

# **STRUGGLING FOR CIVILITY**

## **The Idea and the Reality of Civil Society**

An Interdisciplinary Study with  
a Focus on Russia

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**OLGA HOPPE-KONDRIKOVA**

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## CONTENTS

|          |   |           |
|----------|---|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>INTRODUCTION</b>   | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1      | The Renaissance of Civil Society Discourse                                    | 1         |
| 1.2      | Focus and Scope   | 4         |
| 1.2.1    | Positive Developments during the Democratic Period                            | 5         |
| 1.2.2    | Negative Factors in the Development of Russian Civil Society                  | 7         |
| 1.2.3    | Qualification of the Scope of the Study                                       | 8         |
| 1.2.4    | Subsequent Research Questions and Outline                                     | 9         |
| 1.3      | Approach and Definition   | 11        |
| 1.3.1    | Classification of Theorizations of Civil Society                              | 11        |
| 1.3.2    | Paradigmatic Commonalities in Civil Society Discourse                         | 13        |
| 1.3.3    | Types of Analysis of Civil Society  | 15        |
| 1.3.4    | My Operational Definition of Civil Society                                    | 18        |
| <b>2</b> | <b>CIVIL SOCIETY AS A SOCIAL-MORAL CONCEPT</b>                                | <b>19</b> |
|          | <i>Introduction</i>   | <b>19</b> |
| 2.1      | Genesis of Civil Society as a Social-Moral Concept                            | <b>25</b> |
| 2.1.1    | Conceptual History of Civil Society in a Comparative Perspective              | 26        |
| 2.1.2    | The Moral Dilemma in Early Modern Civil Society Discourse                     | 31        |
| 2.1.3    | The Dichotomy between the Private and the Public Revisited                    | 35        |
| 2.2      | Liberal Theory of Civil Society   | <b>38</b> |
| 2.2.1    | A Post-Foundationalist Perspective  | 39        |
| 2.2.2    | A Liberal-Egalitarian Perspective   | 47        |
| 2.2.3    | Michael Walzer's Argument "In Favor of Inclusiveness"                         | 51        |
| 2.2.4    | A Communitarian Amendment to Liberal Theory                                   | 55        |
| 2.3      | Civil Society in the Theory of Deliberative Democracy                         | <b>56</b> |
| 2.3.1    | Conceiving Civil Society within the Theory of Deliberative Democracy          | 57        |
| 2.3.2    | Civil Society, the State, and the Economy.<br>A Tripartite Model of Relations | 62        |
| 2.3.3    | 'Bad Civil Society'   | 65        |
|          | <i>Conclusion</i>   | <b>68</b> |

|            |   |            |
|------------|---|------------|
| <b>3</b>   | <b>SOCIOLOGICAL EMBEDDING OF CIVIL SOCIETY THEORY</b>                           | <b>75</b>  |
|            | <i>Introduction</i>   | 75         |
| <b>3.1</b> | <b>Max Weber's Theory of Rationalization</b>                                    | <b>79</b>  |
| 3.1.1      | Weber's Diagnosis of Western Modernity  | 79         |
| 3.1.2      | The Paradox of the Disenchanted Modernity                                       | 86         |
| 3.1.3      | A Critical Revision of Weber's Theory   | 92         |
| <b>3.2</b> | <b>Talcott Parsons's Theory of Structural Differentiation of Society</b>        | <b>97</b>  |
| 3.2.1      | Civil Society in the Theory of Structural Differentiation                       | 97         |
| 3.2.2      | Amalgamation of the Normative and Descriptive Analytical Methods                | 102        |
| 3.2.3      | Beyond Parsons: Theory of Interpenetration by Richard Münch                     | 110        |
| <b>3.3</b> | <b>Niklas Luhmann's Theory of Functional Differentiation of Society</b>         | <b>116</b> |
| 3.3.1      | Systems Theory in a Nutshell  | 116        |
| 3.3.2      | Luhmann's Shift of the Paradigm   | 119        |
| 3.3.3      | Functional Differentiation of Modern Society                                    | 125        |
| 3.3.4      | Differentiation in a Democratic System  | 132        |
| 3.3.5      | Civil Society as a Modern Differentiated <i>Gesellschaft</i>                    | 138        |
|            | <i>Conclusion</i>   | 144        |
| <b>4</b>   | <b>CIVIL SOCIETY AND RELIGION:<br/>INSIGHTS FROM THE WEST AND FROM THE EAST</b> | <b>149</b> |
|            | <i>Introduction</i>   | 149        |
| <b>4.1</b> | <b>The Western View on the Role of Religion in the Public Domain</b>            | <b>151</b> |
| 4.1.1      | Christianity and Secularism: The Relationship of Reciprocal Influence           | 152        |
| 4.1.2      | Religion in a Functionally Differentiated Society                               | 156        |
| 4.1.3      | Religion in the Context of Secular Liberal Democracy                            | 162        |
| 4.1.4      | The Phenomenon of Religious Fundamentalism                                      | 165        |
| <b>4.2</b> | <b>Eastern Christianity and Secular Society in the History of Russia</b>        | <b>172</b> |
| 4.2.1      | The Theocratic Legacy of Byzantine <i>Symphonia</i>                             | 174        |
| 4.2.2      | The Holy Synod and the Idea of a Secular Autocratic State                       | 181        |
| 4.2.3      | The Revival of Public and Ecclesiastical Life in Late Imperial Russia           | 190        |
| <b>4.3</b> | <b>Civil Society in Orthodox Christian Philosophy</b>                           | <b>197</b> |
| 4.3.1      | Christian Humanism of Vladimir Solov'ëv   | 198        |
| 4.3.2      | The Orthodox Concept of <i>Sobornost'</i> and Its Realization in Civil Society  | 207        |
| 4.3.3      | Civil Society Revisited from the Perspective of Godmanhood and Service          | 212        |
|            | <i>Conclusion</i>   | 217        |

|            |  |            |
|------------|--|------------|
| <b>5</b>   | <b>CIVIL SOCIETY IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA:<br/>INSTITUTIONAL WEAKNESS IN THE CONTEXT OF<br/>PUBLIC MORALITY</b> | <b>225</b> |
|            | <i>Introduction</i>  | <b>225</b> |
| <b>5.1</b> | <b>Civil Society and the Democratic State</b>  | <b>228</b> |
| 5.1.1      | Russia's Transition to Democracy   | 229        |
| 5.1.2      | 'Imitation Democracy' and a Controlled Civil Society   | 233        |
| 5.1.3      | Hindrances and Prospects of Russia's Democratic Project  | 238        |
| <b>5.2</b> | <b>Civil Society in the Context of Economic Reforms</b>  | <b>247</b> |
| 5.2.1      | Socio-Economic Consequences of Russia's Transition to a Market Economy                                       | 248        |
| 5.2.2      | The Shift in Russians' View on Democracy   | 254        |
| 5.2.3      | The State's Directive in Regulating Civil Society and Business   | 258        |
| <b>5.3</b> | <b>The Moral Crisis and the Problem of Trust</b>   | <b>264</b> |
| 5.3.1      | Ethical Evaluation of the Democratic Project in Post-Soviet Russia   | 264        |
| 5.3.2      | Trust as the Foundational Principle of Democracy and Civil Society   | 267        |
| 5.3.3      | Distrust of Public Institutions as the Post-Communist Legacy   | 273        |
| <b>5.4</b> | <b>The Human Individual and Public Morality in the Context of<br/>Institutional Transformations</b>          | <b>280</b> |
| 5.4.1      | Adaptation and Collective Trust as Strategies of Survival  | 280        |
| 5.4.2      | Russian Society Today: Between <i>Gesellschaft</i> and <i>Gemeinschaft</i>                                   | 285        |
|            | <i>Conclusion</i>  | <b>291</b> |
| <b>6</b>   | <b>CIVIL SOCIETY AND ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY IN RUSSIA</b>   | <b>299</b> |
|            | <i>Introduction</i>  | <b>299</b> |
| <b>6.1</b> | <b>The Russian Orthodox Church in the Context of<br/>Secular Democracy</b>                                   | <b>301</b> |
| 6.1.1      | The Soviet Trauma: Coerced Secularization of Soviet Society  | 301        |
| 6.1.2      | The Privileged Position of the ROC in Post-Soviet Russia   | 307        |
| 6.1.3      | The Prevailing Self-Identification of Russians as Orthodox Christians  | 313        |
| <b>6.2</b> | <b>Orthodox Fundamentalism as an Alternative to Civil Society</b>  | <b>317</b> |
| 6.2.1      | Theological Substantiation of the Fundamentalist Political Program   | 318        |
| 6.2.2      | Russian Fundamentalists in the Public Arena Today  | 322        |
| <b>6.3</b> | <b>Orthodox Conservatism as an Alternative to Civil Society</b>  | <b>327</b> |
| 6.3.1      | The Dialectics between Orthodox Theology and Modernity   | 327        |
| 6.3.2      | Orthodox <i>Symphonia</i> in Contrast to Secular Democracy   | 332        |

|            |   |            |
|------------|---|------------|
| 6.3.3      | Dualistic Theocentrism of <i>Ekklesia</i> and Liberal Anthropocentrism of Civil Society | 338        |
| 6.3.4      | The Orthodox Conception of Human Dignity and Human Rights                               | 343        |
| <b>6.4</b> | <b>The Liberal-Reformative Trend in Russian Orthodoxy</b>                               | <b>351</b> |
| 6.4.1      | Dissidents' Moral Alternative to the Soviet Model of Society                            | 351        |
| 6.4.2      | The Orthodox Dissidents and the ROC: The Ecclesiastical Crisis                          | 356        |
| 6.4.3      | Christian Politics and the Spiritual Economy of Civil Society                           | 364        |
|            | <i>Conclusion</i>   | <b>369</b> |
| <b>7</b>   | <b>CONCLUSION</b>   | <b>379</b> |
| 7.1        | Summary   | 380        |
| 7.2        | Propositions  | 387        |
| 7.3        | Perspective: Where is Russian Civil Society Heading Today?                              | 401        |
|            | Note on Technical Matters   | 405        |
|            | Bibliography  | 407        |
|            | Index   | 429        |
|            | Samenvatting  | 433        |
|            | Обзор исследования  | 443        |
|            | Acknowledgements  | 453        |
|            | About the Author  | 456        |

# *I*ntroduction

## 1.1 The Renaissance of Civil Society Discourse

In the span of the last twenty years, the notion of civil society has been recurring in contemporary social science, as well as in normative social and political theory. The great variety of possible theoretical and empirical perspectives accounts for a tremendous amount of literature on civil society. It also testifies to the inexhaustible intellectual potential of the concept. Remarkably, the recent renaissance of the term coincided with the uprising of anti-communist opposition in East-Central Europe and with the struggle against military dictatorships in Latin America. The trigger to re-examine the notion of civil society, which is, in fact, an authentic product of Western civilization, emerged thus not in Western established democracies, but in newly formed post-totalitarian democracies. The major upheavals in East-Central Europe and Latin America attracted attention of many Western social scientists and philosophers, stimulating them to reconsider the significance of the rule of law, the public sphere, and civil society for a democratic system. As for newly formed democracies, the Western world anxiously waited to see whether post-totalitarian societies were sufficiently prepared to accommodate democracy both as a model of political rule and as a social-political ideal. The concept of civil society attained accordingly an unprecedented centrality in the discussion on democratization, as it raised vital issues concerning the role of social forces in defining, controlling, and legitimating political regime.

Not surprisingly, a notion as complicated and multifaceted as civil society has invited a range of attempts to capture its “conceptual essence”

across time and space.<sup>1</sup> The idea of civil society is essentially an intellectual product of the seventeenth century European Enlightenment and of the emancipation of society from the monarchic state. With the emergence of self-regulating civil society, the certainty of a status-based social order came to suffer a visible decline. During the following two centuries, the challenge of balancing the emergent tension between the public good and private interests was undertaken by such outstanding thinkers as Adam Ferguson, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Karl Marx. In the twentieth century, the concept seemed to have exhausted its intellectual vigor and eventually came to oblivion, except for its restricted usage by Antonio Gramsci.

In the context of East-Central Europe, civil society discourse can be characterized by a double perspective. On the one hand, the notion of civil society was enthusiastically invoked in democratizing countries for the ideological and political struggle against authoritarian regimes. For these countries, as Charles Taylor justly notices, “civil society defined what they had been deprived of and were struggling to recreate” by learning from the experience of established Western democracies (Taylor 1995: 204). John Keane elucidates that the emigration of the term from Western Europe occurred mainly due to “the dramatic growth of non-governmental civic organizations operating at the international level, which allowed the subject of civil society to enter into broad public discourse, beyond the circles of academics and journalists” (Keane 1998: 32-33). On the other hand, such powerful resurgence of the notion of civil society led to its oversimplified usage because the notion became instantaneously prescribed to all countries in transition as a panacea against the maladies of their non-democratic past.

In Western scholarship, the discussion assumed a quite different edifice. Taking into account that Western liberal democracies already had functioning civil societies, as well as a rich political-philosophical tradition of liberalism and democracy, Western scholars surpassed the strategic significance of civil society for the process of democratization. They were rather concerned with a moral dimension of the idea and the reality of civil society. However, despite the fact that the revitalized civil society discourse underwent a serious reorientation in Western scholarship, it managed to sustain its paramount intellectual heritage. The discussion started to involve such new topics as the role of values and norms in modern societies, the

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<sup>1</sup> For concise, yet substantive overviews of the evolution of the concept of civil society, see Keane 1998, Seligman 2002, 1992a, 1992b, Taylor 1995, and Parekh 2004.

type of bonds among people and trust they have in each other, the moral foundation communities create and sustain, the extent to which people constitute a common public space through participation and civic engagement, as well as the role of the mass media and of the intellectual debate. Gradually, civil society became associated with the notions of culture (Gramsci 1971), community (Etzioni 1971, 1993), the public sphere (Habermas 1992), civility (Elias 1994), social capital (Putnam 1993 & 2002), popular participation and civic mindedness (Verba 1995), civic virtue and citizenship (Kymlicka 2002), pluralism (Keane 1998), and individual freedom (Walzer 1995).

As far as the “conceptual essence” of civil society is concerned, the consequences of such an unprecedented global extension of the concept proved both devastating and invigorating. The impact was devastating because the notion of civil society lost its ‘conceptual integrity’ and disintegrated into as many applications as it was allegedly flexible enough to fit. Due to the fact that the term ‘civil society’ has been claimed by experts from diverse fields of social sciences, it clearly suffers from conceptual vagueness and remains continuously contested in terms of its actual meanings and uses. Burgeoning popularity of the notion accelerated “the accumulation of inherited ambiguities, new confusions, and outright contradictions. For this reason alone, the expanding talk of civil society is not immune to muddle and delirium” (Keane 1998: 36). On this point, I can fully agree with Nancy Rosenblum and Robert Post that “civil society is so often invoked in so many contexts that it has acquired a strikingly plastic moral and political valence” (Rosenblum & Post 2002: 1). Regrettably enough, an amazing array of meanings resonating from what Keane has named the “increasingly polysemic signifier ‘civil society’ ” contributed indeed to the negative connotation of this container notion.

Nonetheless, I hold the opinion that the extensive usage of the concept of civil society did contribute to the conceptual richness of the notion. Western analysts of civil society were encouraged to revise the political-cultural tradition associated with the rise of civil society in the West and readdress, from this new perspective, urgent problems inherent in contemporary Western democracies. In the meanwhile, their East-European colleagues were able to introduce some new trajectories in civil society research. Eventually, as the development of Russian post-Soviet science demonstrates, Eastern and Western scholars received the opportunity to become acquainted with each other’s positions and initiate a cooperative dialog, instead of confining themselves to monologs that focus exclusively

on their local problems. Ardent debates followed addressing such topics as democratization, liberalism, authenticity of Russian historical experience and interaction of culture, politics, and religion. The very possibility of reflection beyond one's cultural context stimulates experts in the field of Russian studies to assess Russia's intellectual heritage and its specific historical realities from a comparative perspective.

With this in mind, I define the underlying objective of the present study as a clarification of what Russia had, has, or could have in common with Western liberal democracies. The intent is to contribute to the current debate on whether Russia can be seen as genetically belonging to the "family-tree" of Western civilization and thus as a legitimate member of European and Transatlantic partnership. By focusing on the specifics of Russian political and social tradition, I intend to explain what renders Russian state and society so different from those of Western democracies. In particular, I am concerned with the complex of moral resources that induce Russian society to pursue the path that may seem incomprehensible, appallingly unpredictable, or even entirely uncontrollable to external observers.

