THEORY AND IMPACT OF PHILOSOPHY

EUROPEAN RATIONALITY: THE FOUNDATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY

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Abstract. The issue of ethical aspects of civil society has gained considerable attention in academic circles over the past two decades. A lot of studies on this topic have been created by philosophers, sociologists, and experts in the field of political and legal thought. However, despite the considerable scientific achievements, theoretical debates on the definition and theoretical foundations of the concept of civil society continue, as reflections on this topic remain extremely controversial.

The article emphasizes that against the background of significant contradictions between postmaterial and material values, European countries have been increasingly aware of the importance of mental and intellectual activity for the social structure of a person and ensuring a decent standard of living. The idea of creating a rational secular civil society, or social rationality, which involves organizing social life in accordance with the requirements of reason, is once again becoming relevant at a new level. One of the main achievements of twentieth-century philosophy was the recognition that rationality is the basis for activity in general, as well as for civic engagement in particular.

The analysis of the literature shows that the study of civil society is methodologically linked to the development of political rationality in Western societies. The aspects of the formation of the power of reason in the European social context are considered in detail.

Key words: consciousness, state power, power of mind, citizen, freedom, democracy, human rights.

Introduction. The socio-philosophical dimensions of the development and operation of civil society have long captured the attention of many influential thinkers throughout the history of European thought. Early theoretical concepts and models of civil society can be traced back to the works of Plato and Aristotle, Cicero and Marcus Aurelius, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas during the ancient and medieval periods. However, it was only in modern times, which marked the actual emergence and evolution of civil society in Europe, that theoretical reflections on this phenomenon in its various social, historical, and geographical forms began to develop. This issue became a central theme in European culture, shaping its intellectual trajectory.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the idea of civil society was explored in British social and political philosophy. Thinkers like T. Hobbes and J. Locke provided in-depth analyses of civil society as a product of the discourse on freedom. A. Smith approached it through the lens of liberalism, E. Burke from a conservative standpoint, and T. Paine from a radical revolutionary perspective.

The works of the Scottish school, including notable contributions from D. Hume, F. Hutcheson, and A. Ferguson, also made significant strides in this field.

Following this, the French intellectual tradition began to explore the subject of civil society in depth, with philosophers such as S. Montesquieu, F. Voltaire, J.- J. Rousseau, and A. Tocqueville contributing to the discourse. France introduced Europe to the concept of the rule of law, rationalism, and, most importantly, the intellectual framework of the Enlightenment, which, with all its strengths and weaknesses, influenced European thought for centuries.

The ideas and images of civil society experienced a real renaissance in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century. Among the key thinkers of this period – I. Kant, J. Fichte, G. Hegel, K. Marx, M. Weber, M. Horkheimer, T. Adorno and J. Habermas – a number of prominent names stand out, who created original and significant concepts of civil discourse. However, it is paradoxical that most of these thinkers, except for representatives of the Frankfurt School, worked in a country where there was no civil society of its own, and instead a totalitarian empire was being actively built. At the same time, history shows that these ideas became the basis for the development of civil society in Western and Central Europe. In this context, it also becomes clear that without the integration of European values and ideas, the formation of civil society in Ukraine faces numerous difficulties.

Faced with this social challenge, Ukrainian researchers have been actively turning to the European intellectual heritage in the field of civil society since the 1990s. This is evidenced by the works of such authors as S. Grabovsky, O. Zabuzhko, S. Vovkanych, V. Lisovyi, M. Ryabchuk, I. Bychko, A. Bychko, M. Popovych, I. Dziuba, and others. The socio-philosophical and conceptual aspects of this tradition are thoroughly covered in the works of A. Karas, A. Loy, I. Pasko, and J. Pasko. However, even so, it should be noted that the issue of the conceptual basis of the European model of civil society remains insufficiently developed in the national scientific literature. The proposed article aims to help fill this gap.

The purpose of the study is to identify the key aspects of the formation of rational force in European society as an important theoretical tool for analyzing and understanding civil society.

