

THE SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL ESSENCE OF THE CONCEPT OF VALUE AND ITS ROLE IN THE LIFE OF SOCIETY

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Abstract

This article examines the socio-philosophical essence of the concept of value, its historical and philosophical genesis, and its role in the development of society. Particular attention is paid to the evolution of axiological ideas in ancient, Eastern, classical German, and modern philosophy. The relationship between material and spiritual values, their regulatory and integrative functions in social life, and their influence on human behavior and social consciousness are analyzed. The article also discusses the transformation of traditional and modern values under the influence of globalization, digitalization, and contemporary socio-cultural changes. It is argued that the harmonious interaction of national, universal, material, and spiritual values constitutes an important factor in ensuring social stability, sustainable development, and the realization of human potential.

Keywords: Value, axiology, socio-philosophical analysis, social values, material values, spiritual values, national values, universal human values, social consciousness, globalization, digitalization, social development.

Introduction

From the very first days of gaining independence, Uzbekistan has paid particular attention to the restoration and development of national values. At the same time, the country has demonstrated its commitment to universal human values and has determined that the establishment of a state governed by the rule of law and a democratic civil society, the protection of human rights and freedoms, and the upbringing of a well-rounded younger generation should be based on the harmonious combination of national and universal values. This approach has become one of the essential spiritual and social foundations of Uzbekistan's path of independent development.

Over the past thirty-five years, Uzbekistan has implemented large-scale reforms encompassing various spheres of social, political, economic, and spiritual life. These processes have not been limited to improving the institutional foundations of society but have also brought about significant changes in citizens' worldviews, social engagement, and attitudes toward the future of the country. Today, the harmony between national and universal human values is emerging as one of the important factors contributing to the development of society. As President Sh.M.

Mirziyoyev emphasized, today “one of the most important tasks for us is to educate young people with high spirituality, modern knowledge and professional skills, and independent thinking in the spirit of national and universal human values” [1].

The scientific and philosophical genesis of the concept of **value** can be traced back to the most ancient and profound layers of human thought. It represents a complex evolutionary process arising from the need to perceive, evaluate, and comprehend objective reality. Throughout the history of philosophy, attempts to understand existence and its various forms of manifestation have always developed in close connection with the individual’s attitude toward their own existence and their place in society.

The concept of **value** is expressed as “*value*” in English, “*valeur*” in French, and “*Wert*” in German, and these terms denote not only “value” in the axiological sense but also “worth” [2]. The study of the problem of values led to the emergence of an independent field of knowledge—**axiology** (from the Greek *axios* — value and *logos* — word, concept).

Although values were not distinguished as a separate and independent category in the earliest forms of mythological and primitive thought, their initial elements found practical expression in the worship of natural forces, customs, taboos, and rituals. However, the development of society, the increasing complexity of relations of production, and the evolution of social consciousness necessitated the identification of values as a distinct object of philosophical and theoretical inquiry. In ancient philosophy, particularly in the works of Ancient Greek thinkers, the ontological and ethical foundations of values began to be systematically analyzed for the first time. In the teachings of Socrates and Plato, the concepts of goodness, justice, truth, and beauty were interpreted as absolute ideas and recognized as the highest criteria of all human aspirations—that is, as supreme values.

While Plato’s concept of the world of Ideas suggested that values possess an eternal and immutable essence existing beyond the material world, Aristotle’s works presented values in close connection with practical activity, morality, politics, and the principles of state governance [3].

In defining the human being as a social being, Aristotle interpreted the virtues regulating human behavior in society as practical values. “Goodness (virtue) and justice are the highest social values toward which members of society strive; without them, the polis (state) loses its purpose” [4]. Although the concept of value was not yet employed under the modern term **axiology** during this period, its epistemological and ontological foundations were subjected to profound philosophical analysis. The ideas of Plato and Aristotle were further developed by David Hume in relation to values. According to him, “a person is not indifferent to whether those close to him live in prosperity or poverty. From this perspective, value consists in happiness and goodness brought to people, whereas its opposite is misery and evil” [5]. Thus, things and actions that harmonize with the interests of society and humanity and contribute to people’s happy, prosperous, and fulfilling lives may be regarded as values.