## **1.2 Focus and Scope**

Given the focus of the present study on the idea and the reality of civil society in post-Soviet Russia, I define the central question as follows: How can we assess contemporary Russian civil society? The posed question raises a spectrum of consequent questions and qualifications, among which one is extremely important. In the attempted assessment, we are immediately confronted with the ambiguity ensuing from contradictory observations concerning democratic consolidation and civil society in post-Soviet Russia. On the one hand, as Dianne Schmidt reveals in her survey article 'What Kind of Civil Society Exists in Russia?',<sup>2</sup> some scholars insist that Russian civil society remains weak and internally disintegrated, lingering at a low level of development, tending to assimilate with the state or business, or that civil society does not exist in Russia at all. Alternatively, other scholars are convinced that civil society does not only successfully function in democratic Russia, but also has foundations in the long-term historical traditions of Russian political culture, pointing at the tradition of self-rule

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<sup>2</sup> Диана Шмидт, «Какое гражданское общество существует в России?» // *Pro et Contra* (Январь – февраль 2006).

extant in medieval cities of the North-European part of Russia (for instance, Velikij Novgorod). These two contradictory standpoints in assessing Russia's democratic project create a high tension in the relevant discussion.

### 1.2.1 Positive Developments during the Democratic Period

The indicated tension can be explained by the biased position of the scholars. First, let us explicate the bias by evaluating the democratic project from a positive side. In comparison with the Soviet period, the crucial years of the *perestrojka* signified the regeneration of public life. This trend continued also during the subsequent period of liberal democratic reforms, associated with president Boris El'tsyn. Certainly, the revival of civic engagement in various organizations of civil society was determined by the new legal, economic, and political conditions of democratic rule. After decades of Soviet suppression and underground existence in the dissident circles, civil activity finally assumed legitimate forms. Thereby, it acquired greater political efficacy and gained a broad spectrum of adherents. The results presented in Natal'ja Dorosheva's essay show that if at the dawn of the *perestrojka* (in 1987-88), the so-called third sector of society listed only thirty to forty social organizations, by 2002, the number of non-commercial organizations had increased to over three hundred thousand (Dorosheva 2002: 6).<sup>3</sup>

In 2000, the newly elected president Vladimir Putin announced fostering the development of civil society as one of the chief priorities of his policy program. In 2001, the presidential administration summoned "Civil Forum" to engage into discussion with the representatives of various organizations of civil society. Four years later, in 2005, a next step was undertaken by establishing the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation. This organ was "designed to interact with citizens of the state and local authorities, to take into account the needs and interests of citizens, to protect their rights and freedoms in the formation and implementation of public policies, as well as to implement public control over the activities of the authorities."<sup>4</sup> The Public Chamber became a forum for public debates, symposia, and conferences where local representatives of government services, scholars, and experts dealing with the third sector could share their experiences.

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<sup>3</sup> Наталья Дорошева, *Все, что вы хотели знать о некоммерческом секторе, но боялись спросить* (2002).

<sup>4</sup> The information is available online at [www.oprf.ru](http://www.oprf.ru).

During the subsequent two years, 2006 and 2007, the Public Chamber published two annual reports on the state of Russian civil society. In 2008, it published the proceedings of the public assembly as the volume *Empirical Studies of Civil Society* (Lopukhin 2008).<sup>5</sup>

Referring to this publication, I want to attend specifically to A. Kinsburskij's contribution 'Has Civil Society Been Formed in Russia until Now?'.<sup>6</sup> The study comprises interviews<sup>7</sup> held with the representatives of the local elite of the Russian Federation, whom the author characterizes as "status-holding leaders of public opinion who accumulate and to a certain extent reflect public opinion, but also participate simultaneously in its formation" (Kinsburskij 2008: 73). As the results demonstrate, only one third of the respondents believe that civil society has been (partially) established, whereas the majority (69 percent) gave a negative answer. Kinsburskij's survey also reveals a significant differentiation between various groups of the respondents in their assessment of civil society. Remarkably, the idea that Russian civil society exists and functions is endorsed by the group of local representatives of the presidential administration (50 percent). An intermediate position belongs to the representatives of legislative power (38 percent) and of law enforcement agencies (34 percent). This contrasts the leaders of industrial enterprises (25 percent), the representatives of social organizations (28 percent), and the group of owners of private businesses (13 percent).

The results of Kinsburskij's study reveal a paradoxical trend in the assessments of the respondents. Despite the fact that the democratic state presumes more freedom for civil society and business, the representatives of these two sectors hold a more moderate opinion about the establishment of civil society in post-Soviet Russia, whereas they are supposed to hail the transition to democracy and a market economy. A higher assessment of the success of the democratic project is endorsed by the representatives of the bureaucratic-legislative apparatus. This observation induces us to look at the problem of Russian civil society more critically.

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<sup>5</sup> А. Лопухин (сост.), *Эмпирические исследования гражданского общества. Сборник материалов общественных слушаний* (2008).

<sup>6</sup> А. Кинсбургский, «Сформировалось ли к настоящему времени в России гражданское общество?» // А. Лопухин (сост.) *Эмпирические исследования гражданского общества* (2008).

<sup>7</sup> The interviews were held by the independent public opinion research center "Glas naroda" in April-June 2008.

### 1.2.2 Negative Factors in the Development of Russian Civil Society

In contradistinction to the general revival of the third sector over the last two decades, there are doubtlessly several points of critique. First, as Schmidt correctly notices, state authorities tend to control those civil society organizations that are financially supported by foreign investors. Government officials do not trust the ideological climate of those organizations, considering them suspicious and inadequate. This ideological control aggravates the conditions under which civil society organizations have to survive because government subsidies do not simply suffice for all their needs. Schmidt laconically concludes, “Propositions to provide more sufficient government support are reduced in practice to the support of the groups that are loyal to the federal or local authorities, whereas financial support on the part of big Russian business is constantly confronted with some kind of obstacles” (Schmidt 2006: 7).

Besides increasing distrust in foreign investors, the institutional organization of Russian civil society is also criticized for being dependent on the government. Certain analysts, among whom Sergej Peregudov, Konstantin Kostjuk, and Oleg Kharkhordin, consider Russian civil society to be constructed in a top-down way. This is in contradistinction to the natural, bottom-up mode of the development of grass-root organizations. The omnipresent influence of state authorities on the formation of Russian civil society testifies to “the authoritarian position of state power with regard to organizations of civil society, independent researchers, and journalists” (Schmidt 2006: 8). A contributing factor to the preeminent role of the state in instigating and maintaining different civil society associations can be also related to the communist legacy manifest in the population’s lingering belief that social groups, formed on the basis of certain interests and needs, are unable to act without control of the state. According to the results of E. Topoleva-Soldunova’s research on the (de)motivations of Russian citizens to participate in voluntary and charity associations, a significant number of respondents traditionally shift the responsibility for urgent social problems in their regions to local authorities. Thus, they do not distinguish between the structural tasks of government services and of non-commercial organizations (Topoleva-Soldunova 2008: 135).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Е. Тополева-Солдунова, «Готовность граждан к волонтерской и благотворительной деятельности через НКО: факторы мотивации и демотивации» // А. Лопухин (сост.) *Эмпирические исследования гражданского общества* (2008).

Moreover, as we can infer from Topoleva-Soldunova's account, the sector of non-commercial organizations is undermined by the bad reputation they have acquired over the past two decades. Non-commercial organizations are suspected of spending their financial resources inefficiently and of participating in financial machinations aimed at 'money laundering.' On this view, new civil society organizations have to cope not only with the enduring remnants of the communist past, such as general distrust in public organizations, but also with the consequences of the radical liberal reforms of the early 1990s, in result of which many ordinary Russians came to associate public organizations with the sector of the twilight economy.

### 1.2.3 Qualification of the Scope of the Study

Although more research should be done concerning the type and the character of contemporary Russian civil society, the above discussion provides a number of tentative criteria for a coherent account. The ambiguous assessment of Russia's transition to democracy, with its achievements and failures, reflects the complexity of the concept of civil society. In this sense, Schmidt is correct when averting that "the usage of the term in academic discussion, as well as in the official rhetoric still tends rather to complicate than to facilitate comprehension of the phenomenon" (Schmidt 2006: 6). On this view, I suppose that it would be shortsighted to measure recent developments in Russia's democratic project exclusively by Western standards. Instead, the scope of the study should be defined by specifying three dimensions in the analysis: an analytical distinction between the normative and descriptive elements, a comparative perspective, and a historical perspective.

First, the question how to assess the *idea* and the *reality* of civil society in contemporary Russia presumes an analytical distinction between the descriptive and normative elements in the analysis. The methodological problem with exploring civil society has to do with the connectedness of these two analytical elements. Namely, civil society can be analyzed as a theoretical idea, founded on an ideal vision of society, and, at the same time, as a social reality, as a tangible social phenomenon. Although I need to make such an analytical distinction in the study, I recognize, nonetheless, that whenever we speak of the idea of civil society, we inevitably build on certain descriptions of the social reality, and accordingly whenever we describe the social reality, we understand that this reality reflects the idea.

Second, the evaluative strategy of the research presumes a comparative perspective. The frequently repeated claim of many Western and Russian analysts that Russian civil society is underdeveloped raises the question pertaining to the causes of the deficient development of civil society. The exploration of the causes instigates us to compare the contemporary situation in Russia with the allegedly advanced models of democracy and civil society of Western countries. As noted above, recent Western discourse on civil society has been reinvigorated by the democratic revolutions in East-Central Europe. Then, the discussion revealed the vital importance of civil society, in the form of public debate and voluntary civil activity, for the sustainable success of Western democracies. In this discussion, the normative ideas associated with the general theory of democracy were revisited. That is why, in order to evaluate the development of civil society in post-Soviet Russia, I need to attend to the self-critical accounts of civil society that emerged in recent Western discussion as well.

Next to the comparative perspective and the combination between the normative and descriptive elements, the study also includes a historical perspective. In order to understand current developments in political and social life of Russia, we need to consider them in a proper conceptual-historical and cultural context. This is also necessary given the abovementioned objective to clarify the specifics of Russian political and social tradition.

#### 1.2.4 Subsequent Research Questions and Outline

The central question of this study, namely how to assess civil society in post-Soviet Russia, can be further broken down into more specific questions, which guide the line of my argument and determine the sequence of the chapters.

The delineation of the moral dilemmas inherent in civil society discourse is the primary objective of the second chapter. The question that I shall pursue is whether civil society is a good society and which arguments can be formulated *pro* and *contra* this claim. I shall address the problems that theorists are confronted with when they try to provide a normative validation for the idea and the reality of civil society. In order to identify these problems, I shall start with a conceptual history of the notion of civil society as it developed in the West. Next, I shall analyze the core dilemma of civil society discourse, namely how to reconcile individual freedom and rights with the common good and public ethics. The extant approaches to

this dilemma will be systematized into two theoretical schools: the liberal theory of civil society and the theory of deliberative democracy.

In the third chapter, I intend to provide a sociological embedding of civil society theory and thereby place the discussion into a broader framework of social-scientific analysis, pertaining to the structure and the dynamics of modern society. The question is how we can develop an understanding of civil society as a spin-off of the process of societal differentiation, and why such an understanding is necessary. I suggest that the theory of functional differentiation of society complements the political-philosophical concept of civil society. This theory provides an empirical referent for the normative principles that underlie the concept of civil society. Accordingly, such principles as voluntary association, individual autonomy, plurality, legality, equality, and publicity acquire concrete descriptive characteristics in the theory of functional differentiation. With regard to a democratic system, the intended sociological embedding of civil society theory provides empirical evidence for the compatibility of a highly differentiated society with a complex set of social, civil, and political rights.

The fourth chapter is concerned with the relationship between civil society and religion in the modern world. This general question will be addressed from a historical and intercultural perspective. In the first place, I shall consider the dialectic relationship between religion and modern secularism, as it developed in Western Christian world. In the second place, I shall focus on Russian history and specifically examine the relationship between Eastern Orthodox Christianity and secular society in Russia. In addition to historical analysis, I shall suggest a possible religious reading of civil society theory by resorting to the inspiring thoughts of the eminent Russian religious philosophers Vladimir Solov'ëv and Semën Frank.

Having finished the theoretical part of the research, I shall turn to applying the attained insights to the continuously changing picture of civil society in contemporary Russia. The aim of the fifth chapter is to address the problem of institutional weakness of Russian civil society in the context of public morality. The underlying question concerns the role that moral attitudes play in the democratization process at the level of institutional transformations. In particular, I intend to reveal the kind of civil society that has been established after two decades of liberal democratic reforms, given the communist legacy of general political apathy of the majority of Russian citizens and their overt alienation from participation in the democratic process. The problem of mass distrust of public institutions is pivotal to this part of the analysis.

Although contemporary Russian civil society copes with many problems entrenched in distinctively Russian political culture and historical legacies, one can observe, nonetheless, an increasing importance of alternative moral resources for public reinvigoration. I tend to consider the Russian Orthodox Church as a determinate factor in the process of establishment of democracy. For that reason, I shall focus, in the sixth chapter, on the alternative conception of civil society that can be developed according to the theological tradition of Orthodox Christianity. This discussion aims at elucidating how Orthodox Christianity and civil society relate to each other, and whether their mutual assessment can be reckoned fruitful for the democratic project.

### **1.3 Approach and Definition**

Given the versatility of civil society discourse, my intent is to bring some more clarity into the existing complexity by identifying, revising, and classifying eminent contributions to the debate so far. Before delving into a detailed discussion, I consider it necessary to accomplish two tasks. First, I shall systematize the diverse trends present in civil society discourse and do so by indicating main methodological contours of the analytic term ‘civil society.’ Secondly, I shall outline some salient commonalities in divergent definitions of civil society and provide, on the basis of the identified commonalities, my operational definition of civil society. I shall deliberately formulate my definition in oversimplified and schematic terms with the intention that it would sustain a firm conceptual core when placed in a dialog with different disciplines, like political theory, sociology, religious and cultural sciences, as well as in a different cultural context, when we address the specific case of Russia.

#### **1.3.1 Classification of Theorizations of Civil Society**

Various theoretical trends accentuate different components of civil society theory. Nevertheless, I maintain that there is much overlap among conceptual components accentuated by scholars. For that reason, I have decided to systematize the conceptions of civil society according to the emphasis they put on certain aspects of civil society theory with a view to sketching the broad methodological contours of these conceptions. So far, I have delineated three main categories of relevant studies: empirical, normative, and historical studies.

I categorize certain studies as empirical insofar as they, despite profound divergences between various strands, agree that civil society *is* indisputably an essential component of liberal democratic polity, as it simultaneously constitutes the social basis for the application of democratic governance and legitimizes the very existence of democratic states. Empirical accounts diverge immensely according to their underlying objective. In the present research, I shall consider the study of Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996) and a volume of critical essays with a pronounced focus on policy programs and fieldwork, edited by Peter Burnell and Peter Calvert (2004).

The following two categories, i.e. normative and historical studies, comprise primarily theoretical studies. Although these studies draw on the empirical reality of civil society, their objective surpasses direct implications of the notion, as they aspire to provide an analytical-descriptive or normative account of the concept of civil society. As it will become clear from the further research, theoretical accounts of civil society often combine elements of descriptive and normative analyses, so that the methodological boundaries may seem blurred.

A significant number of scholars are more interested in normative aspects, when they attempt to describe and simultaneously substantiate a certain conception of civil society. For instance, some scholars tackle primarily such vital issues of political theory as the unresolved antinomy between state power and individual freedom. The most prominent example is Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato's study where they consider different normative conceptions of civil society within a broader framework of contemporary political theory (1992). Further, I need to mention Michael Walzer's defense of a liberal reading of civil society (1995), Will Kymlicka's research of the issues of citizenship and civic virtues (2002) and Simone Chamber's deliberation on civil society from the perceptive of critical theory (2001, 2002). Noteworthy is the profound political-philosophical contribution of John Keane, who convincingly advocates a post-foundationalist normative reading of civil society (1998).

Besides these trajectories in the current research, the term 'civil society' made a triumphant appearance due to its allusion to the ideas of social capital, social cohesion, and communal spiritedness. Such qualification of the term is most saliently articulated in the communitarian contribution to the debate, presented by Robert Putnam (1993 & 2002), Amitai Etzioni (1995 & 2005), William Galston (1995), and Mary-Ann Glendon (1991).

