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Intellectuals: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches to Socio-Philosophical Research

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Abstract

Introduction. The aim of the study is to analyze theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of intellectuals as a cultural community and social phenomenon. The task is to compare the research possibilities of various socio-philosophical, sociological, and cultural concepts related to the understanding of this term, the essence, social role, and functions of intellectuals in modern society. It is interesting to analyze the differences and similarities between the functions of the intelligentsia and the functional and cultural specifics of the intelligentsia and intellectuals with the degree of completion of modernization processes in society, as well as changes in the functions of intellectuals in modern information society, in the context of distinguishing between related concepts “intellectuals” and “intelligentsia”.

Materials and Methods. The comparative analysis method is applied, and general theoretical methods of scientific research are used: analysis, synthesis, analogy, dialectical and functional approaches.

Results. It has been shown that the social functions, influence, and value orientations of intellectuals as a cultural and educational community have long been the subject of active study in social and political philosophy, but there is still no unified concept of this phenomenon due to both terminological ambiguity and the diversity of approaches to research. Moreover, the semantic distinction between the concepts of “intellectuals” and “intelligentsia” is not sufficiently clear. Substantive definitions of the term need to be supplemented with functional definitions that allow for the necessary social specificity and enable us to trace the phenomenon of intellectuals in its historical and cultural dynamics.

Discussion and Conclusion. Intellectuals are regarded as an ideal type that meets the conditions of the Western cultural world, being coherent, free from internal contradictions, integrated into a developed civil society, benefiting from an established system of institutional mechanisms that ensures freedom of expression and cross-border professional communication, a high level of material security, and social comfort. Nevertheless, modern society still needs intellectuals to participate in the process of producing and promoting values and ideas, including political ones, in order to overcome the vacuum of values and cultural disintegration that arose during the reforms. There is also a continuing need for the legitimizing function of intellectuals in their expert role, not only in their professional activities, but also in the civic sphere. This determines the necessity and prospects for further research on intellectuals as a contemporary Russian and global reality, their functionality in changing social conditions of interaction with society, the state, and the ruling elites.

Keywords: intellectuals, intelligentsia, functional criteria, cultural and educational group, ambivalence, axiology, ideal-typical characteristics, modernization

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Интеллектуалы: теоретико-методологические подходы к социально-философскому исследованию

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Аннотация

Введение. Целью исследования является анализ теоретико-методологических подходов к изучению интеллектуалов как культурной общности и социального явления. Ставится задача сопоставления исследовательских возможностей различных социально-философских, социологических, культурологических концепций, касающихся понимания этого термина, сущности, социальной роли и функций интеллектуалов в современном обществе. В контексте проведения дистинкции между родственными понятиями «интеллектуалы» и «интеллигенция» представляет интерес анализ различия и сходства функционала интеллигенции и функциональной и культурной специфики интеллигенции и интеллектуалов со степенью завершенности модернизационных процессов в обществе, а также изменения функционала интеллектуалов в современном информационном обществе.

Материалы и методы. Применяется метод сравнительного анализа, используются общетеоретические методы научного исследования: анализ, синтез, метод аналогии, диалектический и функциональный подходы.

Результаты исследования. Показано, что общественные функции, влияние и ценностные ориентации интеллектуалов как культурно-образовательного сообщества длительное время являются предметом активного изучения в рамках социальной и политической философии, однако до сих пор отсутствует единая концепция этого феномена по причине как терминологической многозначности, так и многообразия подходов к исследованию. Более того, сама семантическая дистинкция между понятиями «интеллектуалы» и «интеллигенция» не проведена достаточно отчетливо. Содержательные определения термина нуждаются в том, чтобы быть дополненными функциональными определениями, позволяющими внести необходимую социальную конкретность, отследить феномен интеллектуалов в его исторической и культурной динамике.

