

A NEW LINE OF RESEARCH:
SYNERGETIC PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIOLOGY OF PERSONALITY

Abstract

The research of the synergetic philosophy of history leads to a fundamentally new approach to the study of personality and rational understanding of the meaning of life. The heuristic role in the history synergetic philosophy is argued in the structuring of a new human philosophy in the context of the self-organization of man and mankind. It is this aspect that is specific to the synergetic philosophy of man.

Keywords: synergetic philosophy of history, meaning of life, ideal, value, fashion, personality, ideological society, consumer society, super attractor.

Introduction

There are a number of studies in the theory of self-organizing systems both in the sphere of inanimate, animate nature and in a social sphere. The contribution of Professor M. S. Kagan occupies an important place in this area (1995).

In 1999 Saint-Petersburg State University saw the synergetic philosophy of history which was managed by Professor Branskij V. P. and which offered a new approach to self-organization (organization) in comparison with a traditional approach. This problem area is greatly contributed by the following scientists: H. Haken¹, K. Maitser², R. Robertson³, T. L. Fried-

man⁴. The development of the social synergetic is highly influenced also by the following scientists: G. G. Malinetskiy and, S. P. Kurdyumov⁵,

¹ See Haken, H. (1977). *Synergetics*. Stuttgart; Haken, H. (1983). *Advanced Synergetics*. Berlin; Haken, H., Kelso, J. A. S., & Bunz, H. H. (1985). A Theoretical Model of Phase Transitions in Human Hand Movements. *Biological Cybernetics*. 51; Haken, H. (1987). *Erfolgsgeheimnisse der Natur*. 4.

Aufl. Stuttgart; Haken, H. (1988). *Information and Self-organization*. Berlin; Haken, H. (1991). *Synergetic Computers and Cognition*. Berlin; Haken H., & Haken-Krell M. (1992). *Erfolgsgeheimnisse der Wamehmung*. Stuttgart; Haken, H. (1996). *Principles of Brain Functioning. A Synergetic Approach to Brain Activity, Behavior and Cognition*. Berlin.

² See Maitser, K. (2015). *Issleduya slozhnost': ot iskusstvennoy zhizni i iskusstvennogo intellekta k kiberfizicheskim sistemam* (Studying the Complexity: from an Artificial Life and an Artificial Intelligence to Cyberphysical Systems, in Russian). *Filosofiya nauki i tekhniki*, 20(2), 85–105. Ausburg.

³ See Robertson, R. (1996). *Globalization. Social Theory and Global Culture*. London.

⁴ See Friedman, T. L. (2000). *Understanding Globalization. The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. N.Y.

⁵ See Malinetskiy, G. G., & Kurdyumov S. P. (2001). *Nelineynaya dinamika i problemy prognozy* (Non-linear Dynamics and Problems of Forecast, in Russian). *Vestnik RAN*, 71(3).

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This approach is implemented in three aspects of understanding the notion of self-organization: ontological; gnoseological (epistemological) and axiological (that has not been considered so far).

This theory critically analyzes the traditional understanding and development of history. The notions of truth and ideal are central in development process. No highly scientific definition of an ideology as an overall theory of ideal is given.

Methodological Framework

The general theory of self-organization for another reality (object, subject, subject-object) is the ground for the new methodology to study all types of these realities which differ from the traditional neo-positivist and post positivist methods of research.

⁶ See Knyazeva, Ye. N., & Kurdyumov S. P. (2002). *Osnovaniya sinergetiki* (Grounds of Synergetics, in Russian). Moscow: Aleteyya.

⁷ See Nazaretyan, A. P. (2001). *Tsivilizatsionnye krizisy v kontekste universalnoy istorii. Sinergetika, psikhologiya i futurologiya* (Civilized Crises in the Context of Universal History. Synergetics, Psychology and Futurology, in Russian). Moscow: PerSE.

⁸ See Vasilkova, V. V. (2002). *Poryadok i khaos v razviti sotsial'nykh sistem. Sinergetika i teoriya sotsial'noy organizatsii* (Order and Chaos in Development of Social Systems. Synergetics and Theory of Social Organization, in Russian). Saint Petersburg: Lan.

⁹ See Branskij, V. P., & Kagan, M. S. (1998). *Sinergetika i kul'turologiya* (Synergetics and Culture Studies, in Russian). Saint Petersburg: SPbGU.

¹⁰ See Prigozhin, I., & Stengers, I. (1996). *Poryadok iz khaosa* (Order from Chaos, in Russian). Moscow: Progress.

¹¹ See Khaken, G. (2003). *Tainy prirody. Sinergetika: uchenie i vzaimodeystvie* (Secrets of Nature. Synergetics: Theory and Interaction, in Russian). Moscow-Izhevsk: In-t kompyuternykh issledovaniy.