Methods. The study uses methodological and theoretical achievements based on the concepts of «critical theory» and «communicative philosophy». Particular attention is paid to the application of the comparative method, in particular in its comparative and historical interpretation. This approach allows not only to analyze the commonalities and differences between phenomena, but also to reveal their development in different socio-historical contexts. This method allows us to better understand the nature of the phenomena under study, to trace the evolution of concepts in time and space, and to identify their influence on the formation of contemporary social and philosophical discourse.

Results and discussion. At the present stage, when there are discussions about various components, concepts, models and ideas about civil society, as well as its basic values, it should be recognized that the origins of modern realities should be sought in the Western European and Central European theoretical, moral and ethical heritage – the fundamental foundations of European culture and sociality. It is here that the first elements of a society, which later became known as a civil society, are born and formed.

In this context, normative principles of personal development emerge, and the ideas of culture, civility, and morality are embodied in the concept of human rights and dignity, gaining philosophical content and generalization. Further historical progress was also influenced by European ideas and realities, which in the twentieth century, against the background of sharpening civilizational and worldview contradictions, became increasingly ethically oriented.

In view of this, it is advisable to clarify the foundations of the phenomenon of civil society and reproduce the most studied discourses in the European tradition that directly relate to the cultural identity of the individual, the expansion of his or her freedom and authenticity.

The transformations that have taken place in Eastern Europe have forced both theorists and practitioners, journalists and researchers to reconsider established social and philosophical issues that were previously considered to be settled beyond question. This has pushed intellectuals to analyze the limitations of post-Soviet social science in more depth and to search for new axiological approaches, conceptual categories, and methods. For Ukraine, which, after the post-Soviet upheavals and due to the negligence of the political elite, almost ended up on the periphery of global civilization processes, turning to European experience in the field of social and civic issues is extremely important. This is especially true for that part of Ukrainian society that supports the ideals of freedom, democracy and human rights and seeks to implement the best European practices, adapting them to the needs of the country's modern post-industrial innovative development.

The need to find new ways of democratic development of society, moral guidelines and forms of social integration requires a gradual transition from an outdated, bureaucratic and inefficient model of social development to new, rational forms of social life. These forms should ensure positive changes both in the national context and in Ukrainian society in particular.

New decentralized forms of social activity based on horizontal networking between different social groups and strata play an important role in the process of postcolonial freedom and human rights expansion. They contribute to the restoration of social capital – civic trust, which is critical for the preservation of humanistic principles in society.

In a situation of imbalance of the main social institutions, ignoring the principles of justice, human dignity and social capital, there is a growing need to focus on discursive and ethical aspects, moral foundations that should contribute to civic development and the expansion of universal human rights. In recent decades, theoretical research has focused on the contradictions between the theory and practice of civil society, leading to an in-depth study of humanistic issues in Eastern and Western Europe. This is a natural process.

In the early modern period, the concept of civil society has important commonalities with the German term Bildung and the English term Belding (education as the formation of a personality and a process of conscious socio-cultural activity), as well as with the idea of the university, whose autonomy created a certain space of freedom in university cities in Germany and Great Britain. Thus, at the dawn of the new era, a unique social space, free public opinion, emerged around famous European universities and museums. It is important to note that education and culture as social capital have become key factors in the development of civil society as a real process of social evolution. It should also be emphasized that no organization, social group or corporation can claim to have a monopoly on representing the interests and needs of civil society. It is always in motion, and its interests cannot be assigned to certain classes or political forces. The openness of civil society cannot be monopolized, and participation in it must be constantly confirmed by democratic and moral principles, active life position and civic engagement.

The significance of the process of free civil constitutionalization for Europe becomes apparent if we consider the stages of development of this concept. In the theoretical constructions of German classical philosophy, this «idea is closely related to the ideals of the French Revolution, in particular, to the concepts of freedom, self-formation and self-management, including the management of society» (McLean, 2000: 112-113). The European understanding of civil society as a social alternative to state principles is of great importance for the overall European culture and social structure. It is important to note that civil society is a long-term civilizational process that cannot be fitted into a clear chronological framework. However, its development is closely linked to the spread of social heritage transmitted through education and upbringing. From antiquity to the Middle Ages, the foundations of modern conceptions of civil society were born, reflecting the social affirmation of innovative socio-cultural practices that emerge within and beyond politically organized structures. In this European socio-evolutionary context, the concept of extraterritoriality (self-separation) was laid

down in the early stages of social creativity, emphasizing the ability of autonomous associations and communities to organize, manage and exercise self-control.