Обсуждение и заключение. Интеллектуалы рассматриваются как идеальный тип, отвечающий условиям западного культурного мира, цельный, свободный от внутренних противоречий, вписавшийся в развитие гражданское общество, пользующийся сложившейся системой институциональных механизмов, обеспечивающей свободу выражения идей и трансграничной профессиональной коммуникации, высоким уровнем материальной обеспеченности и социального комфорта. Тем не менее у современного общества сохраняется потребность в участии интеллектуалов в процессе производства и продвижения ценностей и идей, в том числе и политических, в преодолении возникшего во времена реформ ценностного вакуума и культурной дезинтеграции. Сохраняется и необходимость в легитимирующей функции интеллектуалов в выполнении ими экспертной роли не только в профессиональной деятельности, но и в гражданской сфере. Этим определяется необходимость и перспективность дальнейшего исследования интеллектуалов как современной российской и глобальной реалии, их функционала в изменчивых социальных условиях взаимодействия с обществом, государством, властными элитами.

Ключевые слова: интеллектуалы, интеллигенция, функциональные критерии, культурно-образовательная группа, амбивалентность, аксиология, идеально-типические характеристики, модернизация

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Introduction. The growth of foreign policy tensions in the modern world poses many new tasks for societies, and Russian society in particular, including both understanding the new situation that has arisen, and theoretical justification, and cultural legitimization of the changes that are taking place, which deeply affect the very value foundations of the social structure. This mission naturally falls on the intellectual elite of the country, which must formulate and present to the masses not only a new foreign policy, but also a cultural strategy that would correspond to the changed conditions. The intellectual elite must give its expert assessment of the situation, and finally, create theoretical and artistic works in which this situation would be adequately reflected. However, in practice, it is becoming obvious that the intellectual and creative

elite is going through a difficult period caused by the changes that have taken place, its representatives take different, sometimes polar opposite positions in assessing the situation and the prospects for its resolution.

This makes it relevant to turn to the problems of the intellectual elite, which are quite traditional for social and political philosophy, but far from exhausted by researchers, their social essence, group features and social-role functions, place in society, traditional cultural characteristics and newly acquired qualities. A particularly significant aspect of the topic concerning the intellectual elite of society is its relationship with the authorities and its self-positioning in relation to the authorities and the mass layer of the population, its potential for representing the people in culture and the level of legitimizing support for political elites.

As for the scientific and theoretical aspect of the relevance of this topic, it is primarily associated with the existing diversity of theoretical ideas about the social essence of modern intellectuals, including Russian ones, the lack of unity among researchers on many issues related to the prospects for preserving the Russian intelligentsia and its transformation into Western-type intellectuals, the need to study the role of intellectuals in a globalizing society and the relationship between their global and national identity.

Based on the above, it is clear that the study of such relationships presupposes penetration into the essence of socio-cultural processes and, therefore, they should be the subject of study of sociological disciplines, as well as social and political philosophy. Since intellectuals are precisely that cultural and educational group that possesses the mental, cultural, educational potential for determining the vector of social development, forming and transforming social values, constructing social concepts and ideologemes, as well as for critical analysis and comprehension of the current state of society and current trends in its development, the study of the relationship between intellectuals and authorities touches upon the central problems of life, for the solution of which society formulates a collective request and to which it expects an answer. Moreover, at the most general philosophical level, the relationship between intellectuals and authorities represents the archetypal relationship of spirit and flesh, reason and strength, freedom and duty. Therefore, the specified problematic constitutes one of the eternal problems of social existence, and each era, each culture offers its own version of its solution.

Materials and Methods. The study used the comparative analysis method, which allows identifying in comparison the research possibilities of various existing approaches to the study of intellectuals as a cultural and educational community. General theoretical methods of scientific research are also used: analysis, synthesis, the method of analogy, dialectical and functional approaches.

Results. The consideration should begin with finding out who falls under the concept of «intellectual». This can be done on the basis of several methodological approaches. For example, one can set the task of identifying the most fundamental characteristics of intellectuals through typification, describing them as a social personality type with a number of qualities: high creative potential, extensive erudition, the ability to effectively engage in intellectual work at a professional level, a high level of awareness in everyday practices, a specific communicative culture. Obviously, we are talking about ideal-typical features, not individual ones, since individuals can have certain of the listed qualities in different scales and proportional relationships. Research through the identification of an ideal type is a classical method of studying social phenomena, the founder of which is M. Weber.