Results

- The notion of a global attractor (super attractor) which defines the meaning of life in comparison with the approaches of Camus and Chardin is introduced.
- A new conception of the meaning of life which can result in secularization of the problem is given.
- Understanding of life as a value in itself is supported by the arguments, and the statement about the fact that a synergetic approach to a human's essence is in understanding a human being as an ideological animal is justified.
- The statement about the fact that the value activity is based on the value targets is justified, and the synergetic theory of values which is grounded on the synergetic theory of ideology is the key to understand the value production.

The purpose of the present research is to study how the synergetic philosophy of history (SPH) (Branskij & Pozharskii, 2009) leads to a significantly new insight into the nature of personality. Another focus of attention of this paper is the traditional but hopelessly controversial issue with no rational solution – *the reason of individual human existence* (“the meaning of life”). The heuristic role of SPH in constructing a new philosophy of personality is explained by the link between the self-organization of the person and the self-organization of the humanity. The synergetic philosophy of personality (in comparison with the traditional philosophical anthropology) takes this link into account.

Discussion

The authors differentiate an absolute ideal

(universal) from a relative ideal (particular human one) with a universal ideal being developed in their struggle. This process is potential and infinite in nature.

A hypothesis of a fundamental analogy between a relative truth and a development of the absolute truth (universal ideal) in the course of struggle of a relative ideal (particular human one) is put forward. This problem was carefully studied by Saint-Petersburg School of Social Synergetics, while no other scientists touched this issue so far.

1. The Problem of the “Meaning of Life” in the Context of the World History

Our task is, first of all, to refine the formulation of the issue, as the SPH concept requires, rather than to give an overview of its different interpretations. Here we should make four statements.

1. It is impossible to solve the problem of the meaning of life with the help of *metaphors*, no matter how expressively emotional they would seem to be. For example, a philosopher asserts that the purpose of human existence lies in “standing in the clearing of being” (Heidegger), although he expresses his own attitude to a problem with no rational solution. Nevertheless, from the scientific point of view the problem solution and the emotional attitude to it are quite different matters.
2. Most of the authors dealing with this issue reject the metaphorical approach and try to solve the problem with rational means (with clearly formulated concepts), and come to the following conclusion: in principle, the problem of the meaning of life cannot be solved within a coherent scien-

tific worldview; it can get a rational solution only when transferred from scientific to extra-scientific (religious) worldview. This type of reasoning can best be illustrated by the famous paper “Smyslzhizni” (“The meaning of life”) by S. L. Frank, a Russian philosopher (Frank, 1990, pp. 144-149). The key idea is formulated as follows. The life of a person within *natural* (material) reality is completely *meaningless* (“empirical meaninglessness of life”)¹². But it can acquire a meaning (and a very deep one) with the postulation of the existence of *supernatural* (non-material, ideal, transcendental) reality, ministering to which defines “the meaning of life”. The key idea is that life of a human being within *natural* (material) reality is completely *meaningless* (“empirical meaninglessness of life”). But it can acquire meaning (and a very deep one), if one states the existence of *supernatural* (non-material, ideal, transcendent) reality which is defined as “the meaning of life”.

3. The specified difficulties have resulted in the secularization of the problem of the meaning of life: the problem solution is seen in serving the *progressive* development of the “natural reality”. At that, “progress” refers to such an irreversible qualitative change in social reality, where it changes “for the better” (the amount of material

¹² Together with the issue of the meaning of life, one can raise the question concerning the forms of its seeming *meaninglessness*. The history of the world culture has the following examples: (1) serving the absurd (Camus, 1990); (2) word play (Baudrillard, 2006) — the exchange of simulacra, that is, in simple words, idle talk; (3) spiritual suicide — forsaking any activity that keeps the connection of a person to the society (from ordinary hermitage to asceticism, from life in a cave to life in a coffin) and the last but not the least (4) physical suicide.

and “spiritual” wealth is gradually increasing, therefore people’s life conditions and their material and “spiritual” selves are improving). This classical concept of progress and the development of the idea of progress are described in the best way in the fundamental work “Progress: History of the idea” by R. Nisbet, an American sociologist (Nisbet, 1980).

It is easy to see that from the SPH viewpoint the “progressive” approach to the “meaning of life” problem has the following significant advantages in comparison with the two previous approaches (which can tentatively be named “personalistic” and “theological”). Unlike the personalistic approach, the idea of progress connects the meaning of individual life problem with the meaning of history problem. The idea of progress as the key to solve the problem of the meaning life assumes that it is completely *meaningless* to try to solve the problem of individual meaning of life *beyond the meaning of social history*.