Civil society in the European tradition has often been understood as a category of the ideal associated with notions of the proper. It drew inspiration for its formation from the sphere of values and social ideals that emphasized its independence from specific territorial frameworks and «carried it into the space of universal meanings or even global concepts» (Pietrzyk-Reeves, 2004: 72).

European social thought illustrates how intellectual activity became increasingly intertwined with social processes in the modern era. It is becoming more and more noticeable that the everyday life of people in different European countries develops, on the one hand, spontaneously and in the course of random events, and, on the other hand, is determined by institutional mechanisms shaped with the active participation of thinkers and intellectuals.

Since the 1970s, amidst a pronounced conflict between material and post-material values (as noted by Inglehart), European nations have increasingly recognized the significance of intellectual activity in shaping social structures and ensuring dignified living conditions for individuals. The concept of constructing a rational, secular civil society – often referred to as social rationality – has gained renewed relevance. This idea centers on organizing social life in alignment with the principles of reason. One of the key insights of twentieth-century philosophy has been the understanding that rationality underpins human activity in general and civic participation in particular.

An essential contribution in this regard is J. Searle's development of Aristotle's idea that «rationality is intrinsically linked to the capacity for free human choice» (Searle, 2001: 66). Western European philosophical discourse has played a critical role in elaborating on the nature of rationality and its connection to the socio-cultural and civic practices prevalent across various nations. Furthermore, a philosophical analysis of rationality in cultural practices can be grounded in the recognition of fundamental European values, which serve to uphold human rights, address individual needs, and protect societal interests. Rationality, in essence, reflects the capacity of an activity to effectively fulfill a specific social need with minimal effort. A need is considered rational if its fulfillment advances human freedom and social development; it is irrational if it lacks a meaningful connection to these goals or actively undermines them.

Rationality is emerging as a central guiding principle for diverse segments of European society, serving as a means of intellectual resistance for communities that have endured the irrational excesses of communist regimes. These regimes sought to dismantle the genuine dimensions of human existence, including the symbolic realms of culture, society, and individual life. The principle of rationality holds particular significance as it continuously assesses the extent to which civil society aligns with the values of reason, genuine meaning, and legitimacy. This principle encompasses not only a conceptualization of social reality shaped by the theoretical frameworks of Western philosophy but also emphasizes the legitimization of reason within social structures. On a practical level, rationality becomes a benchmark for establishing a democratic social order. It guides the functioning of civil society as a distinctive system of reasonable interaction, facilitating cooperation between individuals and social groups while upholding democratic principles.

The decision of Western and Central European countries to pursue a legal framework for social development played a pivotal role in establishing reason as a fundamental social factor equipped with the tools to influence social reality. Reason emerged as the driving force behind societal progress and the guiding principle for optimally meeting the needs and interests of society, with freedom recognized as an inherent human right. It became the cornerstone of civilization, shaping the key imperatives of civil society and the market. Reason serves as a unifying factor that enables the effective development of social institutions. It fosters a unique system of interaction among individuals, groups, and social strata, aligning their diverse aspirations and expectations while maintaining equilibrium within society. Modern perspectives emphasize the importance of a rational approach to

limiting state interference in the rights of individuals within civil society, recognizing this as essential for creating a dignified social framework.

The concept of freedom – both in civic and personal choices – stands as a core aspect of rationality. In practical terms, it underpins active participation in public and private life, forming the foundation of the European tradition of civil society.

The socio-philosophical understanding of civil society has historically and theoretically been linked to the adoption of political rationality as a methodological framework within Western European social philosophy. This issue is prominently addressed in the works of thinkers such as M. Foucault and J. Habermas. The French philosopher first delves into the challenges of political rationality in his early scholarly work «The History of Madness in the Classical Era» in 1961.

