their own 'ego' and, at the same time, they devalue the needs of other people from their environment.

2. Forming materialism's importance

Consequently, a person's view is characterized by individuality, concentrated on itself and its' goals which are realized while ignoring other person's dignity and well-being. Such behaviour is the resultant of experiences drawn from the functioning in a culture that supersedes humanity from its cognitive, emotional, and behavioural spheres. The humanity is being replaced by materialism and individualism's overriding importance, what has its effect on interpersonal relations. There appears instrumental treating as means to obtaining one's goal. It is supported by the omnipresent acceptance of the society which has already internalized such a value system. A person formed in such a reality and subjected to such factors does not have different models. This representation is identical with their vision. Taking this into account, one can ask whether the shown image of the contemporary cultural

reality influences the value system of a contemporary person of the beginning of the XXI century. In which direction is going the society's evaluation. There follows the enhancement or retardation of the process of materialization and individualization that influences shaping of specific interpersonal relations in a given culture. The word culture is defined by A. Giddens as a learnt, not inherited, aspects of human societies. They create a common context in which human life passes. It includes immaterial aspects, such as beliefs, convictions, ideals, and values, which constitute cultural contents, as well as material aspects, such as objects or symbols (Giddens, 2006). B. Szacka indicates one more very important aspect. She highlights that culture is a collective creation, not an individual one, that it builds up and develops through a given social context as a result of the information flow. What is essential is that culture grows and changes over time (Szacka, 2003), which corresponds to the represented thought that proves the existence of changes in the society. Particular conditions and development determine, in their turn, precise consequences in the cultural sphere. The existing world is subjected to transformations both in the material field (new technologies facilitating the communication, production, and distribution of merchandise and services) and in the immaterial field, especially on the axiological level. The latter includes values which can be characterized as goals designated by the society that are realized in everyday human pursuits. They are socially shaped impulses obliging to a specific behaviour, in accordance with the owned hierarchy. Changes concern also the normative sphere. Norms themselves are behaviour regulators. They are rules telling us how we should conduct ourselves in a given situation. It should be highlighted that a contemporary person does not easily accept values and norms which create a dissonance within them. Those values and norms are inconsistent with their internalized goals of the materialistic nature. They collide with their pursuance oriented towards securing prosperity and stabilization within this sphere. Values are being chosen at discretion of a person who modifies the meaning of values for their own good, not taking into account the well-being of other people, their situation, or their pursuance. It is a state that can burgeon. It is a peculiar ideology of the contemporaneity. The quality of life is reduced to the income level and the social status took the name of the material position. Only this starts to build a person's self-esteem.

3. Person in face of value choices and their threats

As a result of those processes, a person faces many choices, their system of values is subjected to constant modifications. Nevertheless, they become less and less defined and unclear. Their realization in the conditions of axiological-normative chaos, in time, overgrows the possibilities of an individual, leading to taking up actions inconsistent with the social norms. Such state of affairs is a consequence of the increase of a possibility of making choices, as well as of the diminish of the importance of the hitherto institutions directing this process (Horyń and Maciejewski, 2007). It has to be highlighted that modern societies undergo moral transformations that have various shapes and that take diverse directions. It takes place simultaneously to changes of both values and norms. The first possibility is 'morality's secularization' which refers to diverging from the model of religious morality that popularizes a lifestyle not violating the well-being of another person or, in other words, their dignity. The second one is 'morality's individualization' which comes down to the downfall of meta-narration and to the programming of unlimited freedom of individuals. Another scenario, called 'values transformation', indicates the destruction of (traditional) values and the creation of new ones, adjusted to the contemporary society (Mariański, 2001).

A result of such a situation is the development of space for contradictions and conflicts. The amount of material goods increases with the simultaneous increase of poverty. Alongside those phenomena, fight for group domination in the spheres of biological, psycho-cultural,

and geopolitical needs increases. Furthermore, we are dealing with opposing of what is one owns to what is different (Gajda, 2000).

Nowadays, a person who looks for a deeper meaning of life in such an entirety of the global world's influences encounters a lot of threats. They result from the dynamics of socio-cultural changes which contribute to the rise of orientation crisis, manifesting itself with helplessness, insecurity, key questions about values, as well as manifesting in social conflicts. This crisis has an intrapersonal character, because it leads to the rise of one's well-being threat, and an interpersonal character, because it endangers communities' unities (Brezinka, 1992).

Other threats that influence the axiological sphere result from unification and pluralistic tendencies colliding with each other. Moreover, one can see some attenuation in seeking for the universal values which constitute the basis of functioning of an individual in the widely understood cultural diversity. Nevertheless, a leading matter is a diversity in interpretations of values, especially of the ethical ones which are the foundations of the collective life and, in more detail, of the differences in interpreting good and evil, truth and false, depending on individual, particular needs of a person (Gajda, 2000).

The traditionalism, as a reference to the traditional norms and values, loses on its meaning. In exchange, there appears a dominance of individualistic and materialistic values. Numerous research on this matter (Kokiel, 2004; 2009; 2013) show that a good job, knowledge, thanks to which it is possible to become economically independent, becoming a professional, what translates into the income level, it all gain in meaning. On the other hand, moral and pro-social values which influence positive interpersonal relations are subjected to devaluation. Their place is taken by values concerning satisfying the needs of an individual who is oriented on fast and easy achievement of benefits, without effort or sacrifices. Some distressing tendencies were also drawn on the basis of research conducted in 2004, 2009, and 2013. They show that 'goodness' as a value loses on its meaning, the same as 'kindness'. These are values with peculiar importance. They manifest themselves in the interpersonal relations, they shape and stabilize them. They are specific regulators which, being implemented in the social life, influence the harmonization of the mentioned relations. In turn, the value 'wealth' gains in importance. It constructs the feeling of self-esteem. What is essential is that it determines a person to act, digressing from care about other people and their well-being. It takes the form of one-sided gratification of materialistic and individualistic values.

Conclusions

On the basis of the presented contents, one can say that the contemporary reality, despite the apparent balance, peace, relative economic stabilization, increase of wealth in the European Union countries, conditions in a person a need of concentrating on values that give evidence about their individuality, independence, and freedom, as well as on materialistic values which are raised to the rank of autotelic or ultimate values themselves. It reveals itself that they are the ones that build a sense of value, that influence priorities and ways of realizing them. Extremely important in this field seem to be views which allow to reach the essence of this social phenomenon which corresponds to the economic dimension. Today's person with their possibilities of self-determination is subjected to a powerful culture pressure, which obliges them to the conformity and to the reality's evaluation through the prism of internalized behaviour and experience patterns. It is not a state of threat, but it is a state that requires scientific attention whose goal, apart from the analysis of the existing state, is to search for a theory explaining those phenomena and, with this background, to construct tools allowing, in a systematic way, to make influences on aspects which violate the existing state of balance in a significant way. It is a 'thin line' between what is 'natural' and what differs

from the commonly accepted norm in a wide spectre. Nevertheless, in this situation it is a state requiring permanent focus of analysts who can, on their way to scientific study, discern the symptoms indicating a stability threat. In this context, one can take an approach showing the economics extreme, especially susceptibility to those extremes of a person who, following a path laid out by the culture, fits in the approved scheme at all costs. They pursue the materialistic and individualistic values at all costs. Regardless of other values, well-being of other people or their situation. An individual with its expectations comes to the fore.

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