As V.I. Abrosimov explains: “Typification is a fairly common research technique in sociology, when processes occurring in society are studied through the prism of the specifics of the social qualities of the individual that they form, generalized and brought to the level of the type [...] Naturally, in such cases we are talking about describing the features and qualities of an ideal type, which inevitably misses the diversity of cultural and social reality. But the construction of an ideal type makes it possible to identify the main, system-forming identification characteristics [...] and to trace the relationships between them. The construction of ideal types creates the basis for a clear understanding of the dynamics of culture and society, the recording of transitional and stable states” [1, p. 25].

The famous researcher of the relationship between intellectuals and power M. Foucault defines an intellectual primarily on the basis of criteria that we would classify as economic and socio-structural, through compliance with three basic features: socio-economic status; material standard of living and conditions of activity; political position taken in relation to power [2, p. 206]. Within the framework of the functional approach, intellectuals as a group are defined through the roles and functions, they perform in society. For example, according to the definition given in her article by Yu.V. Golubeva: “It seems most correct to define an intellectual as a person who, thanks to his education, erudition and constant observation of socio-political processes, makes judgments about the political situation in the state and the world, makes forecasts of social development or participates in political activity himself” [3, p. 17]. Thus, not typological characteristics are brought to the forefront, but mainly the functionality of the group under study.

The functional characteristics of intellectuals as a community are effective for research, since they provide an

opportunity to reveal the substantive meanings associated with this concept through functionality. For example, researchers note the mediating function of intellectuals in society. Thus, mediation is the starting point in the definition given by F. Hayek. He defines an intellectual as follows: "He is not an original thinker, not a scholar or expert in a special branch of thought. The typical intellectual does not need to have special knowledge of anything in particular, he does not even need to be particularly intelligent, to fulfill his role as a mediator in the dissemination of ideas. What defines him is the wide range of objects about which he can actually speak and write, and the attitude or habits by which he becomes familiar with new ideas sooner than those to whom he addresses himself" [4, p. 372]. Thus, for Hayek, the main thing for an intellectual is the functionality of a mediator in the dissemination and public propaganda of ideas.

According to L.V. Smorgunov, an intellectual should be defined as someone who is substantially distanced from politics, closed in his professional activity and strives to separate the scientific and cultural-creative sphere from the political: "An intellectual could be called a person with broad views, who went beyond the scope of his professional intellectual work in his reflections on various subjects, while often being guided by the criteria of his own professional environment. In a political sense, the task of an intellectual consisted in the emancipation of the sphere of science and culture from politics" [5, p. 28]. At the same time, however, this author notes "the need for politics in value meanings" [5, p. 30], dictating the need to turn to intellectuals in search of value-semantic legitimation and conceptual justification of certain political actions. Thus, intellectuals are assigned a value-creating function, as well as a function of socio-cultural reproduction and cultural legitimation.

The poststructuralist approach practices slightly different criteria for the functional definition of the term «intellectual». In a narrow sense [6, p. 21], an intellectual is defined as an author (of a text, i. e. any innovative cultural product that did not exist before). Thus, to be classified as an intellectual, a person must have realized creative potential, and it is the creation of cultural innovations that is considered the basic social function of an intellectual. In a broad interpretation, sociological and cultural poststructuralism classifies educated people engaged in project and transformative activities in a variety of areas as intellectuals. According to the definition of J.-P. Sartre, these are: "Scientists, engineers, doctors, lawyers, attorneys, professors, etc. As individuals, these people are no different from other people: each of them, no matter what he does, exposes and supports the being that he surpasses with his project of transforming it" [7]. Within the framework of this very broad definition, intellectuals are all those who are engaged in meaning-making, creating and transmitting both life-meaningful values, and scientific knowledge, and ideologies.