Foucault emphasizes the interconnectedness of various forms of human experience – such as madness, illness, lawbreaking, sexuality, identity, and the fields of psychiatry, medicine, criminology, sexology, and psychology – with a complex power system designed for comprehensive control over both individual and collective behavior. Central to his argument is the belief in the pervasive nature of power structures within European civilization, alongside the historical instability and fragmentation of civil society in this context. He highlights how «Western civilization has developed the most intricate power mechanisms rooted in an extensive system of knowledge» (Foucault, 1978: 44). In this framework, Foucault explores the interplay between disciplinary forms of power, which gained prominence starting in the Middle Ages, and various manifestations of subjectivity. This includes the «genealogy of the subject,» which he sees as foundational to the emergence of a society free from totalitarian domination.

It is evident that the application of political rationality in public life has roots extending back to the Middle Ages. The Christian pastorate historically incorporated various methods for exercising control over its congregation, including personal knowledge of parishioners and insights into factors that influenced their spiritual growth. To strengthen its influence, Christianity from the 12th century began integrating two pagan practices originating in the Hellenistic period, reinterpreting them through a rational lens. These practices include the «examination of conscience» and the «guidance of consciousness,» both of which had been utilized by the Pythagoreans, Stoics, and Epicureans in their socio-historical traditions.

In line with this tradition, it was believed that personal self-improvement should be subject to continuous oversight and discipline by the ruling authority, which systematically evaluated both virtuous and wrongful actions. Another related practice involved providing general guidance by those in power to their subjects during particularly challenging situations.

The Christian pastorate merged these two practices into a unified approach. The «guidance of consciousness» was deemed an essential and ongoing requirement for a God-centered society, as the Church constantly sought to combat the sinful behaviors prevalent in the secular world. Over time, however, the Church began integrating the practice of «examination of conscience» into public life. The openness of the confession process shifted focus from individual introspection to the capacity of the human soul to reveal itself and submit to the authority of its confessor.

Another significant transformation of the pastorate can be identified in the adoption of Christian practices of confession and humility. The integration of Christianized methods, such as the examination of conscience and the guidance of consciousness, into both sacred and secular life served a clear rational purpose: fostering spiritual submission to ecclesiastical authority by eradicating the sinful, carnal nature of humanity. «The Christian pastorate introduced elements of a peculiar system that diverged from the traditional political community, which relied on the contributions of its citizens for survival. Despite this, its practices contained fundamental aspects of rationality. Rationalism, as a core methodological principle of medieval culture, found consistent application in the domain of canon law. Instead of relying on precedent and custom, the supreme guiding

principle became the concept of justice – a moral and legal alignment of rationality with truth. This approach established a clear hierarchy of legal norms and principles, the interplay of which remains a critical component of contemporary legal and civil thought» (Foucault,1967: 69). It is particularly intriguing to examine the historical evolution of the concept of rationality, especially in the context of political rationality.

One of M. Foucault's significant works addressing the issue of political rationality is his lecture «Omnes et Singulatim: Toward a Critique of Political Reason», delivered at Stanford University on October 10 and 16, 1979. The key arguments presented in this lecture highlight a gradual shift in Foucault's socio-philosophical focus, moving from the disciplinary aspects of power to the inter-play between ethics and power. This shift aligns with the ethical challenges of civil society and the broader context of societal emancipation from totalitarian practices characterized by hierarchical subordination.

The French philosopher underscores that, starting in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, power began to be analyzed increasingly in the comparative frameworks of norms and discipline. He adopts a critical stance toward disciplinary power, which contrasts sharply with the socio-historical practices of statism and cameralism. These systems emphasized the necessity of state intervention in both public and private spheres of citizens' lives. Foucault also directs attention to a new form of power – biopower – which he identifies as a comprehensive mechanism of control over all aspects of civil society. This form of power, as Foucault argues, became a defining characteristic of Western societies during the technical and industrial revolutions of the modern era.

According to this theoretical framework, the modern era represents a reinterpreted continuation of earlier forms of power, from Antiquity and the Middle Ages. One form of power, embodied by the Polis, gradually evolved into the theory of state interests and police authority, while the other, rooted in pastoral power, transformed into a system of state patronage and societal discipline. This transfor-mation is seen as a manifestation of political eudemonism, characterized by trends that oppose civil society, such as patronage-client relationships, where the monarch is held responsible for the happi-ness and well-being of his subjects.

