

Existential Value of Social Illusions

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Abstract: This article is aimed at the study of phenomenon of social illusions and their existential value. The author provides definition of social illusions, outlining their dual essence, on the one hand the illusions restrain development of society and individual and exert negative impact and on the other hand they promote adaptation of human in difficult situations, support creation of own image of World, thus being an existential value for human. The article shows that due to their metaphysical fundamentality illusions express the human essence. Illusions are not given once and for ever, they are simultaneously dependent and independent on time. Illusions are defined by society, they are transformed by continuously varying society, cultural environment, each epoch proposes new aspects of manifestation of the given phenomenon. The most urgent reference to philosophical apprehension of social illusions is provided by intention to cognize society, reality, crisis of identity in modern society, searching for own Ego, continuously varying sociocultural situation, variation of forms of behavior and values.

Key words: Social illusions • Conceptions • Classification • Value of social illusions • Space of social illusions

INTRODUCTION

Analysis of published sources shows that the problem of studies into social illusions was addressed to by Plato, Aristotle, Augustine of Hippo, Nicholas of Cusa, Tommaso Campanella, Francis Bacon, Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel. The issues of social illusions were highlighted by Russian thinkers Nikolai Berdyaev, N. Ya. Grot, N. A. Dobrolyubov, S. L. Frank, as well as in the works by existentialist philosophers Albert Camus, Søren Kierkegaard, Gabriel Marcel, Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, Arthur Schopenhauer, Karl Jaspers and modern authors: F. Garifullin, A. V. Kurpatov, V. Kh. Belenkiy and others.

The phenomenon of social illusions is discussed by many authors. For instance, Barelds Dick P. H.; Dijkstra [1, pp. 37-43] analyze positive illusions about personality of partner and their influence on quality of relationships. Fletcher, Garth J. O.; Kerr, Patrick S. G. [2, pp. 627-658] discussed romantic relationships and outlined paradoxes of love, the reasons of which are in illusions. Snook Brent; Cullen Richard M.; Bernell Craig; *et al.* [3, pp. 1257-1276] highlighted illusions about criminalists, the content of which is mainly determined by professional activity. The authors' opinion is that criminalists can forecast the pattern of a crime by the

place of the crime. Such assumption can be an illusion, which occurs as the authors believe on the basis of discussed talks and considerations. Equally important is the consideration of phenomenon of false illusion of fate of people with reminiscence about old life. An important aspect of analysis of the considered phenomenon by foreign researchers Mersado Alexis; Peters Maarten J.V. Horselenberg Robert; Jelacic Marko *et al.* is the analysis of social inclusions and social illusions. Certain aspects of the illusions are described by Heine Steven J. Buchtel Emma E. [4, pp. 369-394].

For classical philosophy the aspects of reality of existence of external world, objectiveness of its cognition always were of the highest importance.

"It is obvious now that not the only one but numerous various realities exist, it is not only the reality considered by science but the reality of everyday life, routine knowledge. Subjective reality exists. Reality of ideal subjects of culture exists: scientific and philosophical theories, pieces of arts, inter-individual relationships, communications (it is sometimes related with the world of intersubjectivity). Probably, nowadays it is possible to speak about manifestation of virtual reality as of peculiar type of interhuman communication" [5].

Living in the world woven of numerous contradictions a modern human is forced to think whether there still exist any distinct boundaries between real and illusory worlds. "Recent common position, according to which different types of reality do not correlate with each other at all, nowadays seems to be insufficient. It becomes obvious that it is impossible to cognize society or individual only by means of rational methods, thus, the phenomenon of social illusions comes to the fore" [6].

A philosopher is interested in social illusions in the context of actual existence, as a way of existence of a human in the World, as actual meaning-making, as a factor interfering with development of society and a single individual. Social illusions are not a random product of consciousness, these are certain social and psychological codes, which reveal not only social and psychological features of an individual but also specificity of society, social time and environment where the individual lives.

From the very origination of civilization human was under continuous effect of illusions. For the sake of illusions revolutions, upheavals, wars were committed, pieces of art were created. All they are the result of human pursuits, frustrated hopes, causing him/her to create everything which composes grandeur of our civilization, peak of the arts. To carry a hope to a human, without which he/she cannot exist is the main function of illusions. Scientists of various fields tried to destroy illusions with great eagerness. However, destroying them, they desolated sources of inspiration, creativity, forces and hopes of a human.

