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Doublethink and Anomie: ethical and political context *

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Abstract

The objective of the study was the phenomenon of doublethinking as a special form of anomic thinking. Doublethinking leads to a distortion of the perception and appreciation of political reality, which is expressed in the inaccuracy of information about the surrounding world. In methodological terms, the ethical theory of Alasdair McIntyre and the idea of doublethinking of G. Orwell were used. This allows us to conclude that in our time there is a crisis of values, which consists in the simultaneous presence of two normative-value systems in the human mind. One of them is inherited by the idea of modern humanity from Christianity; the second, which is preferred by many, was created by utilitarianism. This makes it possible to formally recognize, in words, socially approved values, norms and objectives, while at the same time devaluing them in actions, replacing them with the principle of personal gain. As a result, a new political language is emerging newspeak. The desire for constructive public action, mutual help, respect, and altruism is replaced by corruption, hypocrisy, opportunism, the decline of professionalism and productivity, the negative selection of political elites.

Keywords: anomie; doublethink; Alasdair McIntyre; newspeak; ethical and political context.

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Doblepensar y anomia: contexto ético y político

Resumen

El objetivo del estudio fue el fenómeno del doblepensar como forma especial de pensamiento anómico. El doblepensar lleva a una distorsión de la percepción y valoración de la realidad política, que se expresa en la inexactitud de la información sobre el mundo circundante. En términos metodológicos, se utilizó la teoría ética de Alasdair McIntyre y la idea de doblepensar de G. Orwell. Esto nos permite llegar a la conclusión que en nuestro tiempo existe una crisis de valores, que consiste en la presencia simultánea de dos sistemas normativos-valor en la mente humana. Uno de ellos es heredado por la idea de humanidad moderna del cristianismo; el segundo, que es el preferido por muchos, fue creado por el utilitarismo. Esto permite reconocer formalmente, en palabras, valores, normas y objetivos socialmente aprobados, al mismo tiempo que se los devalúa en las acciones, reemplazándolos por el principio de beneficio personal. En consecuencia, está surgiendo un nuevo lenguaje político: neolengua. El deseo de acción pública constructiva, ayuda mutua, respeto y altruismo se reemplaza por la corrupción, la hipocresía, el oportunismo, el declive del profesionalismo y la productividad, la selección negativa de las élites políticas.

Palabras clave: anomia; doblepensar; Alasdair McIntyre; neolengua; contexto ético y político.

Introduction

The study of political reality is impossible without taking in to account the values of a person as a political subject. In recent decades, the study of values in political science has gained wide popularity (for example, the works of R. Inglehart, Ch. Welzel, Sh. Schwartz, and other authors). This is largely due to the fact that the political sphere in many countries of the world, including Russia and Ukraine, is affected by a number of crisis phenomena, which include the denormalization of the struggle for power, discrediting political rights, destruction of civil society, and the crisis of political culture, the rise of absenteeism, political alienation and more. Feelings of powerlessness and cynicism, emptiness and apathy towards the political system are often encountered, which indicates a loss of values.

In science, this phenomenon is called anomie or lawlessness, normlessness. Its study in a political context, among other things, is related to the research of authoritarianism. Thus, T. Adorno, E. Fromm, B. Altemeyer, and others came to the conclusion that reduced intelligence indicates adherence to ultra-conservative ideology and love for hierarchy.

Right-wing authoritarianism provides simple answers to people with low abstract thinking abilities (For example: Adorno, 2001; Altemeyer, 2006). The American psychologist L. Srole established that there is a statistically significant correlation of average strength between authoritarianism and anomie (+0.45), as well as between anomie and hostility towards social minorities (+0.43) (Srole, 1956).

Anomie in the political sphere is associated with the loss of development guidelines and political values and norms, expressed in the distortion or complete disintegration of communications between the government and society, the growing alienation of citizens from politics, the fictitiousness of official legislation, the real dominance of "unwritten" rules, the growth of authoritarian tendencies under the guise of democracy. This opens up prospects for qualitatively new totalitarian and authoritarian regimes.

