

THE SOCIAL VALUES OF THE ELITES

L. Stan

Liviu Stan

Faculty of Law and Social Sciences

University of Craiova

*Correspondence: Liviu Stan, University of Craiova, 13 Alexandru Ioan Cuza St., 200585, Craiova

E-mail: unbeatenliviu@gmail.com

Abstract

Generally, elite means: "the high layer or an elevated position" (Sartori. 1961, p.94), and it defines both the governmental elites and also the nongovernmental ones, in other words "not only those that possess and exert the power, but also those that significantly control and influence the decision-making" (idem).

In a strict sense, the term of elite refers to the political elite seen as the unique holder of power within a society, as a relatively homogenous and well organized group.

Appreciatively, elite refers to individuals that transcend by value or capacities. This is, in fact, the paretian meaning of the term. All these meanings of the term "elite" lead to its understanding as being compound of groups or categories of persons found on the peak of different "structures of authority or of dividing the resources" (Scott. 2001. p. 9). Thus, elites are the leaders, the rich, the influent persons or the privileged ones.

The sociological literature related to this theme reveals the existence of four criteria for defining the elites: the value or meritocratic criterion, the positional or functional criterion, the capital criterion and the expert appraisal criterion.

Key words: *sociology, politology, research strategies, the social-political circumstances, theories, elite, sociological literature*

1. Introduction

In all researches the human spirit directs attention to everything that is related to it. Generally, the human consciousness strives for two aims, namely:

1. to explain the world, the universe of which we are a part
2. to understand the sense of our existence and its value

Asking ourselves about the sense of life, we get to formulate absolute values that we wish to determine, to acknowledge them as much as possible. So, besides the issue of the knowledge of value we add that one of accomplishing the value. We see that the value is above our spirit both within the theoretical research and also within our everyday life.

The philosophy explains the world through logical values, but still tends to transform it, according to some ethical human ideals. Philosophy shows how it is born, how reality evolves and then the value related to all its changes. Philosophy is "the investigation of the highest values, both theoretical and practical", A. Fouille said in <Esquisse d'une interpretation du monde>.

The philosophy of value represents the Ph.D thesis of the philosopher Petre Andrei (written in 1913-1916) and it is the first paper of systematical axiology in the Romanian culture field as philosophical discipline, its founder being H. Lotze.

Theories of value, ideas and theses brought up by: Xenopol, Vasile Parvan, E. Lovinescu, C. Dobrogeanu Gherea are to be found as fragments in papers, surveys and articles before P. Andrei.

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First of all, the philosophy of value should study the values independently of the reality that materializes them. Thus, it will explore: the logical grounds of value, its forms and the way these values gain a real content.

In the vision of Petre Andrei, the fundamental idea for building the logic of the value is: “to consider the value as a logical element of our consciousness”.

Another philosopher, Rudolf Eisler speaks about the logic of values. He affirms that the theory of value may be:

- a psychology of value;
- a critique of value;
- a theory of moral value.

R. Goldscheid additionally emphasizes the relation of value to the field of knowledge and to that of activity and asserted that: the theory of will, the theory of knowledge and that of value compile a whole.

According to H. Rickert, the philosophy of value does not have any other ground than the logical and transcendental one and only the theoretical values, thus it represents the logicist-idealist flow.

Ed. Von Hartmann began by talking about the addiction to an aim, asserting that quality of the value depends on the quality of the aim. Hartmann admits values that we, the people do not become aware of, either because they do not affect our will or because they affect it too little, or because our will is in contradiction to the objective will that sets aims.

Von Hartmann claimed the unconditioned existence of objective values set by an objective will. Another philosopher, W. Ostwald reaches to a metaphysical theory of value. The idea of value is “tightly related to life and dependent on the particularities of life”.

However, the aim is not only in the organic world but also in the unorganic one. This is the theme that Ostwald tries to prove, bringing on mechanical considerations. Every being is a complex of energy; and everything that happens around the world represents a dissipation of the free existing energy.