The proposed topic and derived categories, integration of concepts create specific scientific context, which can be correlated with the scopes of social philosophy, psychology and gnoseology. Basic categories in this context are *social illusions, existential values, reality, society*. Exactly about them and in relation with them the problems of cognition of reality and society occur, interaction between rational and irrational in cognition of them, social and psychological factors, stipulating occurrence of social illusions, their main mechanisms and influence on personality and society [7].

Nowadays social illusions are reproduced and function in all social systems. The scales of social illusions is expanded due to mass media, internet, mobile communications. It is possible to observe intensification of manipulation of consciousness and affection on subconsciousness, propagation of apocalyptic ideas, self-destruction of humanity and virtual reality is expanded, thus eliminating the boundaries of reality.

Many authors agree that social illusions hinder development of society and individual, interfere with onward progress, add disbalance to social development and in general affect negatively on single individual and society. We consider that such one-sided argument to consideration of this phenomenon is wrong. The essence of social illusions is complicated, versatile, ambiguous just because it is determined by numerous factors and determinants. All this composed the profile of researching challenges of the author of the thesis, who attempts to consider social illusions as a social and psychological phenomenon, which in its essence is an existential value not only for a single individual but for society in general.

Mainly its success is determined by joint efforts of scientists of various humanitarian specialties: philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, pedagogues [8]. However, as for now there are no sufficient studies devoted to this problem. There is no clarity concerning definition of the mentioned phenomenon, its terminology. Some scientists believe that illusions are inadequate concepts of subjects, phenomena, outward world; others consider social illusions as false ideas of humans, human religious faiths and associate them with religion. Most frequently illusions are identified with misconceptions, myths, utopias. We believe that social illusions are relieving self-deception, false consciousness of these or those social, psychological processes and phenomena.

This phenomenon is frequently considered by means of such interconnected notions as misconceptions, myths, utopias, the major feature of which is also false consciousness of reality. Most scientists do not separate these notions, consider them as synonyms, though in fact they are combined because all of them can emerge and be reproduced both spontaneously as a result of dreams, hopes, self-deception and within conscious activity. However, the misconceptions are manifested in knowledge or statement and the illusions - in reality and existence. The misconceptions are the opposite of truth and the illusions of reality. The misconceptions are the consequences of ignorance and the illusions are the result of impossibility to understand truth and features of human perception. Utopias are rational concepts of the best social structure, an ideal social project arched merely by imagination. Since the utopias are an ideal of desired society, such *the only possible* world view can be considered as myth. Myth is the existing in human consciousness *own* image of World including both true and false concepts.

Social illusions are an existential value having cognitive, emotional, volitional, therapeutic, archetypical-ethnocultural invariant. While forming a system of truths-misconceptions with certain degree of probability, the social illusions are able to perform adaptation of an individual to reality in collective social environment. The social illusions are a form of cognition and action of an individual in possible social realities.

The social illusions are the expression of human essence in action, capable to carry out self-deception and deception of others with the aim of survival and obtaining of self purposes. This is social-psychological quality of both escape of reality and generation of self reality, a kind of intelligent-axiological activity of self-formation, will to action, struggle for ideals. Performing identification and identity, the social illusions as an existential value of life produce excessive energy which facilitates resistance against environment pursuing a better life.

Sociocultural backgrounds of the social illusions are: a) symbolic nature of cultural phenomena and connotative human action on the basis of natural and artificial languages; b) cultural phenomena containing high amount of symbolism and connotative interpretations: mythology, collective archetypes of consciousness of races and ethnic groups, folklore, ideology, institutionalized mythology of modern societies, ownership, justice, morality and so on.

In order to diagnose the concept of phenomenon of social illusions we developed a special questionnaire. Presenting the items of the questionnaire to respondents, we aimed at acquiring of information concerning the relevance of the problem of social illusions for the respondents and at determination of factors influencing on their occurrence and development, as well as to which extent the respondents consider themselves as bearers of the social illusions.

We were interested in everything which related the respondents with the phenomenon of social illusions, how clearly they understand their essence, ways of their occurrence and features of manifestation. We considered the questionnaire survey as a method, as a mean of stimulation, self analysis and self-actualization of efforts aimed at apprehension and verbalization of existing concepts of social illusions.