Foucault thus understands the political rationality of Western societies as a complex interaction and mutual influence of two models: the Western Greek polis and the Hebrew pastorate, which under-went several changes – moving from the polis to political centralization and the development of modern concepts of state power. He emphasizes the formation of two interconnected concepts: «state interests» and «police theory», which contribute to the emergence of a new political philosophy, pro-viding a detailed account of the development of Western political rationality.

The rational theory of state interests delineated the principles and methods of secular governance, allowing a distinction to be made between state administration and the canonical framework, accord-ing to which God rules the world, the father governs the family, and the leader oversees the commu-nity. On the other hand, the «Theory of Police» functioned as a complementary tool, helping to define the nature of the state's rational activities and the objectives it aimed to achieve.

According to this theory, state interests are realized through an instrumental managerial approach that follows specific, well-defined rules. This approach impacts not only customs and traditions but also the core principles of rational governance in society. The essential argument put forth by Foucault, Habermas, J. Gregory, and other scholars is that the concept of state interests, which became ingrained in the public consciousness of European nations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centu-ries, represents a model of rational political management. It transforms the earlier understanding of the two communities – Civitas Dei and Civitas Terena – which historically embodied a dialectical unity between the sacred and the secular.

The new model of governance largely diverges from the medieval political perspective, which is notably represented in Thomas Aquinas' famous text «On the Rule of the Kingdom of Cyprus». As is

well known, Aquinas emphasizes that in order for the art of governance to be considered reasonable, or «rational, it must mirror the operations of nature itself» (Aquinas, 2000: 234).

According to this medieval understanding of rationality, the royal administration of a secular state must replicate the divine management of nature, with the spiritual principle taking precedence over the physical. This classical text primarily addresses the Church's demand to secular institutions for the necessity of absolutist power to adopt the canonical model of world order, which involves teleological principles and mirrors the divine regulation of both the body and the soul. In this framework, «mankind requires someone who can guide them toward eternal happiness» (Aquinas, 2000: 327).

The concept of state interests, as realized in the social practices of the «princely states of the common good» and the Mediterranean Italian commune republics, fundamentally rejects the canonical element and instead emphasizes the «practical dimensions» of managing a normative state. These practical principles, which represent a clear break from the theological model of political rationality, laid the groundwork for the political legitimacy of state intervention in public life. The enduring legitimacy of «police theory» within the public consciousness of various social groups reflects significant shifts in both theoretical discourse and political practice within Western European society during the Early Modern period, particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These shifts were embodied in new socio-historical and political practices, including mercantilism, evolving relationships between power and civil society, and the development of new academic disciplines such as «administrative management science», which was taught at German universities under the name «die Polizeiwissenschaft», or «science of the police».

In his analysis of political thought within the historical context of the German principalities, Yu. Justi highlights that the new system of specialized education, prevalent in nearly all German-speaking universities (especially in Göttingen), not only facilitated the discipline and practical training of bureaucrats in Prussia, Austria, and Russia, but also laid the groundwork for a eudaimonic interpretation of the state. This interpretation stands in contrast to the concept of civil society. It focuses on the creation of a rational institution of the secular state, which is responsible for the moral well-being of its citizens. This institution takes on a new disciplinary role – the state as a police apparatus that oversees and nurtures its citizens to promote the common good. Clearly, such an institution opposes civil society and cannot be seen as one that challenges the state. The concept of «civil society» effectively dissolves into the notion of «population», where individuals are viewed merely as objects to be managed, reduced to mere agents of the state's interests.

This form of political rationality, which is reflected in the distorted relationship between the state and civil society, gains legitimacy through a wide range of socio-political and philosophical writings. Specifically, Yu. Fon Justi clearly articulates the extent to which society depends on the state, stating that «the lives of individuals in society are subject to the police interests of the state» (Justi, 1972: 121). In the perspective of the 18th-century German theorist, the police play a role in stimulating mutually reinforcing processes: they ensure the preservation, continuation, and improvement of the lives of citizens, which in turn strengthens the state.