In this article we will try to reveal the nature of anomie in the political sphere using the idea of doublethink proposed by the English writer J. Orwell. The object of the study is anomie as a political phenomenon, the subject is doublethink as a prerequisite for anomie.

1. Theoretical framework. Methodology.

Anomie as a philosophical, social, and political phenomenon has not yet been studied well enough. In the scientific literature, it is often defined as a value vacuum, spiritual sterility. For example, the American scientist R. MacIver notes:

> Anomy means a state of mind of a person who has undermined the roots of his morality, who no longer has any norms, but only incoherent motives, who no longer has any ideas about integrity, about the people, about duty. The anomalous person becomes spiritually sterile, responsible only to himself, not responsible to anyone. He scoffs at other people's values. His only faith is the philosophy of denial. He lives with a thin line of feelings that runs outside the future and outside the past (Merton, 2006: 283).

At the same time, the very expression "value vacuum" did not go beyond the beautiful, but indefinite metaphor, related, as it seems, to "value blindness" and "insensitivity to values" of M. Scheler and D. von Hildebrand. The question of what this phenomenon is so far remains unanswered and therefore should be considered in more detail.

In our opinion, the concept of "doublethink" proposed by the English writer J. Orwell (Orwell, 2006: 218) allows us to penetrate into the essence of both "value emptiness" and anomie. In our opinion, it is doublethink that is the value vacuum, the most important condition for anomie. J. Orwell himself was not, as is often the case, a pioneer, because about seventy years before him, M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin in the novel "TheGolovlyov Family".

A very deep understanding of this phenomenon was given by I.A. Brodsky about his essay on I.V. Stalin (Brodsky, 2000).

Surprisingly, his idea, presented in one small essay, anticipates the thought of the English-speaking philosophers A. MacIntyre and E. Anscombe. Although they did not deal with the issue of anomie, their views will serve as a basis for analyzing the nature of doublethink. I.A. Brodsky wrote about Soviet society, but his idea is applicable to other social formations, while it needs broader argumentation and substantiation.

Modern culture can be defined as a "culture of doublethink", formed as a result of Christianity losing its positions. Christian morality cemented all aspects of human life, the departure from it caused the formation of value pluralism as a clash of opposing subjects (M. Weber and I. Burlin), leading rationally insoluble disputes. A. MacIntyre takes a rather radical point of view, saying: "in fact, we have only a semblance of morality, and we continue to use many of its key expressions. But we have lost – if not completely, then for the most part – understanding of morality, both theoretical and practical" (MacIntyre, 2000: 7). The reason for the crisis state of morality is emotivism, but not only as an academic direction in ethics, but as a system of modern man's worldview.

The Scottish American philosopher actually speaks of doublethink, although he does not use the term. The similarity of his argumentation with the theses of J. Orwell and I.A. Brodsky undoubtedly:

> I can accept any point of view, from the height of which everything can be criticized, including the choice of a point by myself ...To be a moral subject from this point of view means to stay away from any situation in which he is involved, to deviate from any characteristic that he may possess, and pass judgment from a purely universal and abstract point of view, from which all social concreteness disappears completely. Thus, everyone can be a moral subject, since moral subjectivity must be limited by the framework of the self, and not by social roles or practices (MacIntyre, 2000: 48-49).

The elimination of the idea of the goal of a person's moral development left many prohibitive norms (the same norms of the Decalogue or the Sermon on the Mount), consecrated by tradition and authority, but deprived them of their intended purpose. It became difficult to combine Christian commandments with the principles of liberal politics, economic utility, or scientific and technological progress. The French Revolution became the first most striking embodiment of this phenomenon. Therefore, the preconditions for doublethink began to form slowly: it is desirable to keep the Christian commandments, but still, it is impossible to give up modern the prizes of life. This idea is very accurately expressed by I.A. Brodsky:

> As a result of the secularization of consciousness, which took place on a global scale, a person inherited a dictionary from the rejected Christianity, which he does not know how to use and therefore improvises every time. Absolute concepts

degenerated into mere words, which became the object of private interpretation, if not a question of pronunciation. That is, at best, by conventional categories. With the transformation of absolute concepts into conditional categories, the idea of the conditionality of our existence was gradually introduced into our consciousness. An idea that is very close to human nature, for it relieves everyone and everything from any responsibility (Brodsky, 2000: 152).

