

# New civilization—new challenges: a concept of social futurism

## Abstract

The paper is devoted to the problem of human existence in new civilizational conditions. She reveals different reasons that have caused a contemporary civilizational crisis. Among them are the following: a man's dependence on a machine, a state's repressiveness, mass character of many phenomena and processes, a loss of spiritual and moral quality in human nature, etc. She bases her idea on the works by G. Marcuse, A. Glucksmann, D. Rismen, A. Camus, K. Lebak. Nowadays we deal with contradictions of information society when technologies again dominate over spiritual values (A. Toffler, E. Masuda, D. Bell D). But we should find a balance between spiritual and technological aspects in order to create a society of a new type.

**Keywords:** social futurism, anthropological crisis, new technologies, mass communication, information civilization, industrial society

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## Introduction

The problem of a man's essence and existence, the problem of his place in a society has always been in the centre of philosophical studies. The actuality of this topic is determined by the peculiarities of a new period of humanity's life. Reconstruction of many values, a desire for large-scale thinking, new principles in management, pandemic of Covid-19 mean a total rebuilding of social and cultural institutions (family, mass media, education) and require new approaches in organizing of human existence. The objective of the paper is to explicate the essence of the civilizational crisis and present possible ways out. We'll use the following methods of investigation: comparative historical, typological. But first of all we'll analyze some problems of human existence of the twentieth century as they cause many processes nowadays.

One of the main characteristic features of the twentieth century is a man's dependence on a machine. G. Marcuse characterizes our society as formed on the basis of the technological progress and a modern man as "one-dimensional man".<sup>1</sup> The term "one-dimensional man" means that a consumer tries to satisfy only his consumer's desires. People depend on this society, and it produces a repressive effect on moral, aesthetic, spiritual orientations of a person. Andre Glucksmann believes that the essence of relations in this society is depression.<sup>2</sup> It is clear that society and state in this variant realize totalitarianism.

The motif of a repressive state and aggression towards a person becomes a leading social motif of the twentieth century. E. Fromm finds that loneliness is a characteristic of a contemporary man. According to his point of view, loneliness and helplessness are caused by human desire to gain economic independence. Attainment of economic freedom and prosperity leads a man to loneliness, insecurity and isolation from the outside world.<sup>3</sup> D. Rismen writes that a man feels himself alone in the impersonal crowd.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, a man being a social creature cannot live alone.

Riot is one more dominating motif of human existence in the twentieth century. Many philosophers believe that riot is a protest of a contemporary man against the world of alienation and indifference. A. Camus believes that the whole human existence is absurd. In his work "Myth of Sisyphus" he demonstrates this absurdity.<sup>5</sup> According to his point of view a revolt precedes any civilization and it is an integral part of it. Revolt is a manifestation of human rights.

One more characteristic feature of human existence at the stage of industrial society is mass character of many phenomena and processes. The twentieth century has provided an enormous material for awareness of masses' essence and role. It's time of two world wars, of numerous revolutions, of inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts, of emergence and fall of totalitarian regimes, urbanization, migration of population. The dramatic transformation in various fields of a modern society means a fundamental change in the nature of human activity. The main distinguishing feature in the twentieth century is massification. Mass production, mass distribution, mass creativity lead to the formation of mass culture.

A number of these phenomena put humanity into crisis ecological, spiritual, and moral. This civilization forms an idea of inexhaustible natural resources, their uncontrolled use by a man as the Supreme Being possessing the mind. And finally, the existing civilization forms a type of mass consumer, owner of such quality as permissiveness.

Thus, the syndrome of anthropological crisis arises in the twentieth century at the top of economic, political and social upheavals. The way out of the crisis is a leading topic of researches of many scientists in various fields of scientific knowledge: philosophy, sociology, psychology, ecology. However, judgments of many scientists have in common the idea that the cause of the crisis lies in faulty actions of mankind. A man becomes, on one hand, the creator of civilizational norms and values, on the other hand, he becomes a product of technogenic civilization's functioning. "A very important role is given to logic and mind ..., and many other forms of human cognition such as meditation, prayer, dreams are ignored". (K. Lebak).<sup>6</sup> K. Lebak believes that one of the mistakes of a contemporary mankind is recognition of mind as the only correct method of scientific investigation.