The ranking achieved by axiological principles has the following structure (Vianu, 1998, p. 119):

1. “Personal values are superior to real values
2. Spiritual values are superior to material ones
3. Adherent values are superior to free ones
4. Aim-values are superior to means-values
5. Amplifying values are superior to preservative ones
6. Integrable values are superior to non-integrable ones
7. Integrative values are superior to integrable ones
8. A value is superior to another for as many steps as the grounds of superiority it possesses in its structure and as the ground of its superiority belongs to a higher quality according to the established order that was above mentioned (personality, spirituality, adherence, aim, amplification, integrability, integration).”

By connecting the characteristic of values, T. Vianu (1998, p. 119) points out the grounds of superiority: the vital value is above the economical one because of its personal nature, both being *material, free, means, preservative, integrable*. The juridical value, part of the same range, has in addition to the two above mentioned the property of being spiritual. Simultaneously, the political value is *personal and spiritual*, possessing two elements of superiority, the theoretical one has three grounds of superiority being *spiritual, aim and amplifying*, the esthetic value has four, respectively five properties of superiority, the moral value has five properties of superiority, while the spiritual value has six characteristics that legalize superiority.

By comparing the grounds of superiority T. Vianu (1998, p. 120) creates an increasing hierarchy from the superiority of values point of view and the next survey may be similar to Maslow's pyramid of needs: “1. the economical value, 2. the vital value, 3. the juridical value,

4. the political value, 5. the theoretical value, 6. the esthetic value, 7. the moral value, 8. the religious value.”

The bonding upon different levels of this system allows the explanation of the personal options of the members of a society, depending on the volume that one or another of these holds within the social space. In all cases we appreciate that the hierarchy of values supposes an adequate volume of each of them in order to balance the system.

1. Criteria of classification of values

The criteria that groups the values are the following: a) the validity of values; b) their quality; c) their subject; d) the reasons that determined the values; e) their object; f) the psychical faculty out of which the values arise; g) their implementation area.

Depending on their validity, criterion adopted by F. Somlo, Kruger, Meyer, Meinong, the values are: -relative values; -absolute values; -subjective values; -objective values.

Depending on their quality, criterion adopted by Kreibig, Cohn, Ehrenfels, the values are: -positive values; -negative values; -proper values; -effect values.

According to their subject, the values are: autopathic, heteropathic, ergopathic.

Depending on the reasons that have determined the values, there are: accidental -transitory values and values of a person. The representative of this criterion was H. Schwartz.

According to their object the values are: -economical; -ethical; -juridical; -political.

Depending on the psychical faculty out of which the values arise, they are: sensitive, sentimental and cognitive.

Depending on their implementation area, the values are: individual, social, cosmic, elementary and ideal.

We can define value as being an axiological specific relation between a natural object or a created one and the human subject, whereby it expresses the appreciation granted to its qualities that satisfy certain needs.

The value stands for the relation between subject and object, where by polarity or polarization, by hierarchies, we express the distinct appreciation for some things or characteristics, for some persons or human acts, for some works created hereunder their capacity to satisfy certain needs, aspirations or concerns.

There can be absolute values, supreme values: “The divinity is the supreme existence and value for the human being”.

Another classification of values is the following:

1. economical values;
2. juridical values;
3. political values;
4. ethical values;
5. historical values;
6. esthetic values;
7. religious values.

The first four values are values determined by the constitutive and regulative functions of the social life. The other three values are determined by the framework where the social reality lives and evolves.

1. Theories of values

1.1. Economical values

By economical values we generally understand the awareness of the utility of a good as compared to other goods. The issue of economical values has concerned the economists since the 18th century.

Aristotle considered as value the fact that satisfies the need. The needs are physical and psychical, that is why he determines two kinds of values: moral (spiritual) values and material values. The economical values are material. A thing bears as much value as it

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satisfies an imperious need. The Greek philosopher distinguishes two types of economical values: the exchange value and the usage value.

In the 17th century, William Petty asserted that the internal value of a thing depends on the work used for its creation. "Work is the father of the active principle of wealth and the land is its mother". W. Harris asserted that: the work is an element that determines value.

Another representative of this theory, Karl Marx, intended to establish a materialist sociology of value, starting from economical bases. A thing bears value because the human work is materialized within that certain thing. Marx distinguishes four types of economical values: -simple or accidental, -total or developed by value, -generated by value, monetary of value.

By affirming the plus-value, Marx exceeded all his forerunners, establishing the real socialist theory of value. (M-M-M merchandise-; money-; merchandise-;). The plus-value grants profit for the capitalism.