4. The difficulties induced by all the above approaches gave the ground for the wide distribution and popularity of an old idea that one should not look for the meaning of individual life *outside* this life, since life is an *inherent value* (the Epicurus - LaMettrie line). So, the meaning of life is in life itself. Virtually, it means choosing such an activity that gives maximum pleasures with minimum sufferings. While the motto of the progressive approach to the problem is “Leave your trace in history”, then the epicurean (hedonistic) approach brings about another credo: “Live unnoticed and vanish without a trace”. If serving the supernatural reality or social progress is directed to-

wards the past and future, the hedonistic approach - towards the present only (“philosophy of everyday routine”).

2. Human Nature. Concept of an Ideological Animal

Let us now look at how the issue of human *existence* is connected with the issue of human *self*. In the light of what has been said above, the following is obvious: from the SPH viewpoint, these issues are interconnected and therefore the question about the “priority” of one of them has no sense (unlike what the philosophy of existentialism claims). The originality of the synergetic approach to human self lies in the fact that a man is an *ideological* animal. This means that a man is such animal, whose final motive of behavior (his, so to say, strategic target) is some *ideal*, and the final result is the implementation of this ideal, i.e. some *value*¹³.

Since the ideal is connected with such concepts as “belief” and “sacrifice”, it can suppress any instincts inherent to a healthy man as any healthy animal. If the ideal recedes into the background in its combat with instincts, the ideological animal turns into an instinctive animal, and thus loses his “human” nature (animalization of a person).

From the definition of the human being as an ideological animal, several very important corollaries follow. First of all, an ideological animal is inevitably an *axiological* animal since the procedure of implementing ideals (just what the synergetic theory of ideology states) results in the appearance of values. Let us emphasize

¹³ In SPH value means *material embodiment of the pragmatic aspect of an ideal* (Branskij & Pozharskii, 2009, ch. I, § 2). A thing (for example, a picture), a person, a social institute, etc. can play the role of such an embodiment.

here that one should not mix up the concepts of “axiological” and “valuable”. A leopard, a fur seal or a bird of paradise are very valuable animals but this does not make them axiological, since they, having no ideals, produce not values but practical utilities. Often values are equated with “practical utility” (material objects, which meet some requirements). From the viewpoint of the synergetic theory of values (as a part of SPH), this should not be done, since the criterion of practical utility is a need, and the criterion of value is *ideal*. The need is not connected with the operation of *idealization*, and the ideal is the product of this operation. But such operation is inherent to human beings only. Due to this reason, practical utilities exist not only in society, but in nature, too; but values exist only in the society.

The second important corollary from the “ideological” approach to the essence of human being lies in the fact that all previous definitions of this essence are obtained automatically, as regular and necessary corollaries from this new definition. In the history of science and self-reflection of philosophy, language and labor have always been considered the fundamental parameters that characterize human essence. It is easy to understand that for the formation of even the most primitive ideal, not only the capability to reflect the external world (primary reflection), but also the capability to reflect the results of this primary reflection (secondary reflection or self-reflection) should be developed. Only in this case, it becomes possible to differentiate the truth and the ideal, and thus *separate the ideal from the truth*. To make this ideal *generally valuable* (inter-subjective, rather than only individual), a system of symbols is required designed for information exchange between different living creatures. And to move

on to the *realization* of this ideal, sophisticated labor is necessary aimed at production of not only goods, but also instruments of production.

Different systems of philosophical idealism have always emphasized the connection of human essence with the presence of “soul”. This term was used to designate the upper form of psyche, inherent to a man only and having a non-material character. From the viewpoint of scientific psychology, the soul of man is a *holistic* unity of different psychological components (perception, thinking, memory, imagination, etc.), which is *specific* for every given personality. The individual features of a personality show themselves in all its components and in the method of synthesis of these components. This holistic unity cannot exist without a material carrier. A no less *holistic* unity of brain cortex cells forming an intricate structure of the highest degree of complexity acts as such a carrier. As the holistic nature of brain psychological processes has, as its material carrier, the holistic nature of brain neural-physiological processes, one cannot identify psychological processes with physiological processes. The soul, showing its existence in the holistic nature of psychological processes, cannot be just identified with the holistic nature of physiological processes associated with its functioning: the holistic nature of physiological processes in a given brain is not a copy, but *a code* of the holistic nature of psychological processes; therefore, in case of identification of the *holistic* nature of psychological processes with the *holistic* nature of physiological processes, we equate information with information carrier, and this results in the so-called psycho-physiological paradox (absurd identification of two different objects)¹⁴. That is why