An attempt at systematizing normative aspects of the concept of civil society from the historical perspective is undertaken by Adam Seligman

(1992 & 2002) and Charles Taylor (1995). Providing historical-conceptual analysis of the concept, Taylor and Seligman seek to reveal crucial philosophical ideas and societal transformations that contributed to the development of civil society in the modern West.

These, then, are the broad methodological contours of theorizations of civil society that testify to the complexity of the concept.

### 1.3.2 Paradigmatic Commonalities in Civil Society Discourse

While there is no single, unanimously agreed upon definition of civil society, I have tried to distinguish, nonetheless, some features that are paradigmatic to civil society discourse on the whole. I have discerned three most pronounced commonalities.

As far as the definition of civil society is concerned, the overwhelming majority of scholars agree that the notion of civil society entails not only specific institutional structures, but also respective values and practices that these institutions embody. However, there is a general consensus to understand civil society as *a rich array of voluntary associations* that countervails the state and provides citizens with the skills and practices assistant for democratic government. This tangible description of civil society approximates what Taylor calls definition “in a minimal sense” (Taylor 1995: 208) and is often considered by theorists as restrictive and insufficient. On this view, civil society can be redefined in a “strong” sense as embracing *a wide range of characteristic features of modern liberal democratic societies*. This understanding seeks to introduce the concept of civil society into a broader conceptual framework where civil society either is perceived as enhancing deliberative democracy (theorists of the Habermasian tradition such as Cohen, Arato, Chambers, or democratic communitarians such as Walzer and Kymlicka), or as embodying fundamental features and tensions inherent in Western civilization (Seligman, Taylor).

However different these theoretical approaches may seem, they all eventually assert the importance of conceptualization of civil society beyond “the minimal sense.” I consider involving a more embracing perspective in the analysis of civil society to be necessary because it allows linking the organizational structure of civil society, as an intermediate public sector between the state and the economy, to the institutional-ethical characteristics of modern democracy. In this sense, one of the most successful attempts at synthesizing the two stipulated definitions of civil society has been undertaken by Helmut Anheier and Lisa Carlson who

conceived of civil society as operating at three different levels, namely at the level of institutions, concrete organizations, and individual citizens.<sup>9</sup>

The second striking commonality in contemporary studies on civil society refers to the consistent claim of *the tripartite relationship between democratic state, market economy, and civil society*. As an essentially relational concept, civil society is systematically located in the tripartite relationship between the mentioned spheres. This tripartite relationship underscores the intimate connection of the conceptual history of civil society with such problematic issues as the limits of state power in regulating market economies and public life. Nowadays, there is a clear tendency among scholars to consider civil society as a sphere involved in a tripartite relationship with the state and the market. In this understanding, civil society functions as a buffer zone meant to control and resist the assaults of the state and the market that are potentially aggressive for society's well-being. Civil society occurs in current discourse as a tangible phenomenon subject to empirical description and hence to concrete localization. On this account, the notion of civil society has sufficient flexibility to be involved in reflection on difficult questions such as: Where to draw the secure boundaries against possible intervention of the market or the state in the life of civil society? How destructive could economic and political forces be for individual freedom and autonomy?

The third glaring commonality that I can discern in the wide spectrum of civil society studies is the complexity of the concept and its resultant resistance to clear and coherent definitions. This complexity is inevitable because civil society is imbued with *the permanent tension between its descriptive and normative components*, which renders it an essentially hybrid notion. The tendency of many civil society theorists to amalgamate the descriptive and normative components leads consequently to the inevitable combination of descriptive and normative types of analysis they employ. With this in mind, I need to clarify methodological nuances of my study.

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<sup>9</sup> An attempt at demonstrating the complexity of the intersections between civil society and modern institutions of the state, the economy, family, culture, and the media has been undertaken by Helmut Anheier and Lisa Carlson in the article 'Civil Society: What It Is, And How to Measure It' (2002) available online at [www.lse.ac.uk/depts/ccs/briefings.htm](http://www.lse.ac.uk/depts/ccs/briefings.htm). The scholars propose to define civil society in terms of the activities and values of institutions, organizations, and individuals located between the market, the state, and the family. Institutions are structural patterns that address and regulate specific areas or tasks and thus shape organization and pattern individual behavior. Organizations generally signify voluntary associations, non-governmental or non-profit organizations, social movements, networks, and informal groups. These organizations constitute the infrastructure of civil society; they are the vehicles and forums for social participation, the expression of values and preferences.

### 1.3.3 Types of Analysis of Civil Society

Three types of analysis of civil society will be employed in the study: prescriptive-strategic, empirical-descriptive, and value-normative. Every type of analysis comprises the combination of descriptive and normative elements.

Prescriptive-strategic analysis is employed prevalingly for studying democratic transformations in East-Central Europe. This analysis is founded on “the more direct and concrete political use of civil society as a slogan of different movements and parties” (Seligman 1992a: 201). Civil society is used then “for the purposes of calculating political strategies of achieving a predefined or assumed political good” (Keane 1998: 37).<sup>10</sup> In the strategic usage, civil society performs an ideological function as a normative concept aimed at enhancing political efficacy. At the same time, this type of analysis is quite restricting because, as Seligman justly notices, it appears inadequate for transcultural studies. That scholar clarifies that “while in the West the idea of civil society is used as a political slogan to advance the cause of community, to mediate somewhat the adverse effects of the ideology of individualism,” in the East, the idea of civil society is meant “to advance an idea of the individual as an autonomous social actor and as an ethical and moral entity, an idea that is in a sense foreign to the political traditions of this area” (Seligman 1992a: 203). As a political slogan, civil society continuously faces the danger of becoming a sort of container notion that may be imbued with entirely different meanings and be rooted in entirely different traditions. Seligman concedes that when he criticizes the ideological use of civil society as a political slogan, he also slips from the political attributes into the normative attributes of the idea of civil society. Calling it “a common but nonetheless dangerous tendency,” the theorist

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<sup>10</sup> Strategic usages of the concept of civil society can be also found in the renewed debate within the Gramscian tradition, which emphasizes the strategic importance of non-market and non-state institutions in the struggle against the exploitative power of capitalist society. Keane clarifies, “Gramsci usually – not always consistently – likened civil society to the labyrinthine trench systems of modern warfare. Wedged between the state and class-structured economy [...] these ‘fortresses and earthworks’ normally protect the ‘outer ditch’ of state power and shield the ruling class from the shock waves produced by economic crises.” By promoting the capturing of civil society structures as a vital precondition for the empowerment of the subordinated classes of proletariat, Gramsci attacked the Bolshevik strategy of violently seizing state power. The aim of the war in the trenches of civil society was “to avoid ‘statolatry’ by creating a *communist* civil society, whose successive enlargement would undermine the foundation of soft state and class power, thus sidestepping the danger of political dictatorship” (Keane 1998: 15).

considers turning to the analytic aspects of civil society as a sociological concept as a best remedy to halt this slide and rebalance the discussion. Let us follow Seligman's apprehension and employ empirical-descriptive analysis, which allows considering civil society from a sociological perspective.

In empirical-descriptive analysis, the term 'civil society' is used to describe "certain forms of social phenomena, of social organization on the macro-level, or even perhaps as a possible venue to link micro- and macro-levels of social analysis" (Seligman 1992a: 201). According to Keane, civil society is depicted then "as an *idealtyp* to describe, explain, clarify and understand the contours of a given slice of complex reality." Ultimately, empirical-descriptive analysis of civil society is aimed to develop "an explanatory understanding of a complex socio-political reality by means of theoretical distinctions, empirical research and informed judgments about its origins, patterns of development and (unintended) consequences" (Keane 1998: 37). In the socio-political reality of civil society, the institutional element is central, for it renders civil society "as an expression of a type of institutional order" (Seligman 1992a: 203) and allows conceiving of a complex reality of institutional structures. In this usage, the concept of civil society is commonly substantiated with the general theories of democracy and citizenship, being employed as a synonym to describe the organizational features of social life in the context of democracy. These features include, according to Seligman, freedom to form and join organizations, freedom of expression, the right to vote, eligibility for public office, the right of political leaders to compete for support and votes, alternative sources of information, freedom of the press, free and fair elections. Democracy needs these institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference (Seligman 1992a: 203-4).

Finally, value-normative analysis underlies every discussion on civil society because it provides the foundation both for prescriptive-strategic and for empirical-descriptive analyses. Keane contends that normative analysis is aimed "to highlight the ethical superiority of a politically guaranteed civil society compared with other types of regime" (Keane 1998: 37-38). The term 'civil society' is employed then "as a philosophically normative concept, that is, – putting it in somewhat grandiose terms – as an ethical ideal, a vision of the social order that is not only descriptive, but prescriptive, providing us with a vision of the good life" (Seligman 1992a: 201). The normative vision of the good life and of the good society is based on certain values and beliefs. In this sense, "civil society is identified with

some more or less universalistic mode of orientations on the part of social actors, and with the definition of citizenship in terms of universalistic, highly generalized moral bonds” (Seligman 1992a: 204).

At the same time, normative analysis of civil society reveals certain contradictions of modern existence, as it posits the concept of civil society on the span of usages ranging from an analytic idea to a normative ideal (Seligman 1992a: 206). In the normative usage, the concept of civil society obtains its potential for critical self-reflection. For instance, Seligman reveals that the normative reading of civil society theory builds upon two important presumptions, namely “Durkheimian emphasis on moral individualism as the basis of solidarity within modern, *gesellschaftlich* societies”<sup>11</sup> and “Weberian emphasis on the increased rationality of modern forms of social organization as the embodiment of universal values.” However, the analyst refutes this informed reading, since it “ignores the problem of liberal-individualistic ideology, that is, how to constitute a sense of community among and between social actors who are conceived of in terms of autonomous individuals” (Seligman 1992a: 204). Instead, the current debate on civil society needs to reassert “the sense of shared community in the face of what is perceived as an individualism defined in terms of self-interest” (Seligman 1992a: 205). As we can see, the concept of civil society evolves in accordance with society’s needs. Civil society appears then both as a tangible reflection and as a normative answer to the complex of urgent social problems. In this sense, I maintain that civil society is employed in academic debate as a social-moral concept.

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<sup>11</sup> Referring to society in terms of *Gesellschaft* presupposes the contrast between *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*. The distinction was introduced by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936). In his book *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (first published in 1887), Tönnies contrasted two types of societies: “an ‘organic’ Community (*Gemeinschaft*), bound together by ties of kinship, fellowship, custom, history and communal ownership of primary goods” and “a ‘mechanical’ Society (*Gesellschaft*), where free-standing individuals interacted with each other through self-interest, commercial contracts, a ‘spatial’ rather than ‘historical’ sense of mutual awareness and the external constraints of formally enacted laws” (Tönnies 2001: xvii-xviii). The contrast between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* is a recurring theme in the present study. It will be considered in more detail in the chapter on sociological study of civil society, in connection to Weber’s theory of rationalization (§ 3.1.1) and to Luhmann’s theory of functional differentiation (§ 3.3.5). Besides, the contrast will be central to the analysis of the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism (§ 4.1.4), as well as to the sociological depiction of Soviet and post-Soviet Russian society (chapter five).

### 1.3.4 My Operational Definition of Civil Society

I define civil society as a sphere of free association among citizens of democratic polities, which enjoys relative independence from the state and the economy. Civil society operates on the border between the public and the private, thus intersecting with various institutions of modern society. It provides citizens with a platform for unrestricted communication and deliberative reasoning on matters of public concern. In this sense, it reaches out to the sphere of politics insofar as it exerts influence on political decisions and policy-making. At the same time, civil society is also inextricably connected with the private sphere, which allows individual citizens to advocate their individual (economic) interests and moral sentiments.

In the stronger sense, civil society presumes a highly differentiated model of society. Hence, its genesis can be identified with the process of structural transformation of society, as it developed in the modern West. The definition of civil society in the stronger sense is encompassing and therefore needs a vast interdisciplinary approach. For that reason, I shall unfold this conception in the subsequent chapters of the study. The next focus will be, however, on the description of civil society in the minimal sense. In this analysis, I shall rely on empirical studies insofar as they provide the most vivid illustration of what civil society consists of and how it functions in a modern democratic polity.

# Civil Society as a Social-Moral Concept

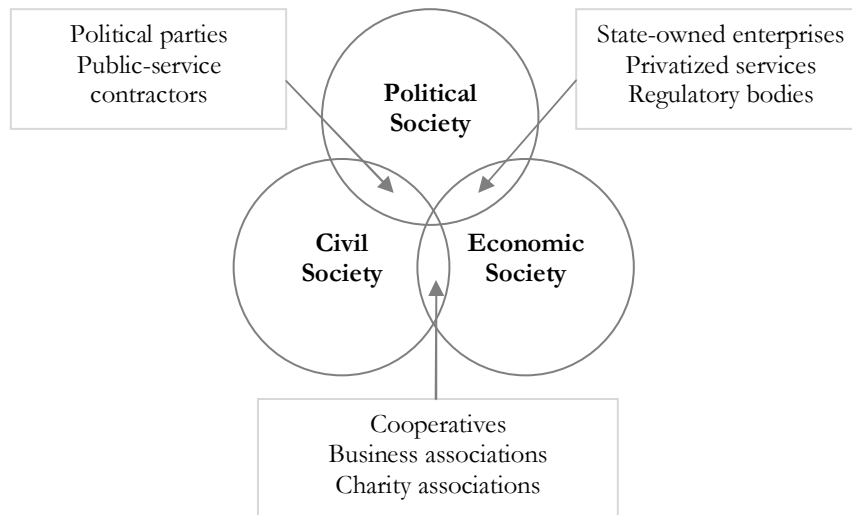
## *Introduction*

The delineation of the moral dilemmas inherent in civil society discourse is the primary objective of the present chapter. The underlying question is whether civil society is a good society, and why it is so. In order to approach the understanding of civil society as a moral concept, we need first to clarify what kind of social reality this moral concept refers to at the empirical level of analysis. On this view, we need to provide an empirical embedding for the subsequent conceptual discussion. Empirical studies of civil society are elucidating insofar as they demonstrate that civil society is not exclusively an elusive philosophical idea with a salient moral dimension, but also a tangible social reality and an indispensable part of any modern democratic system. Although it is extremely difficult to draw a strict border between empirical and theoretical studies of civil society, I have selected the studies by John Clark, Gordon White, Juan Linz, and Alfred Stepan to provide an overview of the empirically-oriented research.

For a clear-cut empirical definition of civil society, we can rely on Clark's comprehensive book *Worlds Apart: Civil Society and the Battle for Ethical Globalization*. Civil society, on Clark's view, spans a wide spectrum of activities, comprising concrete organizations of people, as well as "less tangible institutions such as neighborliness, clan loyalty, or the tradition of free speech" (Clark 2003: 93). Thus, civil society can be conceived of in

empirical terms as an area of associational activity of people that they undertake voluntarily and spontaneously, outside their workplace, families, and friends, neither for profit-making purposes in the private sector nor for management in the public sector. However, in practice, the three distinct spheres (civil society, political society, and economic society) frequently overlap. The gray areas of their overlap constitute a great interest for empirical researchers. In order to illustrate the alleged location of civil society and its relationship with the neighboring spheres, I offer below a modified version of Clark's original scheme (*figure № 1*).