The socialist theory of value is much more than a theory of cost, as it takes into consideration a determinant moment of the value: the cost, but not its utility.

The economical value is practical; it belongs to the goods taken one by one. Here, the value depends on the cost, on the work necessary for the manufacture of a good and on the limit utility.

The economical values are constitutive for the social reality; they are only a part of the social values that contain types of value with different functions within social life. In the case of economical values, the process of knowledge consists in finding the component elements of value.

1.2. Juridical values

These values may represent the object of the science of law, of juridical sociology and of philosophy of law. Law as science, studies the juridical values not only according to form and making. The philosophy of law studies the birth, the evolution and the reasoning of juridical values; while sociology studies their implementation within social life. Law is a sum of rules, norms that are created by the organized will of a social personality of the state.

During ancient times, the juridical norms were considered orders given by the head of the tribe who was respected as god on Earth. The norms were nothing but divine orders, imposed to people.

During modern times, the juridical norms are not either divine orders or results of a mysterious soul of the people, but are imperative and express the will of the social community and of the state. Aristotle understood by natural law what it is implanted by nature within the human soul.

Ulpian affirmed the validity of the natural law, postulated by the nature of divine providence, as the descendants of Thomas d'Aquino believed during Middle Ages.

Today, natural law is represented and claimed by the philosophical school of Catholicism.

Kant proved that reasoning does not contain in itself ready made ethical, esthetic, or juridical norms but it offers the opportunity to elaborate norms.

Hegel asserted that both natural and historical laws interpenetrate; rational law exists within the historical law.

The Neo-Kantian jurists imposed the theory of juridical dualism that distinguishes the value from the juridical reality. A well-known representative is R. Stammler, who distinguishes for every juridical value: a substance and a form- the substance is made of the lawful facts, while the form is well-proportioned, similar to well thought aims and incumbent to lawful facts. He considered the juridical reality as an object of positive law and the juridical value acquired the form of reasonable law.

Real law is nothing but the law that contributes to the achievement of a free will society, thus contributing to the achievement of the social ideal. Law establishes norms and

as positive law formulates imperatives. Both the norm and the imperative serve for the achievement of the absolute value of law.

This absolute value of law is established by the juridical philosophy and the achievement of the absolute value is the object of positive law.

The process of knowledge and capitalization of juridical values consists in finding culture as a measure of juridical value in order to establish the value of positive law for the laws that actually accomplish and materialize the lawful values.

Juridical values do not confer sense to existence out of society because their foundation is represented by community. The idea of just, unjust, the necessity of a juridical norm was born once with the society; that is why the juridical values are social values. The juridical values are the result of legislator's will.

1.3. Political values

They refer to state, to the fortress as a social unit, in other words they refer to the forms of organizing a common life, a social life. Descending from the community forms like tribes, from the genetic congregations based on lineage and blood bond, from the groups grounded on customs and not law, to the proper society founded on law, the state stands as a superior political value.

Aristotle considered home (family) as the first political value; and state as the aim and the final point of the political evolution. In the Greek antiquity, the state was the fortress. The fortress was the supreme value and the individual was totally subdued to the authority of the state. The notion of state prevailed and widened more and more, becoming what it is nowadays.

Bruno Will, Max Stirner considered state as an exterior force that binds the individuals, preventing the freedom of consciousness, of autonomy and the self culture. Spencer saw the gap between the interests of the state and of the individuals and this is the reason for which he proclaimed the contradiction between state and individual.

Although Kant perceived the state as something beyond individuals, he was still a personalist, because he regarded state only as a means for the morality of individuals. He subordinated man to humanity, being a representative of the abstract universalism. He is reckoned as the founder of socialism.

Richte considered the individual simply as a moment within the total value of the state. The state is something distinct from the amount of individuals that compose it.

Hegel stated that the individual reality is developed by state which represents a form appropriate to the absolute spirit.

Spinoza affirmed that state is the result of the fight condition and of force. State should prescribe the rules of common life, to dictate laws and people should comply with law.

The juridical state possesses different values according to its organization: monarchic, oligarchic and democratic-parliamentary. All these forms of organization and transformation of state are political values that condition the development of all the other values. The supreme cultural value is humanity, meaning the achievement of the concept of the perfect morality and consciousness of humanity.

