DIVERGENCE OF SUPREME VALUES OF RUSSIAN WORLD AND WESTERN CIVILIZATION
SOCIAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The relevance of the study is determined by growing tensions in the relations between the Russian Federation and the countries of the Western world, as well as the aggravating Russophobia and anti-Russian propaganda. One of the reasons for this is the divergence of the supreme values of these cultural and civilizational paradigms. Social and philosophical conception of the phenomenon of supreme values and differences in their meaning are important, because in the modern world, they are among the most crucial elements of the formation of national consciousness and civic identity, and, as a spiritual and social construct, can be understood using some philosophical methods with a glance to new realities of life. The article provides a social and philosophical analysis of various approaches to the understanding of the phenomenon of supreme values, their particular features in the framework of the Russian World and Western civilization historically and in the modern science. It is established that the divergences in the value orientations of the two modern global civilizations trace their origins to the contradictions of the Orthodoxy and Protestantism. It is found that in recent decades, the universal supreme values of the Western world have been undergoing a significant transformation due to the influence of postmodern ideas, while in the Russian world the traditional values continue to prevail.

Keywords: civilization, Anglo-Saxon, supreme, values, orientations

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1. Introduction

The current development of the Russian Federation is associated with the emergence of a new global development doctrine, which takes into account, on the one hand, global trends; however, on the other hand, it is underlain by the peculiar features of the Russian state and Russian culture. The values of the global world and democracy that were imposed by the state bodies in the late 80s of the XX century led to a conflict between two fundamental models of life in the minds of Russian citizens: a paternalistic and traditional one, inherited from the ancestors, and an individualistic one, perceived by the majority as a model imposed by the circumstances of life. As a result, in the process of Russia’s search for its individual and unique way of development, its place in the modern rapidly changing world, its national idea, capable of uniting all citizens and giving them Russian state and national identity, the interest in understanding the essence of the Russian idea and the Russian world has increased.

The growing relevance of studying and understanding of the phenomenon of the ‘Russian world’ is attributable also to the fact that after the collapse of the Soviet Union a lot of people who associated themselves with this concept, as well as with Russia, Russian speakers, and Russian culture bearers found themselves to be the citizens of foreign countries. In Russia, the awareness began to grow that strengthening its position in the world community and expansion of the opportunities to defend its national interests is impossible without the efforts of the Russian-speaking population of other countries that are an important economic, political and cultural resource as well as a serious tool of this process [1].

In the modern context, the concept of the ‘Russian world’ appeared in the early 2000s in the works of the Russian philosopher and methodologist P.G. Shchedrovitsky [2]. He wrote that the global historical changes, world wars, and revolutions of the twentieth century led to the emergence of the Russian world, which is a network of different communities united by thinking and communication in the Russian language. This forms a kind of the Russian capital in the global space, which combines cultural, historical, human and organizational potentials expressed in the Russian-language thinking, as well as in the humanitarian and communication resources of the Russian language [2].

S.N. Kocherov notes that in contemporary social philosophy, the following four basic vectors of understanding of this phenomenon can be identified:

- as a geopolitical reality seeking to return to its natural historical borders;
- from the geo-economic perspective, as a network of communities, in which Russian capital is concentrated and its efficiency grows in the process of creating an innovative economy, forming human resources and improving economic, political and social institutions in Russia — the centre of the Russian world;
• as a unique ethno-cultural community of people united by a common Russian language, common history as well as the norms and values shared by the majority;
• as an Orthodox civilization, Holy Russia, which includes not only Russia, but also other states where Orthodoxy is the main religion, and Russian-speaking Orthodox communities around the world [3].

However, scholars also note a number of difficulties in the formation of a single state and national identity of the Russian society within the framework of the ‘Russian world’ concept. First, these difficulties include different approaches to understanding Russia’s civilizational image (Russia is Europe, Russia is the East, Russia is Eurasia, Russia is a unique civilizational paradigm, etc.) [4]. Secondly, there is a difficulty in combining national and state identity, which is based on the concept of the Russian citizen as someone who belongs to the Russian cultural and linguistic world and Russian statehood, and national ethnic and national civil identities that are based on belonging to a particular nation or ethnic group [5].