According to Justi, this paternalistic model of governance, which combines elements of the polis and the pastorate, shifts the focus of civil society issues. It redefines the concept of «citizen», turning it into that of a «client» of the state. As a result, society is treated as an object of state control. For several centuries in European countries, particularly in the German states, the concept of citizenship was largely absent. Individuals were seen as subjects of secular supreme authority, while the population was viewed as an object of police oversight, clearly embodying the repressive rationality of state power.

In this context, both I. Kant and, later in the twentieth century, M. Foucault and J. Habermas, critically examine this model of political rationality, leading to what is described as the «complete totalization of society» (Habermas, 1991: 33). It is noted that the form of political rationality embod-

ied by the state, as a complex overseer of societal actions, is not inherent to Western rationality in its authentic form. Instead, it necessitates the incorporation of Kantian social philosophy, which «limits the functions of state power to the legal principle guiding societal development» (Kant,1997: 214).

The foundation for the rational functioning of civil society lies in the legal principle, which Kant, often referred to as the «author of the three critiques», identifies as the embodiment of reason. It is believed that «where an individual recognizes the possibility of practically realizing this legal principle as the principle of reason, rights are established, and these rights become a fundamental foundation for a society of civilized citizens» (Kant,1998: 112). Kant's perspective forms the basis for "practical philosophy," which connects to themes of civil justice, culture, and civilization –concepts that align with morality, as they are essential to human existence within civil society. For Kant, a critical and foundational indicator of human existence is the ability to assert and maintain oneself as a person and a subject of civil society, endowed with reason. Through Kant's framework, reason is legitimized within European forms of social life.

Thus, German classical philosophy emphasizes the issues of morality, culture, and civilization as crucial elements in the formation and evolution of civil society.

Discussion. This concept, which aligns with the needs and aspirations of a free society, has a solid theoretical foundation that integrates various interpretations of both past and present. In contemporary terms, it encompasses culture, society, and the individual, who must resist all forms of subjugation and oppression, creating resistance against the influence of the «system». However, in the era of globalization, modern civil society must also account for the demands of the «system's» mediators, such as power and capital, which have continuously impacted the individual's life world throughout the twentieth century. At the same time, it is essential to preserve the normative and ethical dimensions of the life world, as well as the communicative nature of civil society. In its most favorable expressions, these features foster the growth of democratic sociality, ensuring human well-being and dignity. Ideal European models of civil society are marked by the continuous development of the moral resources of society – social capital – evidenced by high levels of trust, solidarity, cooperation, mutual respect, and justice. The revitalization of the moral and cultural aspects of life and social capital has become a critical factor in the restoration of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe.

The development and practical establishment of the normative dimension of civil society were accompanied by the recognition of reason as the central social factor that facilitates a unique system of horizontal interaction between individuals, social groups, and strata, while limiting state interference in human rights. Reason thus forms the basis for democratic aspirations for self-governance and plays a key role in legitimizing diverse approaches and discourses on civil society grounded in the principle of law.

Simultaneously, alongside the practical assertion of universal human rights –political, civil, and social – an intense debate unfolds between Marxist ideology, which denies the ethical aspects of civil society, and antinomian concepts that propose a radical democratic alternative to existing forms of distorted sociality and unfreedom. This is particularly evident in «critical theory», which is not confined to a single discourse but instead synthesizes various approaches. In broad terms, it views civil society as a normative institution aimed at overcoming alienation among people and increasing their sense of responsibility toward themselves and the common good.

Conclusions. The paradigm of civil society should be based on the principles of individual freedom, equality and self-sufficiency. The formation of civil society, according to I. Kant, is a movement towards fuller realization of the legal norms of freedom and equality of citizens, and the approach to eternal peace.

The German thinker associates the functioning of civil society with the rule of law and the formation of the European community of nations. To summarize, it should be noted that, according to the thinker, civil society is built only on individual values of civil peace and represents a generalized

constant for all mankind, the culmination of which is the realm of virtue – a categorical imperative. Thus, the German philosopher placed a person at the center of public life, who is obliged to defend the will of his or her own interests against the authorities, the state, to protect civil rights and the high moral rank of a citizen.

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