¹⁴ For example, if in our mind we imagine the Eiffel Tower and completely liken it with some configura-

the human “soul” seems to be some kind of volatile essence which, on the one hand, is likely to form a special non-material reality, and, on the other hand, it permanently eludes observation and, as any ultimately unobservable object, as though does not exist at all, except in the imagination of mystic-minded religious thinkers. So, human essence is closely connected with the presence of a higher form of psyche – human soul, which no other animal has. A deeper analysis of this concept shows that it has ambivalent (contradictory) nature. On the one hand, this concept includes some individual (original, unique) features of a personality. On the other hand, it reveals generally valuable (inter-subjective) nature of a personality (common features with other personalities). In practice, this nature shows itself in the fact that in the depth of the soul there is a “spirit” – a *generally valuable ideal* connecting this soul with other similar souls. Hence, the scientific understanding of such an overly mystified concept as “spirit” lies in its identification with the spiritual community of a variety of people with different souls. Contrary to the psyche of all other animals, the human psyche has a *spiritual* dimension, i.e. orientation (“intentionality” according to Husserl) to the realization of some ideal. Moreover, when the human psyche begins to lose this feature, a man becomes closer to ordinary animals. In short, in the soul of any true human being, like a nymph in a cocoon or a pearl in a shell, there is a certain “spirit”, which is not at all inconceivable or mysterious, since from the scientific point of view it represents none other than a social ideal. Its presence in the soul makes a man a socialized animal

(like ants and termites), but a socialized animal of quite another nature in comparison with ordinary animals, as the basis of the social environment, which a man forms, is an ideal rather than an instinct.

Now it becomes clear how insightful were the ancient philosophers (in particular, the Neo-Platonists), when they required to differentiate between “the soul” and “the spirit”.

Thus, the “ideological animal” concept is in fact an equivalent to the “spiritual animal” concept. In the latter, the conventional materialistic and idealistic approaches to human essence form a natural union, becoming free from the previous centuries-old antagonism. The outstanding difference of the “spiritual” animal from the ordinary (“spiritless”) animals lies in the fact that with soul (with “the spirit” “sleeping” in the inmost recesses of the soul) this animal acquires the *ability to think about the meaning of its existence*, which is completely alien to all other living creatures. It is clear from the above that (1) it is completely meaningless to oppose human existence to human essence, and moreover to discuss the issue on “primary” or “secondary” nature of either; (2) human essence (just like his existence) is revealed and completely disclosed only in his social *activity*. We can say nothing about the essence of an inactive personality; the same is about its existence (except that the latter in this case is no more than vegetation).

3. Axiological Activity of a Human Being and his Main Axiological Orientations¹⁵

Though the forms of activity in a developed society are immeasurably abundant, in

tion of macromolecules in the brain cells, then finally we liken the Eiffel Tower with this configuration.

¹⁵ See Oganyan K. M., Branskij & Oganyan K. K., 2013; Oganyan K. M., 2015.

the context of the problem of the “meaning of life” all forms of activities can be grouped into three sets:

- *Production* of some values (reproductive or innovative creation). At that, one should distinguish between the production of utilitarian and spiritual values;
- *Consumption* of the produced valuables (in particular, consumer goods and everyday deeds);
- *Distribution* of values – material (delivery of valuables from manufacturer to consumer and back) or ideal (transfer of information on values from producer to consumer and back).

Hence, value distribution is a *communicative* activity which supposes *communication* between people. It is important to note that communication is meaningful only in case when it is connected with distribution (in one or another form) of some values – rational or emotional. Otherwise, communication turns into an idle talk depriving life of any meaning (“simulacrum” of life). The communicative activity has two forms. *Firstly*, this is propaganda of production of values, which supposes popularization of the ideals determining the formation of certain values. Such activity is usually called *campaign* in favor of the respective ideological aims (in case of religious aims such campaign is connected with such concepts as missionary activity, proselytism, etc.). *Secondly*, the communicative activity can have the form of propaganda of consumption of values. This is usually called advertising. If we talk about the propaganda of values which are products of our own creativity, then we deal with self-advertising.

Thus, if from the theoretical point of view the “life’s meaning” seems to be rather mysterious, in practice the problem is quite easily

solved: the “life’s meaning” of a common person is necessarily connected with the acquisition of *a value*; without it the life for such a person does not have and cannot have any meaning. Since the procedure of value acquisition can be of three types, the “life’s meaning” focuses on either the production (creation) of a value (what is typically called “creativity”), or its consumption (getting the maximum pleasure with minimum efforts), or its propaganda (campaign in favor of the production of a value and advertising in favor of its consumption). The communicative activity provides the interaction and link (including the feedback) between the creation of values and their consumption. Only providing the effective communication between the creator and the consumer, the results of the creative activity become *in demand* with a consumer.

Generally speaking “life’s meaning” for an active person is in such a combination of creation, distribution and consumption of values, where any counteraction against these values fails (this means that the creators of new values achieve complete *victory in self-fulfillment*, that is, not only in self-actualization, but also in self-assertion – public recognition of the new values).