As A. MacIntyre notes, a gap arises between the meaning of moral principles and their use. Since each individual is autonomous and does not want to compromise his status, he has only one option for social relations – mutual manipulation and attempts to avoid it in the attitude to himself. So, starting from the ideas of two writers (J. Orwell and I. Brodsky) and two philosophers (A. MacIntyre and E. Anscombe), we will try to reveal the essence of doublethink and reveal its connection with anomie.

We use structural, functional, sociocultural and value approaches. Methods of comparison, analysis, deduction, induction, generalization, analogy, classification, abstraction were also used.

2. Results and discussion

Using A. MacIntyre's methodology, we can say that state and economic institutions are based on the manipulation of people and are guided in their activities by utility – this in itself is enough to, firstly, cause an acute confrontation between power structures and individuals, and secondly, to concentrate more and more forces on the top stage of the social pyramid and thirdly, to determine the critical importance of power for anomical society. If atomized individuals, devoid of an objective moral criterion in their lives, find it difficult to unite to achieve a common goal, then it is easier for groups to do this, if only because of the material and psychological interest in their domination. Totalitarian regimes became the highest embodiment of such domination, however, both they and the milder authoritarian and liberal-democratic regimes choose the usual scenery, expressed by time-honored formulas: "concern for the welfare of the people", "guarantee of citizens' rights", "general prosperity", "any power – from God", etc. Imitation of rationality and tradition masks will and power. Utilitarian state-power efficiency dominates individual humanistic rights.

In our estimation, doublethink can be multi-layered. J. Orwell exaggerated in a particular moment, considering the state machine as a single whole, while in practice there are different levels of subordination, which multiplies doublethink. Perfectly understanding the fictitiousness of political slogans, or the impracticability of assigned tasks, or wanting to hide violations (and most often all taken together), state officials of the middle and lower levels of government depict "unity with the people", not forgetting about the need to show unity with their leadership, endowed with

even more power. Here there is already multiple doublethink, reflected in statistical "sketches", meaningless meetings and conferences, false reports in the media, carried out only in final reports, plans, target programs, etc. Reality is distorted many times and it is already completely impossible to figure out where true, and where – a lie. Accordingly, values and morals become fictitious.

Another important conclusion follows from the recognition of the moral autonomy of the subject. In a healthy society, misdeeds are punished; a sick society, on the contrary, reacts sluggishly to them or ignores them altogether. The possibility of reacting to a violation and imposing a sanction for it means the presence of an objective moral and legislative criterion outside the individual consciousness. The offender is limited in rights or excluded from society altogether until the moment of atonement. If there is no objective criterion or is recognized as questionable, the offender often remains part of the social space, setting a negative example for other individuals and further multiplying anomie. Such an individual is undoubtedly an anomical personality and a moral relativist. For an anomalous personality, such a good exists only within oneself and manifests itself in disobedience to the law, which is usually characterized as legal nihilism.

Moral relativism, legal nihilism, anomie lead to the destruction of orderly social activity, primarily the organization of labor. In this sense, the concept of practice by A. MacIntyre is interesting (MacIntyre, 2000: 255-256). The main thing that follows from it is that the practitioners determine the objective external authority of a certain social standard and require obedience to it on the part of a particular person. The latter must admit his incompetence, lack of knowledge in order to learn from an external force. It is necessary to agree with the priority of internal benefits over external ones, i.e. honesty, responsibility, professionalism, etc., over external indicators – money, power, the number of completed projects and written works, etc. You need to be grateful to those who introduced you to the practice, taught new values. An anomical personality who denies the values of other people is incapable of this. He rejects the historical heritage and the memory of the past. In this regard, it becomes possible to interpret anomie as the loss of social standards of practice, professionalism, and conscientious attitude to work. Not surprisingly, this negatively affects labor productivity, disregard for its results and relationships with labor participants.