The political values bear validity only because they contribute to the achievement of culture.

1.4. Ethical values

The aims of our desires can be numerous, that is why we are always asked: which is the best aim? For some is happiness for others wealth, virtue, etc.

Ethical values can be: a) psychological; b) logical; c) biological; d) social.

The psychological theory says that ethical value has a psychic foundation. Therefore, H. Meyer considered ethical value as a product of the ego's will, of the will to perfect personality.

The value is the result of a subjective act of will, of an impulse towards value.

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The following theories of ethical value nature were distinguished: intellectualist, affective and voluntarist. The ethical voluntarism is the most spread theory nowadays, because the ethical value stands for aim of the action.

The logical theory- affirms that the ethical value is logical, Kant being the most important representative. He founded the philosophy of ethical value beginning with the analysis of the moral consciousness, from the opposition between the tendency of sensitivity and the duty dictated by the categorical imperative. The ethical value is an imperative to which we all should submit.

The biological theory of ethical values-; the well-known representative Spencer considered as ethical value everything that contributes to the maximum of life, the maximum of pleasure; natural law being an ideal. The ethical value considers life as the ultimate principle.

Nietzsche considered as moral everything that helps life. Life being the power of will and its ideal is the superhuman.

Paulsen affirmed that humans distinguished good from evil before morality was born. Ethical laws are natural laws and their breach brings evil. The biologism destroys the real sense of moral value.

1.5. Historical values

All human creations are meant to add something to the patrimony inherited from ancestors, thus compiling the cultural tradition of a nation.

History deals with facts; it does not look for general principles and laws but searches facts as they were. The object of history is therefore the continuous change of things within their particularities.

Lotze considered history as the science of individual. According to this philosopher the mankind is only the total of individuals.

Xenopol considered history as the science of time evolution, irrespective of individual phenomena or general phenomena in space.

According to Condorcet, the object history is not the individual but the people, the mass, the progress of the mass. According to Marx and Engels the historical social evolution is determined by the economical structure of the society

History is the science that establishes the available causal links but it has nothing to do with the concept of value. The historical phenomena are the important ones for the cultural development of a nation.

Such phenomena are determined by the political ideas or by economical facts or by tradition. When choosing the historical material and close to it we have a fundamental regulative idea-; the cultural unity. This is the value that establishes multiple and various historical values.

1.6. The esthetic values

The logical theory of value considers the phenomenon as the logical content of reasoning wearing the sensitive intuition.

When we talk about the esthetic value, we perceive it as an object of value and a subject for which that value exists. The beautiful is the central esthetic value and all the other values retrospect to it.

The aesthetics as theoretical-philosophical discipline embraces all other esthetic values and their ties, from the highest level of the beautiful-; sublime-; to its types of artistic creation.

By their characteristic, the esthetic values are sensitively related. Hegel defined the beautiful as the apparition of the idea in a sensitive form. Kant appreciated that art "is not the representation of a beautiful thing but the beautiful representation of a thing". The esthetic values may be sensed, felt, lived, represented, imagined.

The artistic spirits preponderantly possess an intuitive and imaginative reasoning while the science people predominantly possess an abstract reasoning.

1.7. The religious values

Religious values are among the oldest according to their genesis, referring to them being essential for the understanding of the genesis of moral, juridical and political values.

The religious manifestations bear as common and defining the value of sacred. The sacralization is related to the perpetual aspiration for self improvement and human content, oriented towards an ideal, absolute, transcendental and surreal projection. For the religious man there are established sacred spaces, a sacred time and sacred nature.

The religious values are spiritual by their nature. The bearers are the human being and his consciousness, the human community and the collective spirituality. The religious values as all the spiritual values are purpose values. They are based on belief and revelation, on feeling and experience.

The love for the neighbor occupies a central place within religion. Titu Maiorescu stated that "the religious sentiment accomplishes the mission of lifting the spirits beyond the interests of daily egoism".

F. Nietzsche noted that "to love people for God's sake-; this is the most refined feeling that humans have achieved until now".

Philosophy as wisdom, as ontology having anthropologic and axiological purpose, watches over the democratic communication of all values. The values are founded upon specific powers and if aiming to outrun their own axiological area may become tyrannical.