However, one should not think that all active people hold to such a comprehensive approach to the “meaning of life”. In reality, there are significant differences among them regarding this issue. Some prefer to create values but do not attach importance to their distribution and consumption; some tend to consume values leaving their creation to others; the people of the third group are interested solely in the distribution of values and can be completely indifferent to the production and consumption of these values. Since the creation of values is a more diffi-

cult task than their distribution or consumption, in theory there can exist societies of two types: (1) with domination of value production (for our purposes let us call them “creative” or “*ideological*”); and (2) with domination of value consumption (they are typically called “welfare societies” or “*consumer societies*”). The level of life in the first type societies can be quite low, while for the societies of the second type it is very high. Such discrepancy in the level of life of the majority of population is explained by the necessity to save resources for value production and the absence of such necessity (all other conditions being equal) in case of value consumption.

4. Regularities in Value Production and Ideological Self-Fluctuations. The Role of Ideal in Value Production¹⁶

The synergetic theory of values based on the synergetic theory of ideology is the key to understanding the production of values. This theory states that as the source of values serve ideals of various types, since a value orientation (value criterion), whose role is always played by the respective ideal, is required to create a value. Therefore, value creation (no matter whether a new or an old value) is the realization of a pragmatic aspect of some ideal. If we talk about the realization of an old value, we mean the realization of an archetype; and in this case creativity comes down to reproduction of old values. Here arises another question: what is the algorithm of the creative process of value creation in general? Can such an algorithm exist?

SPH claims that this algorithm can and

must exist, and it should be described by the theory of social selection. This theory states that the chaos created by the destruction of old values has the ability for self-organization resulting in creation of new values. The self-organization of an “axiological” chaos is facilitated by the so-called “creative baskets” forming within it through bifurcations, each representing a new possible bifurcation structure. A set of these “baskets” represents the *creative thesaurus* — a set of possible methods to structure a variety of “fragments” formed as a result of destruction and break-up of old values. An active creative personality takes the role of a *creative detector*, who chooses one of the baskets, and the ideal which determines the choice of this personality (looking for a truly new value in a variety of others) plays the role of a *creative selector*. If a group rather than a single person plays the role of detector, and the members of the group are guided by different (sometimes close and sometimes opposite) ideals, then the interaction (superposition) of these ideals plays the role of selector. We have considered a one-act creative process from the synergetic point of view — creation of a new value on the basis of existing resources. However, the global creative process consists of a variety of similar acts. From the viewpoint of the problem of the “meaning of life”, the main threat on the way of the creator is the danger to return to old values and endlessly repeat this process (the cycle of social transformations described by Balzac in his philosophical epilogue to the “The Human Comedy” series of novels). Life loses its meaning, if the creation of a *new* value is impossible either in the nearest future or in the long term.

The situation of the “squirrel wheel” (or, taking the words from the Bible, “*vanitas vanitatum*”) is complicated by the fact that this

¹⁶ See Oganyan K. M., Branskij & Oganyan K. K., 2014, №1 (12), pp. 7-13; 2014, №2-3 (13), pp. 11-20; Oganyan K. M., 2011, pp. 107-112.

“wheel” is not rotating smoothly: it becomes stochastic in character due to many occasional modifications of values (axiological fluctuations). The circle of values is, so to say, distorted by fluctuations. What is valuable for some happens to be anti-values for others. In short, the cycle of values is saturated with axiological fluctuations, and these are auto-fluctuations, since they are not caused by some external (to the society) reasons. It is easy to notice that from the SPH viewpoint, the observed axiological auto-fluctuations are based on the directly non-observable *ideological auto-fluctuations*. The pursuit of the anarchist ideal (the cult of absolute freedom without any restrictions, ignoring the existence of a natural limit to any innovations) causes the reverse reaction in the form of the pursuit of the totalitarian ideal (the cult of absolute order excluding the possibility of free choice in solving any questions). The understanding of the one-sidedness of each trend results in searching for harmony that is the balance between these antitheses. The need for such harmony, which lies in the basis of any mature democracy, determines the content of the liberal ideal. This ideal is explained *ontologically* only in SPH: the unity of freedom and responsibility, rights and duties must come from the objective unity of social chaos and social order as attributes of social reality.

However, the balance between the pursuit of order and pursuit of chaos in many cases happens to be unstable, and the ideological auto-fluctuations are continued near the point of liberal balance. And again, distortions occur either towards the weakening of chaos and strengthening the order (right-center liberalism), or order weakening and chaos strengthening (left-center liberalism).

This picture of ideological auto-fluctuations (which are typical for any developed society) would be incomplete if we did not mention a very important feature of any social ideal – its connection with such philosophical concepts as *belief and sacrifice*. The synergetic theory of ideology states that ideological auto-fluctuations are connected with confrontations of various beliefs (both religious and secular), with conflicts emerging during the attempts to implement their respective ideals and make competition sacrifices on the altar of each faith (including property, job, freedom, health and even life). The real history inevitably leads to the *polarization* of values on the basis of the *struggle (conflict)* of ideals. This very *struggle* fills the social life (as it was repeatedly mentioned in the history of philosophy from Heraclitus to Marx¹⁷) with exceptionally *significant meaning*: on the one hand, it gives a very dramatic character to history and deprives it of any boredom, but on the other hand, it loads history with violence and tragedies, thus giving a bitter (sometimes ominous) taste.