Social and political institutions in a state of anomie exist only for the sake of external benefits. The anomical person is interested in raising his status in the organization not for the common good (although he may be firmly convinced that he "knows how best"), but for personal gain, and also tries to acquire a new post by legislative or morally condemned means. Therefore, the acquisition of status is often divorced from the real merits of a person, and the title may not say anything about the merits of the individual. The

goal is not to improve the quality of practice, but to acquire material wealth. Careerism based on conformism is one of the leading principles of anomical society. It is not surprising that this greatly affects the quality of the social elite: it turns out to be unable to manage and predict the future. There is a deformation of the consciousness of the representative of power: he loses control over himself, lies and broadcasts his false ideals to all members of society.

In a situation where the acquisition of a certain social status becomes a goal that is not supported by the inner virtues of a person, the appearance of a role arises. The anomical person wants to have the appearance of a professional / honest person / conscientious family member, etc. in the eyes of other people, not to be one. He creates numerous decorations around himself that distract from the inner moral emptiness. This is a life focused on others, but it is realized not for their benefit, but to create a certain image of oneself. This pretense gradually penetrates into the self of man, becomes his "I". In medicine, this is called Munchausen syndrome:

> The purpose of such a simulation is to draw attention to your own person. A person with Munchausen's syndrome, creating another image of himself, gives birth to an alien world of subjectivity, introducing a certain disharmony. In the mode of his I, there is a lot of unreal that has no place in reality (Efimova, 2014: 14).

Doublethink is manifested in the fact that a person realizes (at least at first and in the depths of his soul) his moral inconsistency with the role, but gradually gets used to it.

If there is no single system of right and wrong, the normative field of human existence acquires new dimensions, which in fact mean the devaluation of old norms. An example would be the existence of several systems of morality, regulatory structures: religious, secular, political, corporate, etc. – each of which is perceived as mandatory. So, you have to be a Christian at the same time; when coming to work, observe organizational rules, even if they contradict Christian foundations; show loyalty to political hierarchs even to the detriment of religious and corporate norms; after all this, demonstrate their citizenship and respect for the law, etc. An individual in an anomical society should be able to change masks with the speed of a professional actor. There are many criteria for what is permissible and what is forbidden, and they themselves become conditional. Since it is impossible to comply with such a set of criteria, adaptation with simultaneous attempts to "find a loophole" and bypass the existing rules becomes the dominant model of behavior of the anomalous personality. This also gives rise to a situation of endless and universal deception, which is why there can be no trust in other individuals or public organizations. Social contracts are found to be impaired, except those based on personal gain. Unsurprisingly, this destroys both social capital and social communication, and forms loneliness, alienation, and meaninglessness in life.

Another sign of anomie is "newspeak" – a new language used in the information space, while it is not created only at the initiative of the political elite, as J. Orwell believed, but also appears in society itself. This question in itself can become the subject of a separate scientific work. We only note that the "newwords" carry a meaning strictly defined by the socio-cultural system, which is necessarily lost when translated into another language or in another culture. The most accurate translation will not convey all the sensory and emotional shades. The phrases from the Russian past and present can be the examples: "the fifth column", "enemy of the people", "disenfranchised", "from the former", "new Soviet man", "internal and external enemies", "I have not read, but I condemn", "battle for the harvest", "overfulfillment of the plan", "five-year plan in four years", "turn to the east", "conservative modernization", "managed democracy", "special path", etc. Many concepts arise suddenly in the lexicon of the mass media information and just as suddenly disappear from it when the political situation changes. This is not "newspeak" in the understanding of J. Orwell, but it is important to understand the function of these words: masking problems and forming goals to justify the existence of social institutions. However, these goals are defined within the moral codes of these same institutions, not society as a whole. The local is passed off as universal.