*Figure № 1*

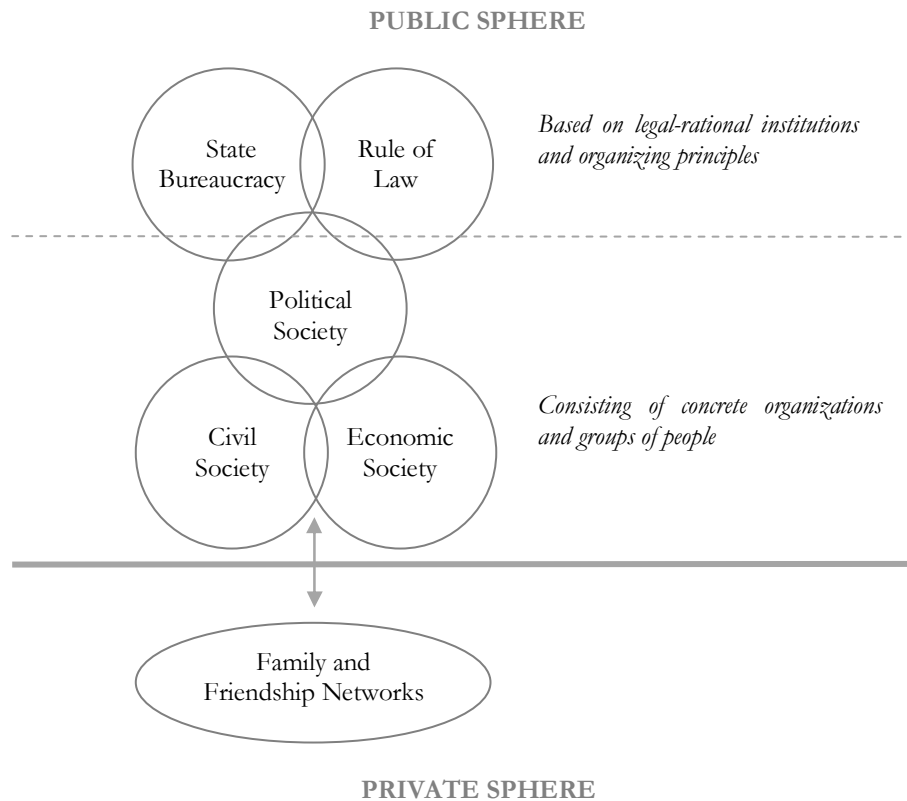


A more qualified account of the relationship of civil society to the sectors of politics and the economy is provided by Linz and Stepan in the comparative study *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. This study marks an important stage in the development of strategic analysis of civil society, as it explicates how the strategy of democratization can be successfully arranged. As Keane has noted, Linz and Stepan propose a bold “theory of the preconditions of a successful transition towards democracy and the subsequent conditions that enable the consolidation of a democratic regime” (Keane 1998: 46-47).

Conceptualizing civil society, Linz and Stepan argue that civil society is not a monolithic unity defined by rigid boundaries, but rather is continuously constituted by its relationship with both state and market. In

order to clarify this relationship, Linz and Stepan specify five factors involved in the process of consolidation of a modern democratic system, which they call five interacting and mutually reinforcing “arenas” of democratization (Linz & Stepan 1996: 126). The interaction between the five arenas, especially in relation to civil society, has been thoroughly studied by Marc Morjé Howard in his recent publication *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*. I assume that the main conclusion one can draw from the considered studies is that the interaction between the five arenas of democratization is crucial for the democratic consolidation in non-Western countries because these arenas reinforce each other and thereby contribute to the establishment of a democratic system. Since Howard has brilliantly illustrated and explained the interaction between the five reinforcing arenas, I resort to his original scheme, although in a modified form (figure № 2).

Figure № 2



As it is illustrated in the above scheme, civil society is one of the five arenas in the democratic system; it refers, on Howard's definition, to "the realm of organizations, groups, and associations that are formally established, legally protected, autonomously run, and voluntarily joined by ordinary citizens" (Howard 2003: 34-35). Hence, civil society is comparable with political and economic societies in the sense that the three designated arenas consist of concrete organizations and groups of people. In this regard, the three arenas determine, as Howard has put it, "the particular character" of the democratic system and are to be distinguished from the arenas of the rule of law and of the state bureaucracy, which are based on legal-rational institutions and organizing principles and which constitute the "essential core of any democratic system." Interacting with each other, the arenas of political society, economic society, and civil society form the social basis for the procedural and institutional mechanisms of the democratic system. On this view, the mutually reinforcing interaction between these two sectors of the public sphere, the social and the procedural-institutional, is crucial for the stability of the whole democratic system. Howard provides an exhaustible explanation, "Indeed the more the state bureaucracy and legal system become institutionalized along legal-rational principles, the greater the freedoms and opportunities for actors and organizations in economic, political and civil society to associate. Correspondingly, the stronger and more influential these groups and organizations become, the better the chances for bringing about a state bureaucracy and rule of law on legal-rational principles" (Howard 2003: 34).

Analyzing the specific relationship between civil society and the democratic state, Linz and Stepan rightfully assert that their mutual reinforcing interaction is of a great importance insofar as it provides legitimacy to the democratic system. The legitimacy of the democratic system depends on the rational-legal institutions and organizing principles of the state bureaucracy and the rule of law because these institutions guarantee the constitution, an independent juridical system, and a strong legal culture. At the same time, democratic consolidation also presumes a "robust civil society, which has the capacity to generate political alternatives and to monitor government and state" (Linz & Stepan 1996: 126). Insofar as political society comprises political parties, elections, electoral rules, and legislatures, organizations of civil society play a vital role in legitimizing the democratic state, as they allow citizens to elect their governments in a democratic way. Economic society, in its turn, creates the space for interaction between non-state forms of property, production, exchange, and

consumption. In this sense, it provides vital support for civil society, securing its independence from the state.

The emphasis on the strategic significance of civil society for democratic consolidation also provoked an opposite trend in the current academic discussion. The critical voices of skeptically-oriented analysts became even stronger after the 'boom' that the concept of civil society has experienced in the course of the democratic revolutions in East-Central Europe. The main objection against the strategic use of the term 'civil society' pertains to the simplistic and tendentious usages of the term. The volume *Civil Society in Democratization* (Burnell & Calvert 2004) presents one of such critical accounts. It comprises studies with a pronounced policy orientation and fieldwork basis. The scholars' main concern is to explicate civil society's analytical separateness from and, at the same time, relatedness with political society and business, and thus to delineate the political role of civil society in facilitating or impeding the democratization process. Gordon White concedes that the strategic potential of the idea of civil society awakened an overwhelming euphoria encouraging a wishful thinking, yet blunting its practical utility, "Together with the market and democracy, 'civil society' is one of the 'magic trio' of developmental panaceas which emerged in the 1980s and now dominate conventional prescriptions for the ills of the 1990s." Indeed, over the last twenty years, the idea of civil society, which indeed enjoys "a long, distinguished but highly ambiguous history in Western political theory," "has been dusted off and deodorized to suit a variety of ideological, intellectual and practical needs." As a consequence of such an extensive usage, the term acquired different meanings in different contexts and thus became "a muddled political slogan" (White 2004: 6).

However, White insists, if we want to discuss the problems of the developing countries and see the relationship between civil society and democratization as empirically testable, we need an "analytically more precise and empirically more useful" notion of civil society. With this requirement, White intends to level criticism against normative-strategic usages of the concept and redefine the benefit of strategic analysis of civil society. Insofar as civil society pertains to social forces that underlie any existing polity, "the idea of civil society is central to any discussion of democratization since it raises central issues about the role of social forces in defining, controlling and legitimating state power" (White 2004: 13). A conventional dichotomous exposition of the relationship between civil society and the state badly oversimplifies the actual relationship. Instead, we need to consider more thoroughly the aforementioned gray area of overlap

between civil society and political society, which reaches to the level of legal-rational institutions and organizational principles. The relationship between civil society and the democratic state is crucial when “it comes to investigating the relationships between civil society and democracy because one would expect systematic differences between different categories of organization in their attitude to the reality or the prospect of democratic politics” (White 2004: 10).

On that account, I agree with White that the objective of empirical study of civil society should consist in identifying “the specific constellations of social forces which underpin a process of political democratization.” In certain transforming countries, civil society can be depicted as tolerant or supportive of an authoritarian regime, whereas in other countries, it can advocate a conception of democracy that is far from liberal. Moreover, civil society can be also typified as “progressive,” fostering the values of liberal democracy. White correctly concludes, “Thus any statement to the effect that a ‘strong’ civil society is more conducive to democratization would be meaningless unless one went further to investigate the precise content of this constellation of social forces” (White 2004: 11). Taking White’s argument seriously, I intend to clarify in the present study the constellation of social forces that constitute the versatile landscape of contemporary Russian civil society.

As we can conclude, empirical studies help us to identify the place and the function of civil society in the democratic system. Nonetheless, they do not answer the important question whether civil society *is* a good society, and on which grounds it is (not). This question belongs rather to a normative theoretical order and thus requires conceptual analysis. Any attempt at understanding of civil society as a social-moral concept entails considering different moral dilemmas that emerge when one provides a normative foundation for the concept and the reality of civil society. Undertaking such an attempt, I specify the questions to be addressed as follows. Does the normative model of civil society provide optimal conditions for the realization of individual freedom and legitimize an acceptable degree of permeation by political power? Where can we draw the borderline of state intervention to secure that individual liberties are not infringed, and that the distribution of resources is just? What are the potential risks latently present in the liberal-individualistic principles civil society is based on? Why, despite of these risks, do analysts still choose to resort to civil society as a paramount normative model of social order? To answer these questions, I shall provide first a conceptual history of the

notion of civil society, as it developed in the West (2.1). Next, I shall systematize the answers to the posed questions into two theoretical schools: the liberal theory (2.2) and the theory of deliberative democracy (2.3).

## **2.1 Genesis of Civil Society as a Social-Moral Concept**

As it has become clear from the overview of empirical studies, current civil society discourse is characterized by an overwhelming consensus among the scholars concerning one central issue, namely that civil society is indeed a vital component of successfully functioning democracies. The more vibrant and advanced civil society is, the better governed and self-organizing the political community is likely to be. This argument largely underlies the claim that Western democratic societies enjoy a relatively high degree of freedom, autonomy, and endurance, whereas post-communist societies, in their struggle to establish and normalize the course of democratization, suffer from the absence of the essential experience of civil society.

On the other hand, as Bhikhu Parekh has rightly noticed, “the fact that the consensus has acquired the status of an intellectual orthodoxy is a good enough reason to subject it to a critical scrutiny” (Parekh 2004: 15). Moreover, if we concede that civil society is indeed an authentic product of Western civilization, the question is whether the notion of civil society can be rendered as an adequate solution for the problems that emerge in post-communist countries. As an upshot of Western civilization, civil society developed along with the politico-philosophical tradition of liberalism and therefore imbibed the principles of modern individualism and liberalism. Are these principles compatible with the values prevalent in East-European political culture, which has an overt communal element and presumes a different relationship between society and the state?

Curiously enough, this question does not dominate the discussion despite its obvious relevance. Instead, the discussion assumed another orientation, which is correctly stipulated by Charles Taylor in his thought-provoking contribution ‘Invoking Civil Society.’ Although the recent attempts to invoke the notion of civil society in the discussion on transforming politics of Eastern Europe were initially intended to reinforce the nineteenth century concept of civil society, they actually resulted in articulation of some fundamental features of the development of Western civilization, which go much further (Taylor 1995: 204). Thus, prior to evaluating civil society in the context of non-Western democracies, we need first to reconstruct the conceptual history of civil society in its authentic

Western context. Thereby, we need to specify different intellectual traditions that contributed to the ideological versatility of the contemporary understanding of civil society and made it such a highly contested notion.

### 2.1.1 Conceptual History of Civil Society in a Comparative Perspective

The most innovative insight I have contributed from Taylor's study pertains to the distinction between two different conceptions of civil society. On the one hand, we can conceive of civil society in a minimal sense as "a web of autonomous associations, independent of the state, which bound citizens together in matters of common concern, and by their mere existence or action could have an effect on public policy" (Taylor 1995: 204). This conception presumes that in the West there is already a functioning civil society simply because "civil society exists where there are free associations that are not under tutelage of state power" (Taylor 1995: 208). In reality, this claim is rebutted by the tendency of voluntary associations to become integrated into the state, or, put differently, by the unavoidable tendency towards corporatism. In the end, Taylor concludes, "we are all going to have to live with some mix of market and state orchestration. The difficult question is what mix suits each society" (Taylor 1995: 207).

On the other hand, the contemporary reality of established civil society in the West can be viewed as an "heir to centuries-long development of the distinction between society and state" (Taylor 1995: 205-6). Departing from this vision, Taylor suggests a definition of civil society in a stronger sense, "Civil society exists where society as a whole can structure itself and coordinate its actions through such free associations [and where] the ensemble of associations can significantly determine or inflect the course of state policy." Whenever analysts speak of civil society, they inevitably point at the fundamental structures and institutions of modern Western societies in general. This conception of civil society in a stronger sense entails "a public dimension that has been crucial to the concept in the Western tradition," so that civil society, in virtue of the fundamental features of political development of the West, still "could be referred to in the singular as civil *society*" (Taylor 1995: 208).

With this contribution, Taylor aims at enriching the minimal conception of civil society and at rediscovering the conceptual sources of the Western historical tradition of democracy and civil society. He concedes, "It remains true that Western liberal democracy has deep roots in its past, that certain socially entrenched self-conceptions greatly facilitated its rise" (Taylor 1995:

210). Resorting to the institutions that incorporate their own self-interpretation, Taylor identifies five main ideas that encouraged the emergence of civil society in medieval Western-European society. In the first place, the idea that society is not identical with its political organization contributed to the conception of political power as one subsystem among others. In the second place, “this differentiation was carried further by one of the most important features of Latin Christendom: the development of an idea of the Church as an independent society,” articulated in the doctrine of the two cities, the spiritual one and the temporal one. Insofar as this model sanctified two equal sources of authority, it created “a formula for perpetual struggle” and determined the bifocal character of Latin Christendom (Taylor 1995: 211), in contrast to Eastern Christendom, which accommodated the model of Byzantine *symphonia*.<sup>12</sup> Referring to medieval Western Europe, Taylor clarifies that “alongside with these two pervasive features, there were particular facets of medieval political arrangements” that have served as a prototype for a modern civil society. Namely, the development of a legal notion of subjective rights, a contractual type of relations of the feudal system, the existence of relatively independent, self-governing cities, and the standardization of political structures of medieval polities (Taylor 1995: 212).

The historical analysis of the genesis of civil society in the West elucidates the analogical developments in Russia from a new perspective. The juxtaposition between these two historical contexts suggests, in Taylor’s view, that Russia is “the obvious pole of comparison” with the West because “at successive stages, Russia took a different political path from Western polities.” Hence, the development of an independent noble class, of free cities and of a regime of estates was impeded by the reforms of Ivan the Terrible, of Peter the Great, of Nicolas I, and, later, of the Communist Party (Taylor 1995: 209).

One the reasons why Russia took a political path different from Western polities lurches in the different type of state-church relations and the different self-conception of the Russian Orthodox Church (henceforth: the ROC). In this sense, as Taylor compellingly argues, “a mainstay of Western development, that is, a Church independent of political authority, never existed in the Russian Orthodox tradition” (Taylor 1995: 209). I consider Taylor’s claim correct to the extent that it concerns the ROC as an official institute. Indeed, the long-term symphonic arrangement of state-church

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<sup>12</sup> The model of Byzantine *symphonia* is discussed further in § 4.2.1 and § 6.3.2.

relations put the ROC in a vulnerable and submissive position with regard to the state. This induced the Church to accept the legal framework of the state and neglect the development of its social doctrine. At the same time, another consequence of the ROC's traditional dependence on political authority has remained unnoticed so far. Namely, the Church continuously enjoyed considerable freedom in its theological self-conception and self-identification.<sup>13</sup>

Taylor develops a dynamic understanding of the poignant historical fate of Russia, recognizing that “in fact, there were moments when things could have been reversed.” Thus, the tragic political plight of Russia was not predestined by the Mongol conquest in 1237; great alterations could have occurred, for instance, during the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917. For his part, Taylor describes the Bolshevik takeover as “a contingent political disaster for Russia, which interrupted the slow development of civil society that had been gathering pace in the last decades of tsarism” and forced Russia to miss opportunities to accommodate at least some principles of liberalism on which Western democracy was founded. Instead, I would conceive of the Bolshevik revolution not as a *contingent* result, but as a *consistent* result of the distinctively Russian genetic code. The fact that the Bolsheviks abruptly usurped political power was not the disaster on itself; what was much more disastrous for the subsequent history of the Russian people was the weak and disorganized opposition of the democratic parties and liberal social forces, which proved incapable to overthrow the established Soviet government. From this purview, Taylor's explanation seems to me more plausible. The Bolshevik takeover happened because “certain socially entrenched self-conceptions” that facilitated the rise of Western liberal democracy “were absent in Russia or were ruthlessly rooted out by earlier rulers,” or, put differently, because “Western democracy was never written in the genes” (Taylor 1995: 210).