In the course of this *struggle* all ideals are sooner or later destroyed (the same idea was expressed by Hegel, Spengler, Jaspers, Berdyaev and others). This destruction is accompanied with great losses and brutality. The supporters of any ruined ideal take its destruction as the greatest tragedy depriving their life of any meaning. On the contrary, the opponents to the ruined ideal feel deeply satisfied and triumphant. Since this happens only in a short run, and in the long term the same fate awaits their own ideals, their triumph comes to an end. Everyone begins to perceive the triumph of an ideal

¹⁷ Here we can just mention the famous answer of Marx to his daughter's questionnaire. His answer to the question “Your idea of happiness”, as is known, was “Fight”.

together with its future tragedy and gradually understand that the ideal is a double-edged sword.

Thus, the *ideological* society absorbed with the creation of new values and ideological *struggle* is involved into an ideological (“spiritual”) crisis. There comes tiredness from the confrontation of values and ideological *struggle*. All values are subjected to painful and cruel evaluation, reevaluation, and partial or even complete devaluation. The competition of sacrificial offerings in the name of the triumph of various ideals ultimately results in acute deficit of utilitarian values. The ideological boom finally finishes with a consumer riot (compare the state of various countries and peoples after large-scale wars and revolutions). People appear to be half-hungry, half-naked and with a half-roof over their heads.

5. Regularities in Consumption of Values and Consumer Auto-Fluctuations. The Role of Fashion in Consumption of Values¹⁸

When the society reaches this state, the problem of biological survival arises: in this situation the majority of population does not think any more about ideals (as the proverb goes, “beggars cannot be choosers”). The described spiritual crisis makes the ideological society reconsider the definition of the meaning of life. Now the “meaning of life” is seen not in the production of some value intended for serving a particular ideal, but rather in simple *survival*. But it means that the “meaning of life” of a human being comes down to the “meaning of life” of an animal with the only difference that a human being realizes this meaning, but an animal does not.

It is widely known that the “meaning of life” of an individual is self-preservation, which supposes the presence of the instincts of a fear of death (thanatos) and family continuation (libido) – the reproductive instinct (self-continuation in future generations).

The reduction of “the meaning of life” to biological survival means a U-turn in solution of the existential problem: “the meaning of life” is now seen not in serving the ideal of life, but “*in life itself as life is an inherent value*” (the Epicurus – La Mettrie line). From the viewpoint of this philosophical aim, the meaning of life is not in the revolt (riot) against natural and societal rules (what is required by ideals with their ideology of transformation), but in such a way of following these rules that allows obtaining *maximum pleasures with minimum efforts* or *maximum pleasures with minimum sufferings*, with the use of ready values within the existing stereotype of the routine behavior. In simple words, “life’s meaning” comes down to achieving the maximum possible pleasure under these conditions, as there is nothing beyond this life. We should live in the present day, and not think about the future following the principle expressed by Goethe through Faust: “Beautiful moment, do not pass away!” (philosophy of everyday life). One should go with the tide but not against the tide; avoid any actions which can cause any difficulties with sacrifices and hardships. And the creation of new values and rejection of the developed stereotype of everyday behavior inevitably require such sacrifices and hardships (suffice it to recall the so-called torments of creation and torments of recognition).

So, as a result of the deep spiritual crisis experienced by the ideological society with its ideology of transformation and cult of ideal, there originates a tendency to the *de-ideologi-*

¹⁸ See Oganyan K. M., 2011, pp. 107-112; Oganyan K. M., Saakyan, Pokrovskaya & Bakhshyan, 2012.

zation of social life at a particular stage of ideological auto-fluctuations. It is expressed in the global transition from transformation ideology to conformism ideology, from the ideology of reality *transformation* to the ideology of *adaptation* to this reality. In practice it is expressed in two scenarios: *rejection of ideals; transition from creating new values to the consumption of available values*.

Thus, there is a tendency towards transformation of ideological society into *consumption* society (“welfare society”). The rejection of ideals and struggle for “the bright future”, which are proclaimed by this society as a dangerous heritage of totalitarianism, can be interpreted as the only “ideal” for this society being the rejection of all ideals (Castells, 2000; Berlin, 2002 and others). According to SPH, the rejection of ideals is equivalent to the refusal of creating new values (and creativity as such). Hence the rejection of ideals must lead the consumer society to the replacement of the creativity cult for the consumption cult (which justifies its name).