Conclusions

Various approaches regarding the theme of elites in sociology or politology suggest a rather vast diversity of definitions and research strategies, so that it is impossible to achieve a list of characteristics of the elite/elites that are generally available. We have already seen how the social-political background in which different theories were elaborated, significantly influenced the conception of the authors about elites. 19th century Italy, that propelled Mosca as the main political theoretician, was much more different than the America of Kicsman.

During the 6th decade of the 20th century, the initial meaning awarded by Pareto, based upon the abilities and value for the definition of elite, was promptly neglected, particularly within the surveys regarding the political elites, mostly because of the impossibility to verify and measure the effective capacities of the individuals that were part of the elite (Sartori, op.cit).

The surveys therefore oriented upon the other three ways to define and identify elites. Concurrently, there was registered a extension of the meaning of the concept of "elite" from that of "political caste" in Mosca's view, to the multiple, plural, sectoral divided elites and to the discovery of the importance of informal leaders as a special type of elite. Through this, the attempts to describe the main features of the elites become complicated.

In a recent work, two young Romanian politologists achieved a synthesis of the main features of the elite within a modern democratic society (Tudor and Mirlescu, 2002). This seems like a great attempt to provide a unitary and coherent image upon elite, even a first step towards an operational definition.

"The approach that represents the start is that the elites of a modern democratic society are recognized according to a common set of features-qualities." (Ibidem, p. 30)

1. "The elite has a high occupational position". The occupation is a source of earnings but also of prestige. Elite is thus formed by persons by persons that occupy the highest positions in different fields of activity.

2. "The elite represents a minority" because the occupied positions are limited as number.

3. "The elite enjoys a high status". The leading social positions confer prestige and diverse material and symbolic rewards to their occupants.

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4. "The elite has a distinct way of life". The members of elites adopt common styles and seem socially homogenous. "The accumulation of wealth and power must be associated to a way of life confirmed by the statute of elite". (Ibidem.p.30)

Some authors notice nevertheless that the emblems of status have lately become less visible.

5." The elite has self-awareness". Overall, members of elites are aware that they belong to a distinct group and share a series of common values and interests. Quoting Parry (1969), the two authors show the fact that elite means a group that acts as a whole and not as a simple ensemble of important individuals. I believe that this issue is debatable. If we accept the statement of Parry within this general context of identification of the main features of elite, then we might walk into the trap of the argument elitism-pluralism. I believe that at this point we should bear in mind the idea of existence of a possible set of values, interests or lifestyles common for the elite, but also reluctantly accept the view upon elite as a group that acts unitary (as a whole).

6. "The elite demonstrates both exclusivity and openness". On one side, there is a certain distance of elites towards the other social groups and a certain closure that protects "the collective identity". But at the same time there are "mechanisms necessary for new enrollments". (Ibidem.p.32)

7. "The elite is morally responsible". Although classic elitists believed that when defining elite the moral aspect does not count (Pareto admitted, for example, the idea of elites of malefactors, provided that they are the best in their domain), authors show that democratic elites are morally responsible within the societies that they lead. "Democratic elites are judged not only according to the success when accomplishing tasks but also according to the validity of these tasks within a society. Such a restriction excludes « the elite of gangsters » because its actions are not approved by the community". (Ibidem, p. 33)

"The elite possesses, on different scales, the power". Hierarchy can be admitted both in the interior of elites and in the various types of elites. Therefore, some elites are more powerful than the others.

This pattern of elites in democratic societies is not free of ambiguities. On one hand, as we have seen, it is said that elites possess group consciousness and act as a whole and on the other hand, it is said that there are discrepancies regarding the capacity of folding that the elites possess and the fact that they are various and divided according to the occupations. Therefore, emerges a contradiction between the neo-elitist and pluralist unitary vision regarding the elites.

Moreover, there is nothing said about what we have earlier named *formal elites*. The approach is therefore positional. Nevertheless, the pattern synthesizes the main features of elites as they appear in the sociologic literature that we have earlier mentioned.

As a conclusion, if we accept that it is interesting and useful to speak about a *sociology of elites* and if we claim that this branch of sociology deserves to be developed, the task of any researcher in this field is to choose one or another of the criteria of definition, even to merge them, aiming to reach an adequate agreement in point of the concept of elite and of a methodological and enforceable formula for this research, according to the specific research objectives.

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