The pertinent inclination of Russian political power toward authoritarianism is also obvious from the attempt of Peter the Great to reform the country's polity according to the popular at that time Western model. Taylor elucidates that when Peter undertook to modernize Russia in the early eighteenth century, he tried to imitate Western Europe by implementing “what was seen as the latest, most effective model, the so-called absolute monarchies” (Taylor 1995: 210). Despite his extended stay in

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<sup>13</sup> A more detailed discussion on the relationship between political power and the ROC is presented in the fourth and sixth chapters of the study.

Holland in 1697-98, Peter seemed to have remained uninterested in the popular political treatises, among others John Locke's *Treatises of Government* published in 1689. In consequence, the Russian tsar took over from the Western model of absolute monarchy only those elements that suited his own idea of monarchic rule and remained indifferent to the claim that the absolutist power of the monarch should be restricted by the rule of the law and by the body of independent associations.<sup>14</sup>

If Russian political culture explicitly misses certain democratic arrangements, the justifiable question is which developments in the history of Western polities can be considered as contributing to the rise of Western liberal democracy and civil society. Relying on Taylor's analysis, we can stipulate three developments: the formulation of anti-absolutist doctrines, the rise of the self-regulating economy, and the rise of the independent public sphere. In the history of Western liberalism, the doctrines of John Locke and Charles Montesquieu have played a pivotal role. In the course of the seventeenth century, the medieval European establishments such as independent cities and citizens' freedoms did not "ensure trouble-free progress for modern liberal democracy." On the opposite, the seventeenth century was marked by an attempt to set up absolute monarchies and thereby impose the identification of society with its political organization. Taylor traces the intellectual roots of the idea of absolute sovereignty back to the works of Bodin and Hobbes (Taylor 1995: 212). It is in this context of resistance to absolutism that two alternative doctrines arose: one most saliently embodied in the political writings of Locke, and the other – in the writings of Montesquieu. Taylor labels these traditions as the L-stream after Locke and the M-stream after Montesquieu. Subsequently, these two anti-absolutist doctrines would lay the foundations for two main traditions of political-philosophical thought, namely the Trans-Atlantic liberal tradition and the continental conservative tradition. Later, in the nineteenth century, the two traditions would be synthesized in the Hegelian sophisticated conception of civil society.

The most advanced conception of civil society belongs to Locke. Inspired by the outstanding military and economic success of England and the Low Countries, where a consensual model of political organization was practiced, Locke introduced "a richer view of society as an extrapolitical reality" (Taylor 1995: 215). With his political treatises, the distinction

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<sup>14</sup> Peter's construction of the monarchic state and the Church's involvement in this process are addressed in § 4.2.2.

between society and political organization “returns in the unprecedentedly strong form that defines government as a trust.” To develop vision, Locke took inspiration in predominantly Calvinist and partially Puritan theological anthropology and ethics, which is specifically obvious from his advocacy of natural human rights. Insofar as he believed society to be constituted as a community of individuals endowed with God-granted natural rights, he considered society as ontologically prior to any political arrangement. Nonetheless, Locke argued, society needs the political arrangement, so that it can be redeemed from the state of nature. If government violates society’s trust, society is free to overthrow it. With this “notion of mankind as a prepolitical community,” Locke prepared the ground for the emergence of a new understanding of civil society, which would be different from his own traditional use as synonymous with political society (Taylor 1995: 213).

Montesquieu offered an alternative anti-absolutist doctrine to the one elaborated by Locke. Taylor clarifies, “Unlike Locke, he assumes a strong monarchical government that is unremovable,” but restricted by the rule of law and allowing for independent bodies, which constitute civil society. This “equilibrium between a powerful central authority and an interlocking mass of agencies and associations it has to work with” is central to the M-stream. Independent agencies form “the basis for the fragmentation and diversity of power *within* the political system” (Taylor 1995: 222). The distinction between society and the state refers then to the balance between central power and “a skein of entrenched rights” (Taylor 1995: 214-15).

Later, as Taylor convincingly argues, the anti-absolutist ideas were also substantiated by the structural transformations that occurred in West-European societies in the seventeenth and in the eighteenth centuries, namely the increasing autonomy of the economy and the rise of the independent public sphere. The remarkably swift development of the economy testified to the ability of modern society to organize itself outside the ambit of political organization and follow its own laws of equilibrium and change.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, Western society experienced the rise of an autonomous public with its own “opinion,” which later would determine the deliberative character of Western liberal democracies. In its original early modern meaning, public opinion relates, according to Taylor, to “something that has been elaborated in debate and discussion, and is recognized by everyone as something held in common. This element of common recognition is what makes it public.” The rise of the public sphere signified

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<sup>15</sup> This awakening awareness is portrayed, among others, by Adam Smith.

an important landmark in the history of emancipation of Western societies from politics. Insofar as “public opinion is elaborated entirely outside the channels and public spaces of the political structure,” it “pertains to the instruments, institutions or loci by which the society comes together as a body and acts” (Taylor 1995: 216-17). In this astute description, one can unmistakably distinguish certain characteristics of contemporary civil society.

Taylor concludes, “The self-regulating economy and public opinion – these two ways in which society can come to some unity or coordination outside the political structures. They give body to the Lockean idea, which in turn has medieval roots, that society has its own identity beyond the political dimension.” By revealing the pervasiveness of the public dimension in the idea and the reality of civil society, Taylor exceeds the empirical conception of civil society in the minimal sense. The conception of civil society in the minimal sense fails to do justice to the conceptual richness of the notion because civil society “defines a pattern of public social life, and not just a collection of private enclaves” (Taylor 1995: 218-19). Bearing this in mind, let us consider which important moral dilemmas contributed to the conceptual richness of civil society discourse.

### 2.1.2 The Moral Dilemma in Early Modern Civil Society Discourse

Adam Seligman suggested an alternative view on the conceptual history of Western liberalism and civil society. Seligman focused on the moral implications of various historical theorizations of civil society and thereby revealed a deep incoherence within the liberal reading of civil society theory. To a certain extent, the intrinsic incoherence is rooted, as Seligman argues, in the normative character of the concept itself. The normative usage of the concept of civil society comprises an inevitable tension between individualism and community, particular interests and universal law. The whole plethora of historical conceptions of civil society has been polarized with regard to this dichotomy. The question is whether any of these conceptions has succeeded to offer a satisfactory solution to the indicated dichotomy.

Until now, as Seligman laments in his contribution ‘Civil Society as Idea and Ideal,’ the term ‘civil society’ remains a catchword for both liberals and communitarians. For liberals, civil society embodies a hope that individuality and sociability can be harmoniously reconciled but still lacks a coherent theoretical framework. Beholding a skeptical position, Seligman criticizes

liberals for neglecting the danger of institutionalization, which inevitably accompanies any voluntary movement, and communitarians for disregarding the fact that voluntary organizations can be based on ascriptive principles of membership and, in that way, can undermine liberal foundations of the idea of civil society (Seligman 2002: 13). Therefore, the critic's central concern is to reconstruct historical responses to the question of "how to posit a social whole beyond the particular interests that define individual existence" (Seligman 2002: 26).

For the first time in European history, the normative concept of civil society in its modern meaning<sup>16</sup> was clearly formulated and extensively discussed in Europe by the abovementioned thinkers, Locke and Montesquieu. At that time, the concept of civil society emerged in result of major changes in the spheres of commerce, politics, geopolitics, and science. The advancing scientific discovery of the empirical world revealed the possibility of a new normative vision of the world as autonomous from God and susceptible to rational explanation. Individual was subsequently positioned at the center of the universe, imbued with one's natural rights and responsibilities. This new insight of an autonomous individual abolished the traditional foundations of the social order in categories external to the social world itself. As Europeans were challenged to find alternative legitimating sources for the social order beyond the traditional theocentric model, the idea of civil society appeared as "a critical new attempt to argue the moral sources of the social order from within the human world and without recourse to an external or transcendental referent" (Seligman 2002: 15).

The crux of the moral dilemma in early modernity pertains thus to the "the newly perceived tension between public and private realms" – the tension that the concept of civil society was designed to overcome. Seligman succinctly summarizes, "In fact, what stood at the core of all attempts to articulate a notion of civil society in that period and since, has been the problematic relationship between the private and the public; the individual and the social; public ethics and individual interests; and individual passions and public concerns" (Seligman 2002: 13-14). Historically, it was "with the nascent capitalist economy and the freeing of the individual from traditional communal and often primordial ties that the

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<sup>16</sup> For reasons of selectivity, I omit tracing the roots of the concept of civil society back to Greek philosophy and Roman law, where it was primarily used in contrast to the natural society of animals. A more extensive discussion on the notion of civil society in ancient Greece is presented, among others, in George F. McLean's (ed.) *Civil Society and Social Reconstruction* (1997).

problem of squaring individual and social goods and desiderata achieved a new saliency” (Seligman 1992a: 205). As society and the economy were increasingly liberalizing from the sphere of politics, the idea of civil society acquired a distinct normative dimension, for it addressed such vital issues as how to organize and legitimize a new social order after the breakdown of the feudal model of society and the rise of a free and equal citizenry. In Seligman’s words, “more pointedly, the question of civil society was, and still is, how individual interests could be pursued in the social arena and, similarly, the social good in the individual or private sphere. What is ultimately at stake in this question is, moreover, the proper mode of *normatively* constituting the existence of society – whether in terms of private individuals or in the existence of a shared public sphere” (Seligman 2002: 14). Because the early-modern attempts at articulating of a new idea of civil society resulted from the persistent intellectual search for a moral vision of social order, civil society can be now studied not only as a reality, but also as an ‘idea,’ ‘image,’ ‘vision,’ or ‘representation.’

One of the prominent moral visions of civil society was provided by Locke in his *Second Treatise of Government* (1689), where the philosopher suggested a solution to the crisis of medieval social order by synthesizing the principles of Protestant individualism and natural law doctrines (Seligman 1992a: 61). Insofar as Locke founded his vision on the Calvinist ethical principles of austerity and self-discipline, he avoided an external transcendent referent. Herbert Foster explains in the article ‘International Calvinism through Locke and the revolution of 1688’ that Locke justified his opposition to tyranny, whether of sovereign monarch, bishop, or presbyter, and supported tolerance and revolution “upon Calvinistic grounds of contract, natural rights, and sovereignty of people” (Foster 1927: 477). Evaluating Locke’s contribution to the international resonance of political Calvinism in early modernity, Herbert contends, “Through Locke there filtered to the American Revolution five points of political Calvinism held by hundreds of Calvinists, but clarified through his *Civil Government*: fundamental law, natural rights, contract and consent of people, popular sovereignty, resistance to tyranny through responsible representatives” (Foster 1927: 487). Locke succeeded to structure these five points of political Calvinism into a coherently working system. Insofar as the philosopher deduced the idea of fundamental law from the Calvinist tenet of the absolute sovereignty of God, he demonstrated “the general Calvinistic tendency to identify the law of nature with the law of God” (Foster 1927: 488). Consequently, Locke argued that “rights, bestowed by

God and based upon his fundamental law of nature, were a part of both divine and human nature and therefore natural and inalienable” (Foster 1927: 490). These natural rights included rights to liberty, equality, life, property, conscience, and reason. Being by nature and God’s law free, equal, and rational, man was connected with God by a “mutual relation,” which resembled in the Calvinists’ thought the mutual relation between ruler and people. This signified, Foster argues, the origin of the contract theory. The doctrine of a mutual contract advocated the sovereignty of people and the possibility of their resistance in case the contract was violated (Foster 1927: 491-92). If we agree with Foster that the main historical outgrowths of international Calvinism were the Civic Revolutions of the seventeenth century, the relevant question is what Locke’s doctrine of government as people’s trust contributed to the development of civil society in modern Western polities.

Obviously, Locke’s main contribution to contemporary civil society discourse consists in relating the normative idea of civil society to the state of nature, which he understood as a state of perfect freedom equally inborn in every individual. Seligman notices that Locke did not have any intention to use purely descriptive terms with regard to civil society and expose a state of equality and liberty as a historical reality. This would otherwise seem farfetched, taking in consideration all the economic and political struggles that tore the English society in the late seventeenth century. Rather, he introduced the notion of civil society as “a theological axiom whose ontological status was not given to empirical evidence or questioning” (Seligman 2002: 16). In Locke’s vision, human beings are naturally free and equal, and therefore endowed with natural rights and with capacity for rationality and self-determination. However, as Parekh notices, men “could not flourish in the unregulated state of nature and needed a well-ordered society that ensued them maximum freedom to pursue their self-chosen purposes. Such a society has a public or civil authority entitled to take and enforce collectively binding decisions” (Parekh 2004: 15-16). Insofar as civil society was founded on a common rational decision, it was essentially “a human artifact, created, sustained and capable of being changed by human beings.” Being constructed without a transcendental referent, civil society appeared in Locke’s theory as “a rational and artificial institution” (Parekh 2004: 16).

After Locke, the idea of civil society became saliently embodied in the intellectual heritage of the Scottish Enlightenment, specifically in the works of Francis Hutcheson, Hugh Blair, Adam Ferguson, and Adam Smith.

These thinkers shared the aspiration to clarify the existing bond between morality and nature and ground the idea of civil society on this bond. In their writings, the notion of morality appeared as an “axiomatic propensity of the human mind,” which made possible to ground “the existence of social order in an intimately human propensity of innate mutuality” (Seligman 2002: 17). Grounding the moral vision of society in an inner-worldly logic, the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment conceived of a member of civil society no longer as an isolated individual, but as part of the whole, a member of the community who evolved in a creative tension between the self and the common good (Seligman 2002: 18-19). This moral vision of sociability and mutual recognition presumed harmony between moral sentiment and natural sympathy, revolving around the concept of civilization. A civilized society was characterized by the Protestant, or more specifically the Puritan, virtues of moderation, self-restraint, and rationality on the one hand and by the secular virtues of exquisiteness, refinement, and progression in the arts and science on the other. The conclave of these virtues entailed respect for law and liberties, serving as a moral legitimation of the growing sector of commerce. In fact, as Parekh correctly notices, the idea of a civilized moral civil society was meant to legally warrant and normatively legitimize the framework necessary for the development of a civilized and commercial society in early modernity (Parekh 2004: 16). However, the naivety of Smith’s and Ferguson’s belief in the confluence of morality and reason was ruthlessly criticized by their contemporary, David Hume.

### 2.1.3 The Dichotomy between the Private and the Public Revisited

The dichotomy between private morality and public reason was first overtly exhibited by David Hume in his *Treatise on Human Nature* (1740). Hume is notoriously known for ruining of what Seligman smartly calls “a happy confluence of reason and benevolence” because he exposed, with disarming simplicity, the contradictions of human nature. Hume claimed that human nature is permanently torn between determinacy of reason and motivation of moral sentiment. With this claim, “Hume abstained from positing the social order in terms of any morally substantive good” and rejected any moral validation of the social order. In contradistinction to the optimistic thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, Hume considered social order as devoid of any autonomous moral value and as motivated singularly by the individual’s rational and benefit-seeking calculus. In this sense, Seligman

categorizes Hume as the first theorist who articulated the inexorable tension between the realm of private interests and the realm of the public good. Articulating this tension, Hume emphasized “the distinction between justice and virtue, between a public sphere based on the workings of self-interest (in conformity to law) and a strictly private sphere of moral action (predicated on such considerations as those of friendship for example)” (Seligman 2002: 22).

Immanuel Kant’s theory signified a new stage in philosophical deliberation on the dichotomy between the public and the private. In contrast to the Scottish philosophers’ inclination to ground the injunction of moral sentiment and natural sympathy in the natural endowment, Kant founded the fragile balance between individual interests and the common good on the notion of categorical imperative of the universal moral law. What is new in Kant’s vision of society is the connection of the ideas of freedom and equality with “the progressive workings of a universal Reason through which individual rights (to civic freedom and political equality) were articulated” (Seligman 2002: 22). Associating universal Reason with the public realm by appealing to the ideals of equality, freedom, and justice, Kant succeeded to overcome the dichotomy between individual interests and social mutuality. Nonetheless, Kant’s solution “contained the critical distinction between the juridical and the ethical that was so important for further theoretical attempts to articulate an ethical vision of societal representation” (Seligman 2002: 23). Indeed, Kant associated the public realm primarily with the juridical law and the duty, but reserved the considerations of morality to the private realm. Thus, the sphere of morality remained “divorced from the representative vision of society as juridical community,” and the discrepancy between public ethics and private interests remained basically unsolved.