Since any national or state idea and any identity is based on the adoption of certain global fundamental values, it is important to study the differences between the values of the Russian world and those of the Western world in order to minimize the negative impact of their divergences on the concept of the ‘Russian world’ as a supranational unifying state concept.

2. Literature review

2.1. The concept of ‘supreme values’ phenomenon in the modern Russian social philosophy

A review of the existing classical philosophical trends in the study of values shows a certain trend manifesting itself as gradual transition from abstract and theoretical ideas about the essence of values to their humanization and correlation of the assessment of significance with an individual capable of cognition and purposeful action, which is in principle inherent in the development of the overall philosophical thought. When axiology was in the process of formation as an independent branch of Philosophy, many philosophers defined the dual nature of the philosophical category of value as the dialectical interaction of the transcendent and immanent, ideal and tangible, absolute and relative, ethical and psychological within a practically, rather than theoretically, acting, cognizing and evaluating subject [6].

M.S. Kagan believes that the substantive aspect of the values-based attitude is a meaningful attitude of an individual and aggregate subject to the real or ideal object expressed therein, reflecting the real, vital and practical significance of this object to the subject. That is, the worldview of the subject is nothing more than a system of values. The main function of values is their influence on human activity, behaviour, social and cultural life [7].
Revising the classical universalist impersonal approach to the conception of values, V.K. Shokhin suggests an opposite — particular and personalistic — paradigm. In his opinion, values must be viewed in the context of personal significances forming the identity of an individual as the ontological centre of the subjective world. Values are the deepest level of significances: for a person, real is what is significant, and, consequently, valuable [8].

Today’s postmodern philosophy allows only one interpretation of values - as reproducing and changing symbols; it declares their complete uncertainty and the absolute impossibility of their universality. In axiology, this leads to the construction of the theory of flexible values, which declares the absence of universal guidelines along with the loss of truth as a starting point and the final result of knowledge [9].

Values, on the one hand, lean towards transcendence, because human life is impossible outside the realm of truth, beauty, and goodness, and on the other hand, they lean towards utilitarianism, which is based on the principles of usefulness and profit. This duality of value orientation is the result of objective and subjective rational goal-setting in the functioning of society [10].

Supreme values (axiological universals) are the entirety, a concentrated content of the world’s essence in the human mind, the generalized meaning of the person’s attitude to it, and a tool for understanding the meaning of life. These are the values that are not refuted by practice; over the centuries, they have had an impact on the human world, being the core of individual and social consciousness. The concepts of truth, goodness, beauty, love, and faith can be certainly attributed to the social and philosophical category of ‘supreme value’. Their epistemological content manifests itself through social and philosophical as well as cultural and moral attitudes. Supreme value is definitely the goal of a human and the principle of his/her life in the most global forms of existence. This goal is universal due to the fact that it to a large extent embraces the desired qualities of life activities [11].

According to V.E. Bagdasaryan and S.S. Sulakshin, the supreme values of a state are specific desirable conditions and characteristics of the factors most crucial for its viability that serve as the motivators of the activities of both the people and the state. They are considered as external and internal conditions that significantly affect the very fact and stability of the existence of the state [12].

2.2. The Russian world’s value system in the Russian social philosophy

The values of the Russian world have been formed on the basis of the ideas of Eastern Orthodox philosophy. It was the spread of Orthodoxy in Russia that gave rise to the consolidation of Slavic, Finno-Ugric, Turkic, Scandinavian and Baltic tribes - with different languages, cultures, and religions - into a single country. One of the basic concepts of Eastern Orthodox philosophy was ‘goodness’ as the highest good or as God. Another fundamental concept is impeccability, purity of the soul and conscience, which holds one back from bad deeds. Courage, which was understood as the ability and willingness to sacrifice...
oneself for the sake of faith, for the sake of other people, was also considered a significant value. Another important feature of the Orthodox ideal of a person was ‘activeness’, i.e. one was supposed to prove his or her virtuous intentions and faith by deeds. This is what the value of communalism is related to. Another important value is beauty in its religious and emotional sense. These were the basic values, vital for the formation of the ideal of human, that were mainly aimed at unification and formation of the Russian Orthodox nation [13].