In addition, it is necessary to separately mention the role of intellectuals as interpreters of new meanings created for society. The social functions of intellectuals also include interpretative and communicative activity in transmitting meanings created by various cultures and communities [6, p. 24]. Here again, as we see, the mediating role of intellectuals is highlighted, promoting mutual understanding and the interconnectedness of various cultural languages and, ultimately, social integration due to the dialogical, discursive nature of intellectual activity. Intellectuals in society are agents of public dialogue and disseminators of the value of dialogue as a way of solving problems.

Specific features and functions of intellectuals are thus identified and studied within the framework of a variety of approaches, which indicates the multidimensionality and versatility of their social role. Generalizing and systematizing the role functions and group characteristics of intellectuals, the Russian philosopher I.V. Narsky identified a number of key characteristics that unite them. According to I.V. Narsky, such characteristics include the role functions performed by intellectuals in modern societies – social reflection – classification and typology of social groups, comprehension, cultural legitimation and criticism of the established social order; the presence of group self-identification, the basis of which is involvement in the storage and transmission of special knowledge that has the status of sacred or sacralized and is not publicly available; a complex and dual position in relation to the elite, simultaneously independent and isolated, critical, and dependent, since intellectuals are interested in cooperation with the authorities and their ideological service, since it is the authorities that act as the group that orders their theoretical activity. Furthermore, according to I.V. Narsky, the key group-forming character is also the positioning of intellectuals in relation to the mass layer of the population – the "people", separated from intellectuals by their "profane" status in relation to elite knowledge, but permanently being the "addressee" and "beneficiary" of their activities, simultaneously honoring and rejecting them. In addition, as I.V. Narsky asserts, there are institutional structures and mechanisms in society that ensure the social functioning of intellectuals and their group integration [8].

N.N. Yarosh writes about the reconfiguration of the functional and typological characteristics of intellectuals, emphasizing that without the initiating role of intellectuals, further modernization of society and the economy is impossible, requiring innovative development and intellectual breakthroughs [9, p. 99]. Thinking in this vein, it is obvious that we are talking here not so much about the value-creative role function in society and not about social reflection, but about

developed creative intelligence, the ability to pose and solve fundamental scientific, technological and social-managerial problems by innovative methods. This suggests that the functional aspect of the social existence of intellectuals currently has a prevailing social significance. The importance of the expert function of intellectuals is also growing, which is associated with the increased technological and social risk-taking inherent in high modern society, generating interest in risks among the masses and the need for the activities of professional experts who would explain to society the degree of danger of certain phenomena [10].

Thus, from a functional point of view, the role of intellectuals in modern society has become incomparably more significant, their social authority, the prestige of the positions they occupy in society have increased significantly, as has the material remuneration of their professional and social functioning. This fact determines the comfortable existence of intellectuals in modern society, a high level of security, social demand and the willingness of society to listen to the opinion of the epistemic community on significant issues, including those beyond purely professional activities. Intensive intercultural and scientific communications on a global scale give intellectuals broad opportunities for professional mobility, the formation of strong contacts with colleagues in different countries, and the receipt of various support from them. In developed modern societies, a significant portion of intellectuals are organically integrated into the market economy, are characterized by professional and social success, well-being in life, are socially conformist, pragmatic, financially secure, integrated into academic and creative communities, have a high social status and public influence, as well as influence on the authorities. At the same time, some intellectuals are characterized by non-conformism, independence of convictions and views, and protest social positions.

Many authors clarify the definitions of such concepts as “intelligentsia” and “intellectuals”. For example, E.S. Chichin writes about this as follows: “To designate the concept of «intelligentsia» in both Russian and foreign studies, two terms are often used: «intelligentsia» and «intellectual». The reasons for such a loose terminology are, firstly, the tradition of translating concepts describing the same social phenomenon from one language to another, and secondly, the social group itself, which performs an intellectual function in society and simultaneously demonstrates heterogeneity and historical variability, which provokes the application of both terms to it” [11, p. 56].