In the nineteenth century, the discussion of the moral dilemmas was reinvigorated by a new generation of civil society theorists: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx. Hegel in *The Philosophy of Right* (1821) and Marx in *Das Kapital* (1867) conceive of civil society both as a realm of societal differentiation and as a normative idea of society. As Seligman noticed, Hegel and Kant signified “the end of the civil society tradition as a normative model of social life” (Seligman 2002: 24). Irrespective of great dissimilarities, their theories share the same goal, namely to overcome Kantian distinction between public legacy and private morality, between juridical societal community and private moral life. Trying to reintegrate morality with legality, Hegel and Marx emphatically asserted the collective

nature of morality and provided, for this purpose, a sociologically-descriptive embedding for the normative idea of civil society.

Thus, the Hegelian and Marxist theorizations of civil society are characterized, as Seligman reveals, by descriptive feasibility because they depict civil society as a realm of societal differentiation marked by a high degree of conflict and density. According to Hegel's theory, civil society occupied an intermediate position between the state and the family. If the family was centered on such values as love and unselfish unconditional concern for its members, the state was guided primarily by rationally conceived sentiments of love and disinterested concern for the whole of societal community. Given the opposition between the two distinct realms of the state and the family, civil society was meant to permeate this span by providing the space for "differentiation, in which free, independent, and otherwise unrelated individuals pursued their self-interest in a spirit of mutual respect and within the limits of the laws" (Parekh 2004: 17). At the same time, Hegel argued that it is precisely the heterogeneity and partiality of individuals' or classes' interests that render civil society "self-defeating" and incomplete. Accordingly, the high degree of societal differentiation and social conflict prevents civil society from achieving ultimate universality. The state alone, as the sole representative of the supreme justice and morality, is able to overcome the "contradictory desiderata of particular interests." Underscoring the normative meaning of the state, Hegel "artfully shows how civil society is itself the object of historical development and not a predetermined natural state" (Seligman 2002: 24-25). In contrast to the earlier understanding of civil society, Hegel considers civil society as an essentially unstable formation, ridden with internal tensions and conflicts, and thus incapable of self-regulation. Later, this idea will be revived in the current discussion on civil society by John Keane, who characterized civil society as essentially wreckable (Keane 1998: 50).

Following Hegel, Marx understood civil society as a realm of conflict, distorted by the class struggle of the capitalist society and in need of regulatory power of the state. Yet, as Seligman explicates, "if Hegel 'resolves' civil society into the existent and ethical (universal) entity of the State, Marx, it can be said, resolves it into itself" (Seligman 2002: 25). Marx conceived of civil society within the scope of material relations, associating it with the "whole communal and industrial life of a given stage" (Marx and Engels 1973: 362-63). In Marx's opinion, civil society was "unique to the modern bourgeois society, especially in respect to autonomy and the freedom from moral and communal constraints that it had currently

acquired” (Parekh 2004: 17). Rejecting all “myths and fantasies” of the early-modern belief in the natural origin of civil society, Marx argued that civil society was just a temporal stage in the societal evolution towards a single possible social-ethical ideal – socialism. Only a socialist society, with its planned economy, based on the principle of ‘from each according to his ability and to each according to his need’ (Parekh 2004: 18),<sup>17</sup> would be able to substitute such an unjust social formation as a bourgeois civil society.

To sum up the above, the historical overview sketched main ideas and developments that defined civil society as a typical product of Western civilization. Civil society originated in early modernity out of a need to establish a new universal and at the same time individualistic basis for the construction of communal life. Civil society suggested a new ethical vision of the modern social order. This vision came to rest on “the idea of the autonomous, moral, and agentic individual as standing at the foundation of the social order,” imbued with immutable natural rights and responsibilities (Seligman 1997: 119). The expansion of the self-regulating economy and the development of the public sphere have instigated the discussion on how the realm of civil society, i.e. the realm of independent citizenry, relates to the state and to the economy (Taylor 1995: 218). The principles of individual natural rights, civic equality, and publicity have instigated the constitutional and institutional formation of a modern democratic state (Seligman 1997: 119). Consequently, the early-modern balanced vision of civil society was challenged by the dichotomy between private moral sentiment and universal public reason. In the nineteenth century, civil society came to be seen as a realm of societal differentiation and permanent conflict, and thus as essentially temporal and wreckable. Next, I want to discuss different solutions to the pivotal question of how to reconcile private individual interests with the public good in the framework of liberal democracy.

## 2.2 Liberal Theory of Civil Society

In this section, I shall attempt at reconstructing liberal theory of civil society. I refer to this theoretical approach as ‘liberal theory’ because it comprises different theorizations of civil society, which are united by one

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<sup>17</sup> Parekh notices, “Within the Marxist tradition, the concept of civil society played a limited role until Gramsci reintroduced it and made it one of the central categories of his thought.” However, Gramsci’s usage was “both inconsistent and richly suggestive” (Parekh 2004: 18) because he linked the concept of civil society with culture, dominance of conventions, and concealed power structures.

central concern, namely to advocate the polycentric and pluralistic nature of contemporary civil society. Specifically, I shall analyze theories elaborated by John Keane, Will Kymlicka, Michael Walzer, and a group of communitarian liberal theorists. Despite dissimilar accents, these scholars agree that civil society represents the arena of conflicting interests, which result from different subjective meanings and commitments of democratic citizens. The solution, however, is never the same, because it implies proposing a right balance between individual freedom and social justice, between political liberties and state power, between a normative vision and distressing realities.

### 2.2.1 A Post-Foundationalist Perspective

In his impressive study *Civil Society: Old Images, New Visions*, Keane develops a coherent critical account of civil society by revising the normative meaning of the idea and the reality of civil society. With his normative criticism, the scholar intends “to highlight the ethical superiority of a politically guaranteed civil society compared with other types of regime” (Keane 1998: 37-38). Methodologically, Keane’s account is an interesting example of an amalgamation of the descriptive and normative approaches, which is obvious from his own definition of civil society. In Keane’s purview, civil society “both describes and envisages a complex and dynamic ensemble of legally protected non-governmental institutions that tend to be non-violent, self-organizing, self-reflexive, and permanently in tension with each other and with the state institutions that ‘frame,’ construct and enable their activities” (Keane 1998: 6).

In my opinion, Keane contributed to the understanding of civil society as a social-moral concept with three important insights. First, he suggests an innovative normative interpretation of civil society theory. For this purpose, he refutes the early-modern conception of civil society as identical with a politically-organized community. Emphasizing the “polysemic quality” and a high level of differentiation inherent in modern civil societies, Keane establishes a post-foundationalist pluralist normative vision. Second, with regard to the debate on the relationship between civil society and political power, Keane argues for a power-sharing perspective. The post-foundationalist normative vision of civil society requires also a revision of the concept of democracy. Hence, Keane conceives of democracy as an indispensable condition for a successful and safe existence of civil society, emphasizing at the same time that democracy should increasingly resemble a

“self-reflexive system,” which is permanently monitored by the institutions of civil society. Third, Keane embarks on possible misusages of individual freedom and provides a convincing analysis of the inborn proclivity of human societies towards incivility. It is exactly this inborn proclivity of human societies toward uncivil behavior that prevents Keane from identifying civil society with a good society.

The main merit of Keane’s theory consists, to my mind, in reviving old conceptions of civil society. He strives to conceive of civil society in contemporary terms, in accordance with concrete needs and dilemmas that are typical of existing democratic societies. Thus, Keane refutes the old “philosophically naïve view that the category of civil society perfectly represents some determinate reality existing ‘out there’ ” (Keane 1998: 52). Equally, he repudiates Hegel’s conception of civil society as a mere stage in the actualization of the ethical idea, as well as Marx’s identification of civil society with a class-ridden bourgeois society. Instead, despite his general critique of Hegel, Keane selects two important theses from Hegel’s *Grundlagen der Philosophie des Rechts* (1821). First, he admits that Hegel was right in defining civil society “as a *historically produced* sphere of ethical life which comprises the economy, social classes, corporations and institutions concerned with the administration of welfare and civil law.” Hegel’s innovative perspective on civil society as a product of the complex historical process and an achievement of modern society implied another important characteristic of civil society, namely its wreckable nature. Civil society does not signify an arena of harmonious meeting of different interests, but rather resembles “a restless battlefield where interest meets interest” (Keane 1998: 50). Insofar as civil society proves unable to overcome its particularities, it needs the higher order of the state.

Keane integrates the characteristics of temporality and wreckability into his own critical account. He argues, “The birth or rebirth of civil society is always riddled with dangers, for it gives freedom to despots and democrats alike.” Notwithstanding such contingent evil outcomes, the normativity of civil society provides certain antidote to its principal wreckability. The antidote consists, according to Keane, in the self-reflexive capacity of civil society, namely in “the shared understanding among socially interacting and socially interconnected subjects that their world never stands still, that it is a puzzling product of their own making, and that as subjects of inquiry into the meaning of life they are an intrinsic part of the object of their enquiries” (Keane 1998: 51). Indeed, Keane concedes that civil societies generate from time to time “self-paralyzing ideologies,” such as patriarchal domination, the

fetish of market competition, ideologies of nationalism, and the conventional belief in the public. Nonetheless, he claims, “All hitherto existing and present-day civil societies contain powerful countertrends that insure that ‘society’ has no fixed and immutable meaning” (Keane 1998: 51-52). Within civil societies, individuals are free to reflect on their values, commitments, and orientations and justify their decisions. Exactly this “bewildering plurality of normative justifications” explains, according to Keane, “the polysemic quality of the civil society perspective.” Keane’s conception of civil society as a social-moral category presumes a “*post-foundationalist* normative justification that itself recognizes, and actively reinforces respect for the multiplicity of often incommensurable normative codes and forms of contemporary social life” (Keane 1998: 53). The term ‘civil society’ implies for social and political ethics a high level of differentiation of the forms, structures, and styles of contemporary social life. In this sense, civil society enables “genuinely non-hierarchical plurality of individuals and groups openly and non-violently to express their solidarity with – and opposition to – each other’s ideals and ways of life” (Keane 1998: 55).

Hence, Keane advocates an essentially pluralist post-foundationalist perspective on civil society theory. He argues that the pluralistic nature of civil society compels scholars “to break with the bad monist habit of philosophically justifying civil society by referring back to a substantive grounding principle, as the early modern notions of God-given justice, natural rights or the principles of utility, or their later modern counterparts of rational argumentations (Habermas), principles of ‘the right to equal concerned respect’ (Dworkin), respect for ‘the worth of the individual’ (Hall), or knowledge of a ‘good which we can know in common’ (Sandel)” (Keane 1998: 53-54). Refuting to involve any substantive grounding principles in the normative validation of civil society theory, Keane radically disagrees with the theorists of civil society who are inspired by the Habermasian idea of universal rationality (theorists like Cohen, Arato, and Chambers, whose views will be considered later).

Keane consistently dismantles any normative argumentation based on a single supreme ethical principle. On the contrary, he defines civil society “as an implied condition and practical consequence of philosophical and political pluralism.” Insofar as Keane claims to treat the principle of plurality in terms of “the logic of occasion,” he considers any attempt at theorizing civil society “as merely one normatively inclined theory among

others,” i.e. one possible theoretical approximation of truth, which can be formulated in the universal terms (Keane 1998: 54).

Considered within the political context, Keane’s post-foundationalist understanding of civil society implies that “the meaning and ethical significance of civil society at any given time and place can be asserted and/or contested as such only within a sociopolitical framework marked by the separation of civil and state institutions, whose power to shape the lives of citizens is subject permanently to mechanisms that enable disputation, accountability and representation” (Keane 1998: 56). Although Keane insists on the separation between the state and civil society, he, nevertheless, agrees with Walzer and Kymlicka that civil society presumes the protective legal-political framework of a democratic state. He also concurs with Linz, Stepan, and White that democratic polity is an indispensable precondition for the emergence of civil society. Yet for a successful functioning of civil society one needs, Keane emphasizes, a revisited version of democracy where political power is “subject to public disputation, compromise and agreement” (Keane 1998: 8). On this view, Keane moves on to the advocacy of the power-sharing principle in democratic polity.

Over against oligarchic and state-centered theories of politics starting from Plato’s *Statesman* and Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* to Hobbes’s *Leviathan* and Schmitt’s *Die Diktatur*, Keane positions an idealistic vision of democracy as “a fractured and self-reflexive system of power.” According to this vision, “state actors and institutions within a democracy are constantly forced to respect, protect and share power with civilian actors and institutions – just as civilians living within the state-protected institutions of a heterogeneous civil society are forced to recognize social differences and to share power among them” (Keane 1998: 11). Within such a power-sharing model of democracy, civil society enables citizens to communicate and interact freely, choose publicly their identities, decide their entitlements, and honor their duties within a political-legal framework. Main functions of civil society are to secure peace among citizens, to facilitate good government, to promote social justice and make sure that political power, wherever it is exercised, is publicly accountable (Keane 1998: 76).

Insisting on the interactive power-sharing perspective in the relations between civil society and the democratic state, Keane criticizes the dualistic model of relations between civil society and the state, as developed by Ernest Gellner in his renowned work *Conditions of Liberty*. For Gellner, civil society is the set of “institutions, which is strong enough to counterbalance the state, and, whilst not preventing the state from fulfilling its role of

keeper of peace and arbitrator between major interests, can, nevertheless, prevent the state from dominating and atomizing the rest of society” (Gellner 1994: 5). Gellner depicts civil society as permanently abiding in antagonistic resistance to the political despotism of the state. Civil society, in his view, emerges only when political power is separated from economic and social life and when dominating power structures retreat from social life. This spatial independence of civil society enables the subjects of civil society to become self-confident individuals, who are in control of their social achievement and apt for self-improvement.

Exactly at this point Keane diverges from Gellner, criticizing him for juxtaposing civil society and political despotism. This juxtaposition inevitably results in demonizing politics and mythologizing the goodness of civil society. Keane endorses his critique of Gellner’s idealistic interpretation of civil society by the “flimsy objection, long ago put forcefully by Michel Foucault, that the discourse about civil society is weakened by a sort of Manichaeism that afflicts the notion of ‘state’ with a pejorative connotation while idealizing ‘society’ as good, living, warm whole” (Keane 1998: 70). Instead, Gellner’s understanding of civil society “as the incarnation of social virtue in opposition to political vice” retains antagonism (Keane 1998: 79). An ardent defender of plurality and versatility, Keane introduces an important qualification to civil society theory. He qualifies civil society as essentially wreckable, alterable, fragile, and therefore susceptible to destructive ideologies, market-generated economic inequalities, and violence. The key problem that Keane rediscovers in Gellner’s account pertains to Gellner’s failure “to see the need permanently to develop new images of civil society,” as he “wrongly supposes that civil societies are largely unencumbered by self-paralyzing contradistinctions and dilemmas” (Keane 1998: 80).

Given contingent outcomes of the pluralistic nature of civil society, Keane is sensitive to the problem of uncivility inherent in modern civil societies. He seriously considers the possibility that civil societies can be dominated by uncivil attitudes and self-paralyzing ideologies, such as xenophobia, racism, religious fanaticism, violence, or unequal patterns of market-generated wealth and income. Hence, Keane confronts us with the following tough dilemma. On the one hand, “the emerging consensus that civil society is a realm of freedom correctly highlights its basic value as a condition of democracy: where there is no civil society there cannot be citizens with capacities to choose their identities, entitlements and duties within a political-legal framework” (Keane 1998: 114). On the other hand,

the same freedom entails the possibility of uncivil choices and behavior within the structures of civil society. The problem of uncivility in civil societies has to do primarily with freedom of choice and hence requires considering the problem of civil society in connection to the problem of human nature and morality.

Working within the post-foundationalist paradigm of civil society theory, Keane adopts a far more rigorous critical approach to the problem of freedom and morality than his predecessors (Locke, Smith, Ferguson, Hegel, and Marx), who, despite numerous differences, understood history as a process of society's transformation from of a rude and uncivil one toward a modern civil one. Keane considers their invention of civility as an antidote to uncivility no more than a mask to conceal the hypocrisy of civility and considers their solution to the problematic balance between violence and peace to be simplistic. Denouncing their naïve belief that violence was on the wane, Keane points at the permanent presence of conflict and violence in all existing civil societies. He asserts, "*All known forms of civil society are plagued by endogenous sources of incivility*, so much so that one can propose the empirical-analytic thesis that incivility is a chronic feature of civil societies, one of their typical conditions, and hence normatively speaking, a perennial barrier to the actualization of a fully 'civilized' civil society" (Keane 1998: 135).