Equally important for the Orthodox philosophy is the concept of freedom, which is based on the idea that the principal path to the transformation of public life is the ‘re-creation’ of a person. In the context of the Orthodox philosophy, external circumstances have no power over the will of a person and they cannot predetermine his/her actions. Freedom of the soul is not simply the absence of dependence on some external factors, but rather the presence of positive content, moral self-determination of an individual and moral self-consciousness [14].

The attitude to the authorities and the state, which also traces its origins to the Orthodox philosophical tradition, is also interesting. It is based on the combination of such distinctive features as the world as a whole, respect for other peoples, nonviolence, non-aggression, calmness; communalism as a God-pleasing co-existence in terms of mutual support, sympathy and understanding; justice as the dominance of the truth based on divine and spiritual laws rather than on externally imposed law; sacredness of power and autocracy (power is granted by God and must be pleasing to God; the ruler must be fair and strong; power is inseparable from the ruler’s personality); democracy (the state should serve the people, not stand over the people). Since the epoch of Ivan the Terrible, such values as sovereignty and statehood have become wide-spread: the state, the ruler, and each person should be free and have an independent spirit in order to make their nation great (the model ‘Moscow is the Third Rome’ as a concept of synthesis of statehood and religious commitment) [15, 16].

The idea of Russia’s integration into Western civilization emerges in Russian history from time to time, which leads to the instilment and spread of Protestant and then liberal values instead of traditional and conservative ones. Such historical periods are marked by the glorification of an individual’s personal freedom along with private initiative in order to achieve social well-being. However, the state then always gains its traditional domination again with the aim to strengthen the national spirit and the country [17].

The modern Russian world is a civilizational, social and cultural space that embraces all people who identify themselves as part of Russian culture, Russian language and spiritual and mental aspects of Russian identity. The Russian world is not a super-ethnic, but rather a supranational community. Its constituents are Russia and the Russian-speaking population abroad [18].

V.E. Bagdasaryan and S.S. Sulakshin [12] say that the supreme values of the Russian state are the specific desirable conditions and features of the factors most crucial for its viability that serve as the motivators of the activities of both people and the state. However, along with the supreme values, they also clearly identified a number of anti-values on the basis of comparative historical analysis
and comparative country analysis that are the same and remain absolutely stable for the periods of catastrophes (watershed moments) in the Russian history:

- the individual’s freedom and autonomy;
- ideological de-authorization, increasing openness in the relationship with the West;
- the tendency for regional autonomy;
- hedonism, revision of the past, denial of historical continuity;
- devaluation of public service values;
- anti-system and counterculture [12, p. 84-105].

Analysis of the works of Russian philosophers suggests that the values of the ‘Russian world’ formed people with a unique type of character, different from the national characters of other peoples. And now it is very important to preserve the unique identity of the Russian people, the ‘Russian world’ with its traditional values, and pass them on to the next generations [19].

2.3. **Major supreme values of the Western civilization**

The values of the modern Western European and Anglo-Saxon world stem from the values of the ancient Greek and Roman civilization. However, they were mainly shaped by Renaissance, humanism, and later developments in Protestant theology (including philosophy of religion). These times witnessed the creation of the foundations of liberal individualism with both the values commonly viewed by Russians as negative, such as self-love, indifference to others, and favouring one’s own goals over other people’s interests, and positive values, such as self-esteem, independence, ability to take risks, and personal responsibility for oneself and for the consequences of one’s actions [20].

The classic values of the Western civilization crystallized during the industrial age, the era of the domination of the modernist philosophy, which is based on several key principles: faith in the power of the human mind, the rationalization of knowledge and the foundations of the social life; and faith in the superiority of man over nature, in the progressive character of any kind of development, and in the universal applicability of the norms of morality, law and ideas of social justice and humanism. Modernist philosophy believes values are utilitarian, the individual is considered not as much as a person or a microcosm, but rather as an element of the consumer society. Spiritual and humanistic values take a back seat [21, 22].