As S.M. Usmanov writes, one of the influential concepts of the relationship between the concepts of “intelligentsia” and “intellectuals” connects them with theories of modernization, in the paradigm of which the intelligentsia appears “as a product of unfinished or deformed modernization” [12, p. 42]. If in the course of classical Western modernization, which found completion in developed modern societies (high modern societies), a socio-cultural group of intellectuals was formed, naturally fitting into the economic and cultural context of a market society, then the intelligentsia in its characteristic Russian form arose and developed in the conditions of permanently unfinished and recurrent modernization. This is precisely what explains, from the point of view of these concepts, the internal contradictions of both the group consciousness of the intelligentsia and the attitude of society towards it. The intelligentsia is characterized by a socio-cultural duality, since, being the bearer of the values and models of modern rationality, it feels partly “outsiders” in a society with strong traditionalist elements, but at the same time it feels its duty to the people and its connection with them.

As S.M. Usmanov rightly notes, the “cultural studies of the intelligentsia” [12, p. 41] allows us to reveal deeper differences between the intelligentsia and intellectuals, while “both the “sociology of the intelligentsia” and the “cultural studies of the intelligentsia” definitely differentiate between intellectuals and intellectuals by their position in society, by their value orientations, and by their purpose” [12, p. 41]. The same is true for the sociology of culture, which combines both perspectives and particularly emphasizes the difference in the value-cultural component of the intelligentsia and intellectuals. In this regard, the position of V.I. Abrosimov is interesting, according to whom the Russian intelligentsia, in particular, represents, first of all, a cultural community that, due to the action of historical and socio-cultural factors, has combined a specific axiology with a distinct orientation toward modernism and social rationality. He writes: “The typological features of the intelligentsia characterize it as a cultural community, which is a distinctive feature of Russia and is identified by the following features: 1) a specific axiology based on the syncretism of secularized values of Orthodox culture (selflessness, non-acquisitiveness, priority of supra-personal goals, collectivism and mutual assistance, everyday asceticism, constant spiritual search) and the values inherent in this group as an intellectual elite and contrasting it with all other social groups in Russia (rationality as a principle of thinking and organizing social order, civic consciousness, professionalism, freethinking, social criticism); 2) a model of behavior that combines civic, political and cultural activity with a high level of individual reflection and existential anxiety (“sick conscience”); 3) the value-ideological nature of the sensation and manifestation of social subjectivity” [1, p. 25].

In our opinion, Abrosimov’s study exhaustively reveals the cultural ambivalence of the intelligentsia of non-Western societies. This explains the discomfort of social existence and self-positioning of the intelligentsia, which is unable to radically break away from the value foundations of traditional culture with its ethos of service and collectivist behavioral

patterns, but at the same time bases its activities to promote social rationality on these axiological constructs. This position is in principle consistent with S. Usmanov's opinion that "it is necessary to increase attention specifically to the cultural aspects of the analysis of self-awareness and activities of both the Russian intelligentsia and Western intellectuals" [12, p. 43].

Discussion and Conclusion. There is a research tradition of contrasting two ideal-typological constructs: the intelligentsia has been firmly and long associated with the Russian cultural tradition, which developed under conditions of a long-term absence (or weakness) of civil society, unfinished and constantly renewed modernization, an obvious or latent socio-cultural split of society into a minority (the intelligentsia), oriented toward social rationality and individual development, and the majority (the mass layer of the population), living according to traditional stereotypes. Intellectuals are considered as an ideal type that meets the conditions of the Western cultural world, integral, free from internal contradictions, integrated into a developed civil society, using the established system of institutional mechanisms that ensure freedom of expression of ideas and cross-border professional communication, a high level of material security and social comfort.

However, at present such an ideal-typical division no longer corresponds to the changed situation. Nevertheless, modern society still needs the participation of intellectuals in the process of production and promotion of values and ideas, including political ones, in overcoming the value vacuum and cultural disintegration that arose during the reforms. Society needs values that are viable in the modern globalizing world, which could become new historical reference points. There is also a need for the legitimizing function of intellectuals, for them to perform an expert role not only in professional activities, but also in the civil sphere.

This determines the necessity and prospects of further research into intellectuals as a modern Russian and global reality, their functionality in the changing social conditions of their interaction with society and the state, and the ruling elites.

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