What are the sources of violence and uncivility in civil society? Or, put differently, why can the intentionally peaceful associational activity become affected by the sentiments of anger, brutality, hate, or revenge? These are legitimate questions to ask. If Keane wants to develop an adequate normative justification of civil society, he needs to provide a solid philosophical account of violence, which he certainly does.

In essence, Keane distinguishes between external and internal sources of violence that may affect civil society. He identifies external sources of violence with the mechanisms inherent in a modern democratic state as an impersonal, abstract entity, a bureaucratic machine, or an invisible power apparatus. State violence tends to destroy civility "leaving in its wake social relations riddled with incivility: violence, insecurity, aggravated conflict" (Keane 1998: 124). Keane's awareness on this issue has been mainly stimulated by the innovative book by Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*, published in 1939. Drawing on Elias' ideas, Keane envisages civil society as abiding in a permanent tension with violence, latently or overtly present in modern societies. Therefore, the civilizing process of modernizing Western societies cannot be conceived in purely normative

terms; instead, it should be conceived in terms of a fragile historical episode, which connects the medieval and modern epochs. Although this important transformation towards civility seemed to alter the normative façade of modern societies, it did not affect the perseverance of power structures, as Foucault has demonstrated it, nor did it restrict or reduce the possibility of violence, as Elias has argued (Keane 1998: 119-24).

Elias's thesis of the exogenous source of violence in modern civil societies allows Keane to argue that "the modern civilizing process is directly related to the formation and growth of states seeking to disarm competitor power groups and thereby to monopolize the means of violence over a given territory and its inhabitants" (Keane 1998: 122). Responding to this apprehension, Keane clarifies that civil societies cannot escape monopolistic power of a sovereign state. He resorts to Claude Lévi-Strauss' distinction between primitive and civilized cultures with respect to violence. Lévi-Strauss defines primitive cultures as *anthropophagic*, meaning that they 'devour' their adversaries. Modern civilizations, on the other hand, are *anthropoemic*, meaning that they segregate, evict, marginalize, or 'vomit' their adversaries. When dealing with violence, modern civilizations appear "quintessentially modern" not only due to their struggle for territorially bound state power, but also because they illustrate "the rational-calculating use of violence as a technique of terrorizing and demoralizing whole populations and preventing them from engaging in organized or premeditated resistance" (Keane 1998: 126).

In opposition to the persistence of power structures and state violence, Keane accentuates the positive achievements of modern societies, amongst them the invention of "non-violent methods of ensuring that the institutions of violence, such as the police and the army, become publicly accountable, and therefore disembodied or 'empty' spaces of power that can be made by citizens to change their ways" (Keane 1998: 130). Keane assesses the democratization of the means of state violence as an important step toward minimizing the threats of violence that confront civil society from the outside.

In addition to the external source of violence, civil society is also potentially susceptible to the internal source of violence, which consists in the inner contradiction within the workings of civil society. Keane clarifies, "Every known form of civil society tends to produce this same violent antithesis, thereby preventing it from becoming a haven of non-violent harmony" (Keane 1998: 141). Keane relies on two different explanations to elucidate the source of violence with regard to modern institutions. The first

explanation, grounded in *“meso-level regime theories*, insists that violence on a limited or extended scale derives primarily from the particular, historically specific organizing principles of the state or socio-economic system” (Keane 1998: 144-45). Put differently, violence is inherent in certain regimes and thus can be attenuated only if these regimes are defeated. It is noteworthy that Keane builds upon social theories of risk elaborated by Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens, although he does not use the term ‘risk.’ Keane asserts, “Civil societies, ideal-typically conceived, are complex and dynamic webs of social institutions in which the opacity of the social ensemble [...] combined with the chronic uncertainty of key aspects of life [...] makes their members prone to stress, anxiety and revenge” (Keane 1998: 147). The vital concerns include uncertainties about employment, policies, and identities of one’s self and of one’s household. Keane associates other causes of individual violence with the increasing availability and cheapness of means of violence, or with high freedom of communication within civil society.

In contrast to meso-level regime theories, Keane ascribes less explanatory potential to *macro-level geopolitical theories*, which identify the ultimate cause of violence with “the permanently decentered international system of states,” characterized by anarchic dynamism and a plurality of armed states. Keane considers the meso-level theories more plausible, since they ascribe the eruptions of violence to the specific institutional structures of civil society and thus understand civil society as a contingent historical phenomenon and not as a naturally given social order. It is the self-determination of societies that contains potential for tensions, struggles, conflicts, and violence.

One of the most effective remedies against uncivility consists, according to Keane, in the tactic of publicizing violence. Making violence transparent to the public stimulates public awareness about actual conflicts enabling citizens to monitor resistance efforts non-violently. In this sense, Keane rightly asserts that “the public spheres of civil society can certainly canvass and circulate to other citizens ethical judgments about whether or not (or under what conditions) a certain form of violence – by the police, for instance – is justified” (Keane 1998: 156). Interestingly, Keane has argued above against grounding civil society theory on any single grounding principle, insisting on the post-foundationalist conception of civil society. However, discussing public opinion as a capacity of civil society to resist and condemn violence, the scholar presumes that there are some universal moral values, or rational standpoints, to which publicizing of violence can

appeal. In this regard, Habermas's idea of universal public reason appears relevant, since we need some common presuppositions to preserve democratic pluralistic society from lapsing into an absolute chaos of relativism that would lead to ceaseless war against all.

### 2.2.2 A Liberal-Egalitarian Perspective

In the studies *Civil Society and Government* and *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Will Kymlicka suggests a liberal-egalitarian perspective on civil society theory. What is remarkable about Kymlicka's approach is his attempt to combine "a liberal commitment to individual freedom of choice and an egalitarian commitment to eliminating disadvantages in the distribution of resources and opportunities" (Kymlicka 2002b:79). Doubtlessly, this "twin commitment" to the two opposite ideals has been a source of ardent debates on whether these principles are susceptible to reconciliation in a single coherent theory.

Another noticeable attempt at synthesizing antinomies refers to Kymlicka's conception of civil society as operating on the border between the private and the public, but without infringing upon any of these two spheres. Specifically, Kymlicka subdivides the concept of civil society into two broad areas. The first area comprises public interest groups, including NGO's and social movements, in which citizens discuss various issues of public concern. The second area relates to private associations in which people pursue their particular ideas or needs (Kymlicka 2002b: 82). The scholar maintains that the combination of both kinds of associations is essential for the liberal-egalitarian theory of civil society. Accordingly, he criticizes theorists of the Habermasian tradition for defining civil society exclusively in terms of the public sphere where public communication and reasoning occur, and for ignoring associations that are merely private in their orientation. On the other hand, Kymlicka also repudiates the libertarian conception of civil society as the network of exclusively private associations because this definition suits libertarian promotion of the genesis of self-organizing spheres that are genuinely independent of the state.<sup>18</sup> It is the commitment to social justice through fair distribution of resources that distinguishes the position of liberal egalitarianism from its more right-wing libertarian counterpart.

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<sup>18</sup> Loren Lowansky's contribution 'Classical Liberalism and Civil Society' is a good illustration of the libertarian perspective (Chambers and Kymlicka 2002: 50-70).

The greatest challenge for liberal-egalitarian perspective on civil society theory consists, on Kymlicka's view, in ensuring "that people exercise their freedom of association in a way that promotes, or at least does not inhibit, the achievement of social justice" (Kymlicka 2002b: 83). An analogous problem underlies Seligman's critical account of the inconsistencies inherent in liberal attempt to reconcile the public good and individual freedom. Nevertheless, if Seligman regards the problem unresolved, Kymlicka undertakes to elevate the tension between social justice and individual freedom by developing a normative liberal-egalitarian theory of democratic state and civil society. Attending to the characteristically egalitarian concern with distributive justice, Kymlicka asserts, "The justice of a modern democracy depends not only on its 'basic structure,' but also on the qualities and attitudes of its citizens" (Kymlicka 2002b: 84). On this view, Kymlicka revises the normative theory of democratic citizenship and civic virtue.

In Kymlicka's opinion, democratic citizens possess, or, I would say, should possess, a distinctive way of dealing with different national, ethnic, or religious identities. Civic virtue pertains to citizens' ability to tolerate and work together with individuals different from themselves. Next to tolerance, dedication to the common good is also a distinguished virtue of democratic citizens. This virtue manifests itself in citizens' desire to participate in the political process in order to promote the public good and hold political authorities accountable. Moreover, democratic citizens need to be willing to show self-restraint and exercise personal responsibility in their economic demands or personal choices (Kymlicka 2002b: 84). On the liberal-egalitarian account, the state and civil society are involved in a reciprocal relationship, as they both need each other to accomplish their goals. Ideally, civil society and a democratic state participate in "a mutually reinforcing interaction" (Kymlicka 2002b: 94) because "it is in the voluntary organizations of civil society [...] that we learn the virtues of mutual obligation" (Kymlicka 2002a: 305), and because any democratic system needs to be continuously legitimized by its citizens. In a nutshell, Kymlicka astutely summarizes, "a thriving civil society produces the citizens who support the policies that support a thriving civil society" (Kymlicka 2002b: 94).

What civil society needs from the state is the guarantee of a legal framework that enables citizens to associate freely and according to the law (Kymlicka 2002b: 93). This legal framework is expected not only to involve the Habermasian ideal of freedom of speech, but also, as Kymlicka argues, to establish an efficient and balanced cooperation between civil society

organizations and the sector of public administration. Such an arrangement allows civil society organizations to manage finances, possess property, and obtain an official status. Kymlicka underscores the importance of this cooperation by pointing at the democratic transformations in Eastern Europe where the weak institutional network of civil society organizations resulted from the deficient legal system in these new democracies. In this sense, Kymlicka correctly notices that “the enhanced role of the state also entails a more robust and demanding conception of the individual citizen.” A developed democracy presumes a strong sense of justice of the part of the citizens, their capacity for public debate, and their disposition towards civility. Accordingly, a developed democracy entails a more demanding role for civil society because “the associations of civil society must help develop such citizens” who “abide by certain principles of civility and justice” (Kymlicka 2002b: 101).

Emphasizing the importance of learning civic virtues in the associations of civil society, Kymlicka agrees with Walzer that “the civility that makes democratic politics possible can only be learned in the associational networks” of civil society (Walzer 1992: 104). He also shares Glendon’s opinion that civil society is the “seedbed of civic virtue.” Glendon praises the voluntary formations of civil society as the only places where “human character, competence, and capacity for citizenship are formed” and where citizens acquire the skills of self-restraint and a better understanding of how ideas of personal responsibility and mutual obligation can be realized (Glendon 1991: 109). Recognizing the strength of Glendon’s argument, Kymlicka qualifies it by admitting that “the civil society theorists demand too much of voluntary associations in expecting them to be [...] a small replica of democratic citizenship” (Kymlicka 2002a: 305-6). Thus, his adherence to the liberal-egalitarian position obliges Kymlicka to consider civil society as one of the successful, yet not perfect, environments for laying the foundations of civility. Kymlicka’s conception of civility is devoid of the previous teleological content typical of the Scottish Enlightenment, which has been criticized by Keane. Instead, civility signifies prudence and adequacy in the social behavior of citizens, who act within the legal-political framework of a pluralist democratic state.

Such prudence and adequacy in social behavior can be learnt not only in civil society organizations, but also in various political organizations, business associations, and the family. Taken apart, these organizations suffer from their limitations, but merged together, they have more chances to provide citizens with freedom to communicate their ideas about the public

good. With this claim, Kymlicka makes an importance distinction between civic virtues that are applicable to the public sphere and virtues that are appropriate to the private sphere. For instance, he considers the virtue of public reasonableness as essential in political debate, but as unnecessary and sometimes undesirable in the private sphere. Moreover, the philosopher also admits that people frequently join voluntary associations because they want to pursue their own private interests and realize their own individual values, which have not much to do with the promotion of citizenship (Kymlicka 2002a: 306).

It is important for us to realize that Kymlicka's theory exposes a normative vision. In reality, however, the interactions between civil society and the state are considerably more conflictual than depicted. Likewise, not all associations teach democratic values. When associations create injustice through discriminatory practices, "bad civil society" is likely to emerge. Addressing the problem of bad civil society, Kymlicka does not fully embrace Walzer's advocacy of "critical associationalism," whereby Walzer implies that associations of civil society may need to be reformed in the light of the principles of citizenship. Kymlicka objects, "If the government adopts this aim too enthusiastically, it would become a threat to civil society" (Kymlicka 2002b: 94, 98). The question at stake is, in Kymlicka's eyes, where to draw the line for legitimate state intervention.

As we can remember, the main controversy of the liberal-egalitarian theory ensues from the attempted balance between considerations of egalitarianism and liberalism. The indicated controversy reaches its climax when applied to the case of bad civil society and possible state intervention. Liberalism precludes the state's engagement with cases of private discrimination, even if there is a clear evidence of inequality of resources and life-chances. Although this standpoint may be liberal, it is at odds with egalitarian principles. Egalitarianism, on the other hand, advocates social justice based on the equal distribution of resources; thus, when social justice is endangered, it justifies state intervention. However, this solution is not liberal enough (Kymlicka 2002b: 98). Being permanently confronted with this dilemma, liberal egalitarians seek for "the minimally disruptive way to remedy the problem" (Kymlicka 2002b: 102).

As far as potential violence within the institutional framework of civil society is concerned, Kymlicka holds an opinion comparable to that of Keane. Accordingly, Kymlicka does not share Nancy Rosenblum's "liberal expectancy," whereby she expresses the hope that public awareness about the principles of liberal democracy would function as a gravitational pull

with regard to associations of civil society. Instead, Kymlicka points at the alarming outbursts of discrimination and incivility in civil society, which threaten, in his view, to refute liberal expectancy and thus need to be thoroughly studied by theorists of civil society (Kymlicka 2002b: 103).

### 2.2.3 Michael Walzer's Argument "In Favor of Inclusiveness"

The "civil society argument" – the term that Michael Walzer introduced in his identically titled contribution in 1992 – does not imply one systematic unencumbered argument. Instead, the "civil society argument" comprises a complex of arguments, some of which seem incongruent with each other. Presumably, Walzer meant to emphasize the versatility of existing civil society theories. In addition, he conceptualizes civil society as a vision of the good life, thus attaching a distinct normative meaning to his conception. This is evident from his later contribution 'The Concept of Civil Society' (1995). In the chapter 'Equality and Civil Society' (2002), Walzer concretizes his political position as "the non-Marxist secular left," which is in certain ways similar to liberal egalitarianism (Walzer 2002: 34). In his normative substantiation of the idea and the reality of civil society, Walzer departs from the presumption that civil and political liberties are fundamental to human freedom and dignity. However, he admits that a perfect equality could never be achieved because people would use their freedom to pursue conflicting conceptions of the good life.

In search for the preferred setting for the good life, Walzer starts with refuting four rival answers suggested by moral philosophers and political theorists. The scholar criticizes these answers because none of them can claim to be exclusively correct and complete. Instead, Walzer suggests a vision of the good life that would take into account "the necessary pluralism of any civil society." First, Walzer discusses two positions from 'the Left.' According to the republican conception of the good life, the perfect setting refers to the political community and presumes freely engaged, active, committed, and politically-effective participation of citizens. Walzer ridicules the republican interpretation that citizens are motivated to engage into political life "not for the sake of this or that determination [of our common destiny] but for the work itself." The full-pledged engagement of all citizens in the process of political decision-making is beyond realism, simply because power of the democratic state has grown enormously and because politics rarely attracts the full attention of the citizens who are involved in economic relations. The second leftist answer to the question

about the good life focuses on economic activity. Walzer associates this position with the names of Marx and other “utopians he hoped to supersede” (Walzer 1995: 9-10). According to the Marxist theory, the perfect setting for the good life would be the cooperative economy. Once productivity of the economically engaged citizens would be set free, the state would surrender its legitimacy and disappear. Again, Walzer repudiates this “romantic” vision as being “set against an unbelievable background – a nonpolitical state, regulation without conflict” (Walzer 1995: 12).