The deep reason for transition from the creative to consumption society is the problem of new valuables *being in demand*.

Thus, the problem of “the meaning of life” can be solved in “the opposite way”: find its solution in the consumption of values rather than in the creation of them. This solution of the existential problem seems to be more attractive than the first one for many people – it is easier and simpler to consume than to create.

Fashion plays the same role of selector in consumption as ideal plays in value production. In the global (general) sense, fashion can be defined as a generalized image of the desired “consumer goods basket” which (under other equal conditions) guarantees maximum pleas-

ures with minimum efforts (in particular, sufferings). Thus, fashion is the selector which corresponds to the philosophical standard of life as an inherent value (the Epicurus - La Mettrie line) (Volodin, 2003, pp.259-303).

These features of fashion make its main function in the social life understandable: *fashion determines the style and taste in value consumption* in the same way as ideal determines the style and taste in value production.

Seeing higher “meaning of life” in *consumption of utilitarian values* results in what is usually called the *cult of routine life* (the cult of “everyday life” in contrast to the cult of the past or future). This philosophy¹⁹ likens life to a sentimental pop song (“the song of a minute”). The cult of everyday life in the consumption society shows itself mainly in the following forms:

- the cult of ready-made goods (food and drink, clothes, interior and exterior, furniture, hygiene, transportation, communication, etc.);
- the cult of everyday activities (mainly, rest and entertainment: domestic and international tourism, games of different types, TV series, TV talk-shows, sex, dances, etc.).

In the cult of everyday things, a special place is taken by the cult of clothes (salons of high fashion – *haute couture*) and in the cult of entertainment – by the cult of various games, which are permanently developing due to the upgrading of old and creation of new games (computer games, etc.). As the system of more and more complicated and expensive games

¹⁹ This philosophy is sometimes called the “philosophy of petty bourgeoisie” (“philosophy of a modern philistine”). The so-called consumption cynicism is connected with it – the belief in the hypocritical nature of any talks about the priority of spiritual values, “such ideas only come from losers in the consumption sphere”.

acquires the system of empathy to game participants (the development of fan institute), the cult of game in a developed consumer society becomes similar to a ritual accompanying different ideals in ideological societies. So, fashion tries to imitate ideal in rituals as well and to fill the *spiritual emptiness which occurs in the society when ideals are denied* (Oganyan K. M. & Branskiy, 2015, pp. 385-391; Oganyan K. M., 2010, pp. 42-50).

The ideal of “welfare society” (closely connected with the ideal of “worldwide consumption”), which was the core of the communistic ideal in the nineteenth century, and which the communists promised to implement in the twentieth century but failed for a number of reasons, has been implemented in the countries of the Golden Billion by socialists and new capitalists. A modern supermarket has become a peculiar symbol of the consumer society (“the temple of worldwide consumption”). However, the seeming triumph of the consumer society ideology (the ideology of denial of ideals) has appeared to be the Pyrrhic victory: even unlimited consumption of unlimited variety of utilitarian values cannot solve the existential problem due to the crucial difference between people as “spiritual” animals from the other (“spiritless”) animals. This is connected with the fact that even the most intensive consumption of various utilitarian valuables cannot completely fill the spiritual emptiness developing when ideals are denied.

Now it is important to see whether the similar tendency to self-denial exists in the consumer society and leads to its transformation into a new ideological society.

The point is that the widely known *self-fluctuations of fashion* are the analogue of the ideological self-fluctuations. To this or that ex-

tent, they can be observed in all spheres of everyday life (from fashionable dishes and beverages to the sophisticated forms of cloth design, exterior and interior design of residential houses, vehicles, recreational and entertainment facilities, etc.). At the same time, fashion appears to be more changeable than ideals, while its changes can be even more extravagant and unpredictable. There exist epochs with the fashion for erotica in different spheres of social life. But this very fashion can be replaced with the fashion for mysticism. And some time later the fashion for paradoxical combination of mysticism and erotica can appear (for example, in the epoch of the European decadency at the turn of the nineteenth-twentieth centuries). Naked human body as well as carefully covered body may become fashionable. Physical development of a person as well as mainly spiritual development of a person can come into fashion too. The nineteenth century was characterized by the fashion for praises to scientific technological progress, while in the twentieth century it became fashionable to criticize this progress. The list of such examples can be continued endlessly.

Since the philosophical basis for the consumer society is the thesis about the “inherent value” of life, which is followed with the principle of hedonism (“life’s meaning” lies in pursuing maximum pleasures with minimum efforts or sufferings), the changes in fashion are ultimately connected with the impetuous rush for pleasures with no sufferings²⁰. The global experience shows that the increase of pleasures for a particular person can occur in two directions – intensive (increase of one’s *own* pleas-

²⁰ Therefore, serving the ideal is connected with alternative hedonism through the asceticism principle (being ready to receive minimum pleasures with maximum sufferings).

ures) and extensive (helping increase *other* people's pleasures, not only for one's own sake).