Medieval philosophy, particularly European scholasticism and the works of thinkers of the Eastern Renaissance, enriched the problem of values within religious, ethical, theological, and philosophical contexts.

In the scientific and philosophical heritage of the great scholars of the Eastern Renaissance—**Abu Nasr al-Farabi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Abu Ali ibn Sina (Avicenna), and Alisher Navoi**—human dignity, spiritual perfection, science, and enlightenment were advanced as among the most important values of social development. In particular, in al-Farabi's treatise on the virtuous city, values are substantiated as a teleological factor that unites society and guides individuals toward social perfection. "Every human being, by nature, needs a community of other people and association with them in order to attain the highest degree of perfection. The supreme value and purpose of society is the attainment of true happiness (*eudaimonia*)" [6].

Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, discussing the regulatory and normative role of moral and epistemological values in ensuring the stability and development of society, stated that "justice, truthfulness, and science are the highest social values that protect society from disintegration; deviation from justice and turning toward falsehood lead to social decline" [7].

In his medical and philosophical views, Ibn Sina scientifically substantiated the idea that human health and the harmony of physical and spiritual well-being constitute an individual's most valuable assets [8]. The great thinker Alisher Navoi also emphasized the importance of anthropocentric and humanistic values in social relations, stating: "Humaneness and humanism are the crown of all material and spiritual wealth. A society deprived of enlightenment and morality loses its values" [8]. These thinkers regarded value not merely as an abstract concept but as a practical force manifested in human life, interpersonal relations, and the promotion of social well-being.

Classical German philosophy marked a major turning point in the development of the theory of values. In the philosophy of **Immanuel Kant**, the moral values of humanity were interpreted through the **categorical imperative**, understood as a universally binding principle independent of any particular conditions or circumstances. Kant emphasized that a human being should never be treated merely as a means but always as an end in themselves, thereby placing human dignity and individual freedom at the core of all moral and spiritual values [9].

By the second half of the nineteenth century, the growing influence of the natural sciences on the social sciences and philosophy created a need to scientifically distinguish between the material and spiritual dimensions of reality. It was precisely during this period, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that representatives of German Neo-Kantianism—Rudolf Lotze, Wilhelm Windelband, Heinrich Rickert—as well as the sociologist Max Weber contributed to the establishment of axiology as an independent field of philosophical inquiry. According to Rickert, values are cultural entities of an absolute nature that are independent of empirical reality but provide individuals with orientation and direction in their activities [10].

Max Weber, in turn, analyzed the problem of values from sociological and epistemological perspectives and advanced the principle of **value neutrality**. Although Weber emphasized that a scholar should remain free from personal value judgments in the process of scientific research, he did not deny that values consistently function as a driving force in the activities of society and individuals. In his view, human social actions are based on particular value

orientations. “Value-rational action is a form of social action determined, irrespective of its consequences, by an individual’s absolute belief in a particular ethical, aesthetic, or religious value” [11].

Throughout the twentieth century, axiology developed further and was investigated within various philosophical traditions, including positivism, pragmatism, phenomenology, and existentialism. In particular, representatives of the phenomenological school developed an objective hierarchy of values, classifying them into material, vital, spiritual, and religious values. According to Scheler’s philosophical doctrine, values are not invented or constructed by human beings; rather, they exist objectively and are apprehended through emotional perception and affective intuition.