In the modern world, we observe a transition to the post-industrial information society, and the dominant philosophical paradigm was replaced with the philosophy of postmodernism. In terms of Social philosophy, the transition to postmodernism is associated with a rejection of the model of a rational, independent person as the basis of his or her own existence. This is caused by the increase of personal freedom and uncertainty; inability to control external circumstances and predict the future; absence of global sense-making goals; destruction of personal authenticity and identity, and the choice of life ‘here and now.’ The society is beginning to be considered as a fragmentary, disordered
entity. Cynicism, scepticism and irony are gaining traction. The focus is shifting to the values of diverse minorities and their right to alternative forms of existence in the society. People are starting seeing values as relative and forming many different systems; the notion of multiculturalism is declared. The society is breaking free from the norms and values and the lifestyle becomes pluralistic and eclectic [23].

The modern Western civilization branches in two directions – European and North American, with the latter claiming world leadership and striving to impose its own system of values on everyone, invalidating not only Eastern, Asian, and Russian but also the closest to it Western European values [24]. The North American system of values originates from Anglo-Saxon values and is based on the idea of the superiority and exclusivity of America and Americans in the entire world and throughout all areas of life (America is seen as a ‘City upon a Hill’). The long-standing system of American values views private property as something sacred; there is a cult of power and money, business acumen and pragmatism; individualism and independence [25].

The differences between the North American, Western European and Russian worlds mainly originate from the different core values of the two societies. Three main elements intrinsic to any world civilization, namely a person, society, and power, have a different hierarchy in these two societies formed over the centuries. The Russian world is power-centric, the society and the person are inferior to the authorities, they submit to them. (Building on the long tradition of Orthodox theology in Byzantium which “rejected autonomous anthropalogy” [26] and connected the notion of the human self to its relational constitutive source in the divine being (transcendence) and human community (immanence), the Russian world disagrees with the pre-eminence of the individual so typical for Western liberal democracies.) In the liberal-capitalist Anglo-Saxon civilization, the individual stands above all, and then comes the civil society formed from voluntary groups of people, and only after that – the power, which serves their interests. This explains the differences in their core values. The values of the American dream as the quintessence of the ideas of Anglo-Saxon and Western European civilization are represented by the myth of a new man and, one might say, superman, who has freedom, business acumen, talent, self-reliance, and ability to fight for his or her happiness. This is a myth about a new social world created by free people acting on their own choices. “A common worldview spawned a common value foundation for the Western civilization, this in turn giving rise to converging definitions of rights and freedoms over the centuries.” [27, p. 610] The Russian idea states that the fate of Russia has a higher purpose, and one shall obey this purpose; any deviation is detrimental to both Russia and the rest of the world [28-30].

3. Results and discussion

The modern social philosophical literature does not offer an unambiguous approach to understanding the phenomenon of values. Generally, one can say
that the value is a way consciousness preserves positive (positive values) or negative (anti-values) experience about the world in various spheres of a person’s everyday life (specific values) and of universal nature (universal values).

**Table 1.** The differences in the understanding of supreme values in the Western civilization and the Russian world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Values of the Western world</th>
<th>Values of the Russian world</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>View of the world</td>
<td>Globalism with a focus on the Western values The right to unilateral use of force in the name of democracy</td>
<td>Multipolar world Non-violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existence</td>
<td>Universality Consumer mind set</td>
<td>Distinctive identity Focus on the spiritual existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Progress with no boundaries</td>
<td>Aiming for the new without destructing the old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Democracy Power comes from people Patriotism</td>
<td>Democracy, but power comes from God Patriotism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Working for wealth</td>
<td>Working for personal fulfilment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Multiculturalism</td>
<td>Preserving own cultural heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Agnosticism and atheism</td>
<td>Respect for the faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of religion</td>
<td>Focus on unconventional religions</td>
<td>Focus on conventional religions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>Freedom as the rejection of social taboos</td>
<td>Freedom as a way to get closer to (godly) perfection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Law implies justice</td>
<td>Justice is above law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political structure</td>
<td>Political pluralism</td>
<td>Political pluralism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Crisis of conventional families, wide-spread alternative types of families</td>
<td>Conventional family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life in the society</td>
<td>Individualism Charity as a way of self-actualization</td>
<td>Different types of communitarianism, communal mind set Altruism, empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance</td>
<td>Formal tolerance Political correctness</td>
<td>True tolerance; Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social security</td>
<td>Social security for everyone</td>
<td>Social security for everyone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supreme values have a universal identity; they represent a concentrated content of the essence of the world in human consciousness and its generalized meaning, which determines the attitude of a person towards it. Supreme values emerge as a result of spiritual activity at all levels of consciousness of the social subject. They form the basic structure of individual and social consciousness.
Divergence of supreme values of Russian world and Western civilization

They exhibit universality, antinomic nature, non-uniform content, and potentially infinite possibilities of objectification and humanistic orientation. The differences in the understanding of supreme values in the Western civilization (the Anglo-Saxon and Western European worlds) and in the Russian world are described in Table 1.