Moreover, individuals who think in "Newspeak" put their own meaning into it, while other meanings remained in the previously existing cultural forms. There is a confusion of ideas. When some political "newword" turns out to be unnecessary, it is replaced by another, so the mind of a double-thinker begins to resemble a vessel in which fluid is periodically renewed.

English writer E. Burgess quite rightly notes (Burgess, 2017) the fact of loss of the exact meaning of a number of words in the absence of a traditional system of moral values. This primarily refers to words that express spiritual concepts – "honor", "duty", "loyalty", "betrayal", etc. Political regimes can assign their own definitions to them. An example is the phrase "duty to the fatherland", used exclusively in the context of military service, as if observance of laws, respect for family and friends, caring for nature are not the duty of a person and a citizen. That is, any more or less logically coherent, "rationally similar" interpretation of moral concepts can serve as the basis for authoritarian control and substitution of meanings. The more utilitarian effective they are, the more likely such regimes will emerge. Improving living standards, foreign policy gains, or curbing crime can lay the foundation for such phenomena. It turns out that good will become identified with social efficiency regardless of the motives and ultimate goals of the activity. Such a utilitarian interpretation of good is, of course, evil from the point of view of moral absolutism.

According to J. Searle, multiple repetition of value judgments forms the norm and at the same time streamlines and expands social reality. If

you attach a strictly definite meaning to any word (remember Orwell's "Ignorance is power. War is peace. Freedom is slavery"), then, on the contrary, a narrowing and distortion of reality will occur, the significative function of speech will be disrupted. Vivid examples can be the words "democracy" or "capitalism", which in Russia periodically change their meaning from unambiguously positive to unambiguously negative. Also, the constant influx of foreign words and slang expressions complicates communication. Therefore, one of the domestic works rightly notes: "We call assasins "killers", stock dealers and speculators – "brokers", legalized robbery – "raiding", theft of ideas and technologies – "benchmarking", bribery and covetousness – "corruption tax"or"status rent", electoral foul language and profanity – "black PR"..." (Krivosheev, 2008: 50).

In our assessment, these terms are a formal reflection of essential doublethink, and they contribute to moral relativism. If the "old" words clearly conveyed a value-normative connotation (bad – good, worthy – unworthy, sacred – profane), then "new" words make the language seem "sterile", indefinite in relation to Good and Evil.

It is worth noting an interesting study of the definition of the power of metaphor in political language, conducted by linguists at the University of Amsterdam in 1998. The object of analysis was the speeches of more than seven hundred members of the European Parliament from 1981 to 1993. Having calculated the metaphorical coefficient using a certain method, scientists proved a direct relationship between in the country and the frequency of the use of metaphors in politicians' speeches.

> Scientists have found a direct relationship between the socio-economic situation of a country and the frequency of the use of metaphors in its political discourse. The more difficult the situation was in the state, which was represented by the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), the more often they used metaphors in their speeches, and, as a rule, live metaphors of pessimistic or aggressive content. In other words, during economic crises, the metaphorical coefficient increases, thereby indicating "social stress". In this regard ... a political metaphor can be considered an indicator of social tension (Gavrilova, 2004: 131).

Doublethink in anomical society also acts as a defense mechanism, the ability not to go crazy in a multitude of impossible rules and a feeling of general distrust, which still does not make it normal. This function of doublethink seems to be one of the most important.

This implies one important rule: in an anomalous society, those individuals who are consistent in their values are socially unsuccessful (or at least less successful), while those who are constantly reevaluating values, i.e. nihilists, are socially successful. Professionals, in their doublethink, have more opportunities for conformal careerism than individuals with firm convictions and loyal to them.