Meanwhile, a faith in mind leads to another lurch of the industrial age. It is a loss of spiritual and moral quality in human nature. However, we can say that a man becomes a personality only if he has consciousness in conjunction with the mind. And the way to the mankind's rescue lies in the formation of a true morality, in a sense of responsibility for the thoughts and actions, awareness of his own imperfections and, as a consequence, striving for constant spiritual development. One of the most serious defects of civilization's consciousness is the sense of superiority of a man over all living, and his right to reign on Earth. R. Atfild sees the cause of global problems

in the faith in progress inherited from German metaphysicians that allows exploiting natural wealth. He declares that it's a mistake to think that if people are so much allowed, it must mean lack of moral prohibitions in practice. But God according to Bible cares for welfare of all living, not only mankind, and people must take care of nature, and must not destroy anything.<sup>7</sup>

The cult of knowledge proclaimed by Enlightenment leads to one more trouble. It's a creation of ideological doctrines based on racial or class superiority. It is a step to the emergence of totalitarian regimes. According to French sociologist J. Semlen moral sense is dulled in this society as it is inherited in the individual, not in the mass. The dominant of a society over an individual is a threat to the very existence of morality.<sup>8</sup> A society built on any ideological idea tries to depress free personality by any violent means because this society doesn't accept alternative ideas and actions. And we have total wars, mass violence, and an enormous destruction of human resources in the twentieth century.

Some characteristics of information civilization are evident already. Demassification is one of them, it means a large number of different ideas, social institutions, social human roles, diversity of scientific knowledge. Now we pay a special attention at the ability of an individual to create, create new ideas. A. Toffler writes that ability to synthesize is more important than the ability to analyze. Synthesis takes the first place in any science now. A specialization is not important nowadays, global thinking dominates. Such branches of science as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics also begins to dominate. All these changes influence on the specificity of people's duties. Many of them work at home and have flexible working hours.<sup>9</sup> In sociosphere changes influence on a family. So, in different countries we can observe different types of families. We mean single-parent families, arranged marriages. There are many changes in info sphere. Modern mass media by means of their qualities have a huge power in a society. Mass media determine all main changes. Among them are technological changes in techno sphere, the creation of new forms in culture. Implementation of communication between its members in a society is realized by means of different ideas, images through system of mass media. Mass media keep and transfer cultural values in a society. According to researchers mass media keep informational relationship and interaction between individuals and groups, institutions and population, cultural patterns' creators and their consumers. Contemporary mass media can contribute to the renewal of society, the consolidation of the democratic forces and public opinion. But at the same time mass media can lead to the opposition between political positions, confrontation and radicalism.

Information as one of the main kinds of recourses in a new era leads to transformation of processes of communication. But not all scientists determine information society in this way. They have two different positions towards this concept. The representatives of the first position call the civilization of a new type as a postindustrial one. Among them are D. Bell, A. Turen, R. Darendorf, and A. Etuloni. The representatives of the second position call it an information one. Among them are A. Toffler, E. Masuda, G. Neisbit. In 1976 term "postindustrial society" gets its official ideological status in the report of the Advisory Commission on questions of political mechanism of national development. The authors of this theory believe that service and sphere of consumption have a particular importance in this society.<sup>10</sup> Term "post" means changes in development of high technologies, but the character of economic activity and structure of political power are the same. The second position has been popular in the 80-ies years of the XXth century. E. Masuda notes that information society means postindustrial society.<sup>11</sup> G. Neisbit states that information is more

important than "white collars" in a new era. A. Toffler determines a society of a new type as super industrial. He finds the following features which distinguish it from industrial society. The first one is a desire of each individual to satisfy his own needs. Information is more important than land, money and labour. The development is not linear, it can destroy all previous attainments.<sup>9</sup> We take into account that information, mass media and communication are really the most important factors today if we discuss the problems of a contemporary situation. And we can determine our modern social stage already as post information stage.