Therefore, we can see that in most cases universal supreme values in the Western and Russian worlds bear different meanings, sharing the same understanding only when it comes to political structure and social security. Consequently, the national idea and the personal identification of individuals within these civilizational paradigms are based on different core values.

4. Conclusions

The study of supreme values of the Russian world and the Anglo-Saxon and Western European civilization is especially relevant nowadays due to the escalating crisis in the relations between these two civilizational paradigms. The attempts that started in the late 1980s to impose the values of Western democracy on Russia failed in the beginning of the 21st century. Russia is increasingly aware of the need to shape a national idea and national interests, which is impossible without embracing the original supreme values of the Russian people and state. The ever-increasing Russo phobia, anti-Russian propaganda orchestrated by the West and the double standards policy towards Russia underscores a major importance of understanding, preserving and strengthening the unique Russian world with its authentic worldview and values that have been maturing for many centuries of the Russian history. The socio-philosophical understanding of the phenomenon of supreme values and their peculiar features in the Russian and Western (Anglo-Saxon and Western European) cultural and civilizational paradigms is also crucial for identifying the vectors of alleviating the tensions arising from the conflict of values of the Russian world and Western civilization in order to preserve harmonious development, peaceful coexistence and effective interaction of the leading world civilizations.

The socio-philosophical aspect of the article establishes that the Russian world is a unique ethnocultural network structure with various Russian-speaking communities sharing a similar mind set, common norms and values both in the Russian Federation and abroad.

The Russian world is characterized by the values based on the principles of the Orthodox Christianity: spiritually-focused existence, salvation, justice, kindness to people and the world, working for the common good, conscience and justice as criteria for legality and law, worshipping higher power and pursuing communalism in decision-making at the local level, patriotism and defence of the Motherland, rationality and creativity, non-possessing attitude, altruism, tolerance, traditional family values, love for one’s neighbour, and embracing beauty in everything.
The supreme values of the modern Western world, based on the Protestant Christianity, are guidelines for a democratic form of government and perception of power as a mechanism for protecting the rights and freedoms of citizens, patriotism, expansive foreign policy aimed at spreading democratic values throughout the world, consumer-oriented behaviour, work as a God-willed way of gaining wealth, business acumen and creativity, individualism, rationality, tolerance to unconventional forms of social existence, including family, charity as a way of asserting self-worth in one’s own eyes and the eyes of others, self-improvement and personal development for the effective achievement of goals.

Therefore, it seems reasonable to argue that differences in the systems of supreme values of the Russian world and the Western civilization stem from the fundamental differences in the sources of their formation – Orthodoxy and Protestantism (and to some extent also the Latin ‘Catholic’ Christianity). It is important to emphasize that in the modern world these differences are exacerbated by the influence of the postmodernist ideas on the Western world, which invalidate the traditional values and virtually deny the existence of supreme values, while in the Russian world traditional values appear to be more deeply entrenched in the cultural expectations and to exert a stronger influence on the way the people see and perceive the world – at least this is how it is commonly perceived by the moral intuition of both, visitors and locals. (We may thus argue that “every attack to weaken the cultural and religious capital leads directly to the disintegration of the whole system” [31, p. 96].) Traditional values are generally upheld as exemplary by the state-run media and the Russian education system (in addition to being endorsed by the Orthodox Church).

The materials of the article possess theoretical relevance for the development of an unifying national idea, an understanding of the place of Russia in the world, and practical value for the development of educational materials on Social philosophy, Sociology and Social psychology, as well as for programs designed to foster a national and civic identity, patriotic education in the process of socialization of youth, and the adaptation of both repatriated individuals from the Russian-speaking foreign diasporas and migrants from other cultural and civilization paradigms.

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