In anomic society, this creates a negative consensus. If everyone seems uneducated, unprofessional, cheating, etc., then there is no need to be kind to them. Solidarity is paradoxically based on mistrust and fear, deep and hidden contempt for others, competitiveness and, as F. Nietzsche and M. Scheler showed, resentment. That is why anomalous personality is usually affirmed by belittling others, first of all, their ideals and moral dignity. Self-assertion occurs through insulting the values of other people. This is a reaction, on the one hand, to the primacy of power in a state of anomie, on the other hand, it is a cynical culture, a rejection of everything that is high and positive.

Doublethink does not lead to a bifurcation of reality: the social world is recognized by individual consciousness as devalued, unnecessary, and only subjective, inner being is genuine. In this regard, one cannot reliably know anything about the world outside oneself. The concept of truth is not applicable to the devalued world, because the line between good and evil is broken in it. Moreover, the other cannot be right in essence, from the point of view of "reality, in fact", his view can only be subjectively acceptable or not. The consequence of this dualism is, first, ethical solipsism, the denial of any moral criteria outside oneself; secondly, epistemological and, if I may say so, social skepticism, denial of the transformability of society to a qualitatively better state. (This attitude can be expressed by the phrase "society is incurably sick").

Solipsism, paradoxically, turns into a priority of collective perception of reality. Since an individual cannot live without knowledge, he needs information about the outside world, for example, about the economic situation in the country. To satisfy the information hunger, the solipsist performs an act of doublethink: for example, he takes an official position, deep down in his soul, being sure of its distortion. The individual is psychologically uncomfortable to be in the minority, so he tacitly identifies with the generally accepted point of view, thereby creating a collective perception. By virtue of doublethink, any value projects – political, religious, others – are doomed to failure.

Conclusions

Spiritual vacuum, value emptiness is doublethink, which has become the basic principle of thinking and behavior of a person. The fundamental sociocultural reason for its appearance was the processes of transformation of the value system. Modern ethics and axiology are post-Christian and post-Aristotelian, and the language of each of them continues to coexist with modern forms of worldview, finally confusing the situation. Many moral terms (good, evil, duty, honor, love, law, norm) were inherited from

Christian and ancient cultures, but due to certain processes they lost their meaning and began to acquire a new one, locally and voluntarily defined. This creates a fundamental split between classical ethics and modern, predominantly utilitarian, and pragmatic ethics. Cultural traditions prescribe the old interpretation, and the surrounding reality – a new one. Therefore, a person begins to think twice in order to remove the conflict.

A utilitarian understanding of values, in particular of goodness, generally leads to the displacement of truth by utility. The requirement to "do the right thing" and "understand rightly" becomes the basis of social morality. This leads to the assertion of moral and value relativism. Therefore, E. Anscombe notes:

> If it is psychologically possible, one should get rid of the concepts of obligation and duty – that is, moral obligation and moral duty, from the concepts of morally right and wrong, as well as the moral meaning of obligation. After all, these concepts are relics or consequences of relics of an earlier ethical concept, which as a whole no longer exists; and without it, they only harm (Anscombe, 2008: 70).

The purpose of doublethink and relativism seems to be to maintain impersonal political and economic domination. This is power, cleansed of any socio-cultural layers, subordinating to itself all objects of public space. The constant reassessment of values is actively supported by social institutions, and therefore anomie itself becomes a "structuring" factor of society in the sense that it allows creating instability, instability in order to maintain power. This is power in a very broad sense of the word; it is not associated with any specific political forces. Power, no matter how strange this definition may sound, is the ability to overestimate values, to impose certain models of behavior. It is no coincidence that all kinds of words with the prefix "post-" are widespread in modern times: postirony, post-punk, post-rock, postmodern, post-capitalism (P. Drucker), post-social society (K. Knorr-Cetina), post-secularism (J. Habermas) and so on, that is, a lot is immersed in a continuous process of revaluation of values. In this sense, technological progress opens up wide opportunities for the imposition of a certain will through utilization, deindividualization, dehumanization.

So, the highest form of human anomalous consciousness is doublethink – the simultaneous coexistence of two value-normative orders. Apparently, in order to overcome the situation of doublethink, it is necessary to search for an objective basis for values: in society, in religion and in the moral dignity of a person.

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