What does postinformation society mean? Where can new technologies lead us? We'll try to determine some phenomena of our new civilization. Nowadays information can overcome any borders, it can be spread everywhere without any difficulties. An event takes place in one country, but very soon it's known in others. But can the dominant of available and understandable values lead to spiritual degradation? This question is rather actual in the context of our reality. A contemporary mass culture has often neither historical nor ethnical roots. It is evident that this is a way to a society of consumption. We can lose cultural differentiation because of global technological chain:

Fleetingness is one more characteristic feature of information and postinformation civilization. If temporal characteristic of agrarian society is orientation for past, temporal characteristic of industrial society is adaptation for present, temporal characteristic of information society is orientation for future, temporal characteristic of postinformation society is an attempt to predict the nearest future. We destroy many values, deny many thoughts, feelings. A gap between different generations is rather big already. Freedom is introduced into some absolute. But any society must be based on existing values. It's very difficult for an individual to be adapted for new values and new speeds if he denies all previous traditions. A fast development of technologies and science give raise to many ethic and philosophical issues. Cloning of a man is one of the most unclear issues here from point of view of philosophy. We begin to copy each other and become clones of each other, we become "computer people". A modern man gets great abilities by means of technologies, at the same time he absolutely depends on them. It's one more controversy of the society of a new type.

Information technologies have led to a crisis in our political sphere. Democracy has always been recognized as a consequence of free access to information. Today however we observe how information creates premises for a new totalitarian regime, as new information technologies interfere into our personal life. Any citizen's biographical fact can become known for everyone. It's necessary to change principles of political management to avoid it. A new type of democracy is a mosaic democracy. It is oriented on every individual. A. Toffler distinguishes three principles of political management of a new type. Among them are the following: a principle of minority, principle of semi-direct democracy, principle of sharing responsibility in decision-making.<sup>12</sup>

A model of consociative democracy is an alternative to democracy based on majority. Institutions and principles of new democracy include communication between different groups, elites, coalitions in Parliament, a right of veto for minority in questions which are important for them. But all these issues have to be developed.

## Conclusions

So we deal with a large number of controversies and problems of our civilization. In order to find correct decisions we have to investigate all possible variants and develop absolutely new concepts. We need

new views on life, a new philosophy free from traditional statements. At last we have to develop a mechanism to remove inter-civilizational contradictions. It's necessary to pay attention at sociocultural dominant to overcome all difficulties. And we can say that the most terrible disaster among all threatens existing in the contemporary world including pandemic is an anthropological disaster that means "the destruction of human in a man". In this case we have right to declare that the crisis of the modern world has not a civilizational character, but a social one. If anthropological crisis of industrial civilization is caused by scientific theories and cultural positions, the system of spiritual values must help us to get out of it. Contemporary processes of informatization of a society are characterized by creation and development of new mass media, telecommunications, production and management based on computers. On one hand, it contributes to universalization of cultures, on another hand, it exacerbates the tendency of many nations to keep their identity. And we observe here different destructive manifestations. That's why we have to focus on problems in the sphere of intercultural interaction. Many scientists analyzing problems of information civilization devote their attention only at technologies, but they ignore sociocultural aspect. It happens because technologies dominate in our society over spiritual values. This is the main controversy of a new civilization and it causes all the rest difficulties. We can remove contradictions if we're able to develop a new concept of social futurism based on eternal values using new technologies.

The main aim of social futurism is to overcome technocracy and to subdue all processes of social evolution to a conscious human guidance. A person is a main character in the information civilization. He creates new technologies and he creates spiritual values. And he has to find a balance between spiritual and technological aspects that allows him to live and create in a society of a new type.

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## Conflicts of interest

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