In general, a deeper examination of the epistemological foundations of value reveals the subtle dialectics of the relationship between subject and object. Epistemology is the theory of knowledge that studies how human beings acquire knowledge of the world, as well as the sources and forms of cognition and the criteria of truth. Value, meanwhile, introduces the subject’s own attitude, interests, and emotional evaluation into this cognitive process. “Value is expressed in the relationship between an object and the subject’s conception of what the evaluated object ought to be. If the object meets the requirements imposed upon it—that is, if it is as it ought to be—it is regarded as good or as possessing positive value; an object that fails to meet these requirements is classified as bad or negatively valued; an object that is neither good nor bad is considered indifferent or axiologically neutral” [12].

Objective reality may in itself be neutral; that is, natural phenomena occur according to their own laws regardless of human existence. However, when human beings encounter this objective reality, they evaluate it on the basis of their needs, goals, and interests. As a result of this evaluative process, an objective thing or phenomenon acquires a particular meaning for the subject and attains the status of a value. “The phenomenon of value is a product of the social interaction between subject and object and expresses the degree of significance that phenomena of reality possess for individuals and society” [13].

The scientific and philosophical genesis of the concept of value demonstrates that throughout its development humanity has continuously enriched its system of values in the pursuit of truth, goodness, and justice, and this process remains an enduring and inexhaustible source of social existence.

The socio-philosophical essence of values and their systemic structure constitute a complex theoretical category that occupies a central place in the development of society, the regulation of human activity, and the stabilization of social relations. “Values do not possess existence in themselves; they possess only significance: they represent requirements imposed upon the will and upon the goals that individuals set for themselves” [14]. Every society, in order to ensure its existence, development, and future, must rely on a particular moral, spiritual, and material foundation, and it is precisely the system of values that constitutes the essence and content of this foundation.

The systemic structure of values possesses a multifaceted hierarchical architecture encompassing all spheres of the socio-economic, political, and spiritual life of society. In

scholarly literature, values are classified according to various criteria, one of the most fundamental and widespread classifications being their division into **material and spiritual values**. Material values include society's productive forces, material and technological resources, goods that satisfy human physical and vital needs, infrastructure, and technological achievements. Spiritual values, in turn, encompass human intellectual potential, moral virtues, aesthetic taste, religious beliefs, legal consciousness, and political culture.

Material and spiritual values do not exist independently of one another; rather, they function in a constant dialectical relationship and mutual interaction. Material wealth is created through human creative and intellectual potential—that is, on the basis of spiritual values—while spiritual values themselves develop on a material foundation and serve the practical needs of society. The harmony between these two dimensions is one of the principal factors ensuring the stability and continuous development of social life.

In the era of globalization, the rapid development of digital technologies, and the emergence of the information society, the dialectical relationship between traditional values and contemporary demands has become increasingly complex, generating new axiological orientations in the consciousness of members of society. In the process of transforming social consciousness, traditional values assume an important role in preserving society's historical memory, stability, and distinctive identity, while contemporary values reinforce the pursuit of innovative approaches, pragmatism, competitiveness, and global integration. Ensuring interaction and balance between these two dimensions is a fundamental condition for maintaining the spiritual security of society and enabling the full realization of human potential. "In modern societies, the legitimacy of social values and norms is based on consensus achieved through communicative interaction and free discourse" [15].

Any process of modernization and reform in society cannot be limited merely to the renewal of material infrastructure. It can produce the expected positive outcomes only when it also fundamentally transforms the epistemological and axiological foundations of human beings and their ways of perceiving the world. This further demonstrates the central role of the system of values in the transformation of social consciousness.

In conclusion, the socio-philosophical essence of values and their systemic structure constitute a multifaceted hierarchical architecture encompassing all spheres of social life, while the dialectical relationship between material and spiritual values serves as one of the principal driving forces of social development. Whereas material values contribute to sustaining human physical existence and developing productive forces, spiritual values shape intellectual potential, moral qualities, legal consciousness, and aesthetic taste. The harmonious interaction between these two dimensions serves as a fundamental factor in ensuring the stability and continuous progress of society.

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