Thus, it is evident that the problem of the "meaning of life" is irresolvable in egoistic hedonism. The attempts to solve the problem in this direction show only intellectual and philosophical narrow-mindedness of those who become a slave to their own emotional turmoil and try to solve the existential problem in such a naive childish way. The consumers of the utilitarian values with a more developed mind and wider worldview sooner or later understand the narrowness of the egoistic hedonism and turn to altruistic hedonism – applying the principle "maximum pleasures with minimum sufferings" to other closest people (relatives, friends, acquaintances, etc.), but not just to their own personality. The progress in this direction leads to a consistent growth in the number of people deserving to feel your empathy and compassion, until this number becomes global, covering all people in the world (humanistic hedonism or just humanism). Now the higher pleasure for oneself is to bring pleasure and save *the others from sufferings*. Life not for oneself, but for the other and for the sake of the other – this is the greatest discovery which sooner or later some inhabitants of the "consumer society" make when attempting to solve the existential problem.

Here charity, social technologies (the system of supporting the socially vulnerable groups) and patronage come into fashion. However, when the fashion fluctuations and pursuit of fashion reach this stage, it becomes clear that the problem cannot be solved without transformations in the consumer society, without certain economic and political reforms. And here appears a fashion which is the most dan-

gerous for the consumer society – the fashion for ideal²¹. And again we have the picture similar to the one developed at the end of the period of ideological society. Just like the ideological boom was accompanied with a consumer revolt (for example, Petrograd in March 1917), now the *consumer* boom finishes with an *ideological* revolt (for example, Paris in May 1968). The average citizen is at a loss and completely puzzled. Why are the streets of the gigantic megalopolis choked with utilitarian values filled again with barricades and demolitions, and tens of thousands of people are marching holding the portraits of the world known revolutionary Che Guevara, whose image has a romantic aura, and all these actions are accompanied with the nostalgic sounds of the well-forgotten "Internationale"? A law-abiding inhabitant of the consumer society believes this society to be solely "adequate" (and "right"), and any ideology-driven society to be surely "inadequate" (and "wrong").

The fashion for ideal, which spontaneously appeared in the process of self-organization of the consumer society, should help significantly in this process. The consumer cynicism comes to an end with the spread of this fashion. And the sources of this fashion are very serious and deep. The point is that it is not a simple task, as it may seem at first sight, to find the "meaning of life" in taking care about another person and in helping him. This solution of the existential problem could be simple, if interests of different people completely matched. However, in reality humankind consists of different social strata with

²¹ The formation of this fashion at the dawn of the consumer society is a natural product of self-organization of this society, just like the formation of fashion for denying ideals at the dawn of the ideological society is a natural product of self-organization of the ideological society.

different and even opposite interests. What is good for one person can be evil for others, and vice versa. This means that by bringing maximum pleasures with minimum sufferings to one person we can simultaneously guarantee minimum pleasures with maximum sufferings for another person. It is necessary to find the compromise between the interests of these people to avoid the confrontation of the hedonistic attitudes in them. And here some transformations in the social reality programmed by some ideal are required. Thus, the fashion for ideal arising in the epoch of crisis of the consumer society is not an ephemeral psychological fad, but has a serious objective basis.

Let us summarize. The meaning of life is connected with the activity aimed at creation, distribution, and consumption of some values. Without the concept of “value”, the concept of the “meaning life” is meaningless. But since values can be various and even alternative to each other, their creation, distribution, and consumption are connected with the existence of *opposing* (mutually excluding) tendencies. Therefore, the creation of a value supposes both implementing a certain ideal and overcoming the opposition to this ideal from an alternative ideal. Similarly, the consumption of a value is connected with the opposition to consumption of an alternative value. The conflict of opposing tendencies is also typical for value distribution – the distribution of any value impedes the spread of its opposing counter-value.

Conclusion

The final result of the research is the movement of both an individual and a society to both a local and a global attractor. In this sense, Prigozhin et al., the representatives of the dissi-

pative structure theory, together with the representatives of fractal theory (Mandelbrot, et. al.) laid the foundation in the development of this movement.

Thus, due to the fight (collision, not just coexistence) of opposite axiological tendencies, life acquires wider and deeper meaning – to achieve the *victory* in this fight of one trend over another, rather than just participation in the fight of opposing tendencies. Life temporarily loses its meaning when the participant of the conflict loses. And it again acquires meaning thanks to the desire for revenge. This is perfectly understood by any gambler, sportsman, or soldier. Only a scholastic out of touch with reality can fall into despair at the seemingly irresolvable problem of the “meaning of life”. Although the alternation of victories and defeats make them relative, it still raises the question of achieving *absolute victory*, excluding alternatives.

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