The survey involved 400 respondents of different age groups, sex and educational level. According to the opinion of most respondents the social illusions are peculiar state of mind, belief, hope, dream. More than one third of the respondents suppose that the social illusions

are related with the educational level, cultural level of a human, level of concepts of moral values. Certain responds indicated at interrelation of the social illusions with *sublime sense of beauty*. About 40 % of the respondents associated the social illusions with intention to vary their life, the existing situation in life. In most responds the social illusions were mentioned as an aspect differentiating humans from animals.

In general the respondents consider the social illusions as a quality of internal reality of a human, associate them with beauty and wealth of mental world of an individual.

Most respondents consider the social illusions as a state of internal world of a human, as a quality which enables perception of the beautiful, closeness and union of human and Higher Reason.

20 % of the respondents associate the social illusions with life experience and ability to mediations, interest in essential philosophy problems (*supreme matters*). The respondents' view points on the essence of social illusions include various opinions, reflecting understanding of the phenomenon of social illusions as certain objective and subjective reality, existing in various manifestations.

The proposed questionnaire included the question about synonyms to the notion *social illusions*. The responds were distributed as follows: most commonly as a synonym of *social illusions* the respondents mentioned *perception of imaginary as reality, something unattainable, dream, delusive hope*. Then followed: *belief, something unfeasible, impossible, unreal, fantastic, fraud, utopia*. We deliberately included this item into the questionnaire in order to clarify the understanding of the essence of social illusions, as well as to assist their apprehension of this notion. In addition, the work with the synonymic series provided possibility to clarify informative components of social illusions in commonplace apprehension. First of all, these are emotional and ethical components. The respondents unconsciously related the social illusions above all with exclusive attitude to another, with love, relationships in society and other people. The notion *social illusions* as a mirror reflected versatility of human mentality, its conscious and unconscious levels, wealth and omnitude of human life, life quality in society. The notion *social illusions* generates for the respondents numerous definitions which reveal subjective experience, level of human knowledge, ability to reflection and analysis of various feelings.

Taking into account numerous interpretations of the social illusions by our respondents it is possible to conclude that the notion *social illusions* reflects versatility of concepts of this phenomenon with regard to revealing of leading conceptual component; difference and inconsistency of concepts at the level of consciousness and subconsciousness; strong influence of Russian cultural and educational traditions; peculiar features of behavioral and ethic aspects of the respondents. In their conceptions the social illusions encounter in the following aspects: existential - as quality of living; ethic - as attitude to other people; cultural - as level of culture; theological - as faith.

Concerning the questionnaire item *How often have you met illusions in your life?* 65.3 % responded *often*; 26.3 % *seldom*; and 8.5 % *never* met illusions.

Concerning the questionnaire item *Do the illusions assist or interfere with your life?* 37.8 % responded that *illusions assist in life*, 43.8 % responded that *illusions do not have any influence*; 18.5 % had some difficulties to respond.

Most commonly from the view point of the respondents the social illusions are exposed in attitude to other people, friends, particular approach to the world, attitude to motherland, history. The respondents believe that the social illusions are reflected in politics, education, economics. Mainly they are determined by the world view, features of the society, individual in general, educational level and quality of living. Of peculiar interest were the answers of the respondents to the question *Is illusion a value for a human?*: 49.2 % gave positive answer; 25.5 % answered negatively; 25.3 % had difficulties to respond.

Our questions aimed at revealing of hesitation or, vice versa, confidence in necessity of social illusions for human.

The value of social illusions according to the opinion of the respondents is mainly determined by inconsistency, complexity of life and existence, uncertainty in tomorrow [9]. It is exactly the illusion, as most of the respondents suppose, provides possibility for a human to remain human in extreme situation, to hope for the better, to see prospects in life. It is exactly the illusion is a background of his/her individuality, mechanism of self-improvement and self-respect.

We hold the viewpoint that the social illusions are not a human fancy or intelligent consistency, we outline their effectual essence and their axiological nature. The illusions are seated not only in human consciousness but in his/her attitude to the world, system of values,

mechanisms of social regulation and behavior, forms and methods of worldview [10]. Modern educated people can be bearers of the illusions. The space of social illusions is unusually rich, this is the space where human lives, which he/she cognize and which is socially meaningful and tailored for him/her, exactly this space can form not only self reality but self *worlds* of human. Social space reflects not only the reality of developed existence, related with increase in complexity, intensity of contacts, the extent of integration and at the same time isolation of human, but also the illusions which assist a human to override difficulties, obstacles, facilitate his/her development.

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