As far as conceptions from ‘the right’ are concerned, a capitalist, or libertarian, position promotes the marketplace as the preferred setting for the good life and associates the marketplace with the ultimate expression of individual freedom. Walzer finds the market-based model restrictive and unjust because “people come to the marketplace with radically unequal choices” and therefore “autonomy in the marketplace provides no support for social solidarity.” In this regard, Walzer is as emphatic as Kymlicka in asserting the principle of distributive social justice.<sup>19</sup> Finally, the critic perceives a nationalist response as “a response to market amorality and disloyalty,” playing on the nation-bound sentiments of citizens. Because the highest value of this response consists in “the firm identification of the individual with a people and a history,” he repudiates the nationalist conception of the good life due to its exclusiveness (Walzer 1995: 13-14).

Given the normative and empirical insufficiency of the depicted positions, Walzer proceeds with elaborating his liberal reading of civil society theory. The scholar criticizes the answers both from the left and from the right for their singularity and undertakes to overcome it by exposing the civil society argument “as a corrective to the four ideological accounts of the good life.” Prompted to think “in favor of inclusiveness,” he aspires to demonstrate that “ideally, civil society is a setting of settings: all are included, none is preferred” (Walzer 1995: 16). Thus, he ascribes a distinct anti-ideological propensity to his theorization. This presumption

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<sup>19</sup> Although the question whether civil society includes market associations is not of major importance to Walzer, he addresses this issue, as he recognizes that the market can have far-reaching consequences for a balanced civil society. He clarifies, “Civil society reflects and is likely to reinforce and augment the effects of inequality” insofar as it provides space for mass mobilization of recourses and where the basic market rule of expansion of the strongest is applied (Walzer 2002: 39). Weak groups of civil society face the danger of being excluded from the market. To deal with the problem of inequality, Walzer suggests two arguments. First, he insists that each individual is responsible for his own individual destiny. Secondly, he underscores that the state’s action aims at a just redistribution of resources. Both arguments are valid in Walzer’s eyes, as “the distribution of responsibility is a pluralist business” (Walzer 2002: 41).

resembles Keane's post-foundationalist pluralist thesis that any theory of civil society is essentially incomplete and cannot have one universally valid substantive foundation.

Within this liberal reading of civil society theory, Walzer defends the argument "in favor of inclusiveness" on the grounds that civil society "would include all social groups that are or can be understood as voluntary and noncoercive, thus excluding only the family, whose members are not volunteers, and the state," which yields coercive power over its members (Walzer 2002: 35). In essence, Walzer calls for "a more densely organized, more egalitarian civil society" that would allow people to make smaller decisions and thereby to exert more direct influence upon the state and the economy (Walzer 1995: 18).<sup>20</sup> The unity and coherence of civil society in such a pluralist understating, are guaranteed by "multiple and overlapping memberships" that help to tie all the groups together, "creating something larger and more encompassing than any of them." In this respect, it is vital that autonomous individuals should be free to join associations of their choice and move from one group to another. At the same time, the unity of civil society is also guaranteed by the liberal state, which marks the boundaries of civil society and establishes "the chief playing field for associational commitment" (Walzer 2002: 36-37).

The problematic relationship between civil society and the state is for Walzer as important as for Kymlicka and Keane. On Walzer's account, the problem arises from the discrepancy between the normative idea and the practice of state- civil society relations. If ideally, civil society designates "a realm of free choice, community, and participation," in reality, it also accommodates "a realm of difference and fragmentation," and thus a realm of conflict and competition. The scholar admits, however, that "there is no avoiding it, and it may well be that the most important thing people learn in civil society is how to live with the many different forms of social conflict" (Walzer 2002: 37-38). On this account, I cannot but fully agree with Walzer that "civil society is a school indeed – for competitive coexistence and toleration, which is to say, for civility. Of course, it is also simultaneously, a school for hostility and sometimes for zeal. But [...] toleration may win out in the end, if only by exhausting its enemies" (Walzer 2002: 38).

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<sup>20</sup> Walzer shrewdly observes that active participants of civil society are different from the "heroes of republican mythology" of Ancient Greece, as they remain outside the republic of citizens and are commonly represented by "part-time union officers, movement activists, party regulars, consumer advocates, welfare volunteers, church members, family heads" who search "for many partial fulfillments, no longer for the one clinching fulfillment" (Walzer 1995: 18).

The exhaustion of the enemies should be exactly the ultimate goal of the democratic state, which “has to hold the ring and make sure that the conflicts within civil society are never permanently won by any single group and that the norms of civility, at least in some minimalist version, are maintained throughout” (Walzer 2002: 39). In order to sustain the unity within civil society, Walzer asserts, we need “a strongly positive theory of the state” (Walzer 2002: 47). However, it is the indispensability of the state that constitutes “the paradox of civil society argument.” As the realm of freedom, differentiation, and possible conflict, civil society needs the state because the state compels “association members to think about a common good, beyond their own conceptions of the good life” (Walzer 1995: 23). On this view, Walzer agrees with Keane and Kymlicka that the state’s primary function is “to enforce the norms of civility and regulate the conflicts that arise within civil society.” This can be achieved by remedying “inequalities produced by the associational strength of different groups” and by setting the limits on the forms of occurring inequalities. The conclusion of this argument is obvious: “A decent society requires state action” (Walzer 2002: 47).

Walzer addresses the problem of bad civil society in the context of state-civil society relations, admitting again that the normative idea of their relations often diverges from the actual relations. Specifically, the scholar wonders how the liberal democratic state can deal with those associations of civil society that potentially or virtually undermine the principle of individual autonomy, tolerance, and pluralism. The question at stake is analogous to that posed by Kymlicka, namely how the liberal egalitarian state may resist damaging practices, and to which extent state intervention is justified. Walzer, however, suggests a different solution to this dilemma. To start with, he denies that there is such a thing as a perfect, essentially non-hierarchical, all-reconciling civil society because “many of the supposedly voluntary associations of civil society are in fact involuntary” and because not all individuals are equally aware of their autonomy and are prepared to defend it. Walzer concludes, “For these reasons, there will always be local hierarchies and even local tyrannies within liberal democratic state, and so we will always need a theory [...] that tells us when to intervene and when not.” Positioned between two main strategies of prevention or defeat, “state intervention should not aim at a perfect civil society, but rather at partial and temporary remedies to the complex imperfections of actual associations” (Walzer 2002: 46). In this sense, Walzer’s proposition to

balance an ideally free civil society and a controlling state approximates the solutions suggested by practical politicians.

#### 2.2.4 A Communitarian Amendment to Liberal Theory

The analysis of the liberal theory of civil society would be incomplete without a communitarian perspective. For this purpose, I shall resort to the contributions of Amitai Etzioni, William Galston, and Robert Putnam. The general goal of the communitarian theory consists in revealing the need for “a change in the moral climate” established in contemporary Western societies. Worried by the growing moral disconnectedness and consumption attitude, Etzioni advocates a pronounced communitarian perspective on civil society theory with a view to restoring “civility and commitment to the commons” (Etzioni 1995: 100). This objective is evident from the title of Etzioni’s article ‘Too Many Rights, Too Few Responsibilities,’ in which the scholar emphatically asserts that the communitarian project aims to promote shared responsibilities among members of a community and thus to reduce the demand for state restrictive intervention.

Given these objectives, Etzioni considers the concept of civil society as utterly apt for communitarian aspirations. As he explains in his insightful article ‘Why the Civil Society Is Not Good Enough?’, communitarians tend to reinvigorate the normative understanding of civil society exclusively in terms of a good society because only in this sense the concept “fosters additional virtues beyond the merely civil.” If, “from the basic standpoint of the civil society, one voluntary association is, in principle, as good as any another,” from the perspective of the good society, associations of civil society differ, as they embody different values. Insofar as the good society seeks to uphold “some particular social conceptions of the good,” it is viewed by Etzioni as “centered around a core of substantive, particularistic values” and thus as different from civil society (Etzioni 2005).

In his contribution ‘Progressive Politics and Communitarian Culture,’ Galston also conceives of civil society in terms of a good society on the grounds that civil society provides “a rich set of opportunities for satisfying human connections.” He identifies the natural home of such connections with “micro societies: in particular, family, neighborhood, local school, voluntary associations, and the workplace.” Galston’s argument reveals a typically communitarian proclivity to associate civil society with a web of micro communities that promote “special kinds of bonds of intimacy, continuity, and stability.” On that account, Galston underscores the

importance of different values that underlie the relations within civil society. Insofar as individuals participate in civil society to articulate their private needs and interests, the characteristic language of these relations is “a language of commitment, responsibility, duty, virtue, memory, solidarity, and even love rather than the discourse, valuable in its own rights, of choice, rights, personal freedom, and individualism” (Galston 1995: 109).

A similar focus on the micro-level in the life of civil society is central to Robert Putnam’s study *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, where he compares contemporary American and Italian civil societies. Analyzing the process of formation of civil society, Putnam complements the micro-level with the factor of civic culture. Voluntary associations of civil society are exactly the places where civic virtues are cultivated and where civic skills are developed; they are basically the “schools of democracy.” Such nonpolitical associations promote, as Putnam correctly argues, social capital, which is the capacity of citizens to trust each other and work jointly for a common purpose. In such context of trust-based civil society, the “cultural cement of the civic community” is created and the cardinal civic values are learned (Putnam 1993: 182-83). Accordingly, civil society offers an environment that nurtures associative life and enables people to share common interests and hobbies, or, using Putnam’s evocative term he has coined in his study *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, to “bowl together” (Putnam 2000).

The brief survey of the communitarian amendment to the liberal theory of civil society reveals that there are two more complexities to the liberal reading of civil society theory. First, any theory of civil society will be inevitably confronted with the question whether civil society is indeed a good society, and, if so, why bad civil societies can emerge. As we have seen, liberal theorists, amongst whom Keane, Kymlicka, and Walzer, do not avoid the problem of bad civil society; instead, they consider it in connection to such urgent issues as violence, individual right to freedom and autonomy, a legitimate extent of state intervention. Secondly, communitarians revitalize the values of solidarity and commitment in civil society discourse, considering these values as a remedy to counterbalance the consequences of individualism.

### 2.3 Civil Society in the Theory of Deliberative Democracy

To study the concept of civil society in the light of the theory of deliberative democracy, I have chosen to consider the contributions by Jean L. Cohen,

Andrew Arato, and Simone Chambers. The mentioned scholars elaborate their conceptions of civil society under the noticeable influence of Jürgen Habermas's theory of deliberative democracy and discursive ethics. Despite differences in philosophical profoundness, scope, and objective of their contributions, the theorists tend to ground their analysis of civil society in such concepts as public reasoning, rational consensus, and communicative interaction. In what follows, I intend to sketch the trajectories for conceptualizing civil society within the framework of deliberative democracy.

### 2.3.1 Conceiving Civil Society within the Theory of Deliberative Democracy

Jean Louise Cohen and Andrew Arato's comprehensive study *Civil Society and Political Theory* has been an immense contribution to the revitalization of the debate on civil society and democracy. With this study, the scholars have succeeded to draw attention to the normative foundations of the concept of civil society. Their analysis provides a sympathetic revision of the Habermasian framework and advances civil society theory to a high pitch of philosophical sophistication.

At the background of Cohen and Arato's work, one can clearly discern Habermas's conception of civil society that he articulated in his paramount study *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*.<sup>21</sup> Habermas associates civil society with society's capacity for self-organization beyond the institutions of the state and the market. In his view, "Civil society is made up of more or less spontaneously created associations, organizations and movements, which find, take up, condense and amplify the resonance of social problems in private life, and pass it on to the political realm or public sphere" (Habermas 1992: 443). Convinced that the current academic discourse urgently needs a normative theory of civil society "on the basis of a new comprehensive and justifiable practical political philosophy," Cohen and Arato suggest such an innovative normative theory. They do so by linking the Habermasian theory of discourse ethics and the political-philosophical theory of civil society through the categories of democratic legitimacy and basic rights (Cohen and Arato 1992: 346-47).

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<sup>21</sup> First published in German as *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* in 1962. The English translation appeared in 1989.

In essence, the scholars venture a further qualification of the Habermasian theory. In the first place, they emphatically assert the importance of civil society for a democratic polity, asserting that “a highly articulated civil society with cross-cutting cleavages, overlapping memberships of groups, and social mobility is the presupposition of a stable democratic polity, a guarantee against permanent domination by any one group and against the emergence of fundamentalist mass movements and antidemocratic ideologies” (Cohen and Arato 1992: 18). Such a conception of civil society bears a striking resemblance to the liberal-egalitarian definition of Kymlicka and Walzer. Cohen and Arato’s positioning of the concept of civil society within the general theory of democracy determines two indispensable characteristics of civil society. First, civil society promotes civic culture of participation. Second, civil society can successfully function only within the established institutions of democracy. Let us consider these two characteristics more thoroughly.

As far as the intrinsic connectedness of civil society with civic culture of participation is concerned, Cohen and Arato criticize contemporary accounts of the decline of civil society in Western democracies because these accounts tend to understand civic culture of modern civil societies as one based on civic privatism and political apathy. Rejecting this presumption, the scholars undertake to break through general political apathy by asserting the urge of civic participation in associations of civil society, which has never been abolished by established and enormously expended democratic polities. On the contrary, the truly democratic character of civic culture is unthinkable without “*active* participation on the part of citizens in *egalitarian* institutions and civil associations, as well as in politically relevant organizations.” The scholars compellingly explain, “Precisely because modern civil society is based in egalitarian principles and universal inclusion, experience in articulating the political will and in collective decision making is crucial to the reproduction of democracy” (Cohen and Arato 1992: 19).

In contrast to Walzer’s liberal encouragement to “join association of your choice,” Cohen in her contribution ‘Interpreting the Notion of Civil Society’ approximates rather a republican view. She contends, “The discourse of civil society involves a politics, a democratic politics potentially more engaging and mobilizing than the slogan” endorsed by Walzer. It is the democratic edifice of civil society that necessitates a specific type of politics, namely the one that envisages civil society itself as a target of democratization. Cohen is convinced that “the politics of civil society can

try to change the institutions of civil society in a direction [...] toward egalitarian, horizontal, non-sexist, open versions based on the principles of individual rights and democratic participation in associations.” On this view, she advocates “a self-limiting, radical politics” as indispensable for contemporary civil societies (Cohen 1995: 36-37).

The second essential characteristic of civil society is intrinsically connected with the promotion of civic engagement, namely the condition that civil society can successfully function only within the established institutions of democracy. Endorsing the conception of civil society as “a normative model of a societal realm different from the state and the economy,” Cohen and Arato allege that this ideal of civil society needs a corresponding institutional makeup of the democratic polity. First of all, civil society presumes *plurality* and therefore needs to be composed of “families, informal groups, and voluntary associations whose plurality and autonomy allow for a variety of forms of life.” Second, civil society presumes *publicity* and, in this sense, requires the institutions of culture and communication. Third, civil society presumes *privacy*, as it corresponds to “a domain of individual self-development and moral choice.” Finally, civil society presumes *legality* because it needs “structures of general laws and basic rights needed to demarcate plurality, privacy, and publicity from at least the state and, tendentially, the economy.” Cohen and Arato conclude, “Together, these structures secure the institutional existence of a modern differentiated civil society” (Cohen and Arato 1992: 346).

Cohen and Arato specify the institutional preconditions for the existence of civil society. Although the scholars work within the paradigm of political theory, they move toward an inquiry characterized by both sociological precision and philosophical depth. In fact, their approach exceeds the limits of the minimal definition of civil society as a web of voluntary associations, revealing instead a broad scope of creative approaches related to the conception of civil society in a strong sense. The creative potential is even more obvious from Cohen’s description of civil society, “Modern civil society is created and reproduced through forms of collective action, and it is institutionalized through laws, especially subjective rights that stabilize social differentiation” (Cohen 1995: 37). Her definition pertains to the institutional and structural constitution of modern democracies, as well as to the concept of social action, which is the key concept in sociological accounts of modern differentiated societies. Similarly, Cohen and Arato’s study advocates a dynamic understanding of the process of institutionalization of civil society as involving “a stabilization of societal

institutions on the basis of rights” and providing civil society with “the immanent possibility of becoming more democratic” (Cohen and Arato 1992: 411).

By way of a midway conclusion, the strength and the weakness of Cohen and Arato’s conception of civil society ensue from their attempt at amalgamating the descriptive and normative approaches. The scholars undertake such an attempt in order to provide an exhausting understanding of civil society, which would be valid for practical philosophers, sociologists, political scientists, and policy analysts. Next to articulating normative principles that underlie the idea of civil society, Cohen and Arato also examine the institutional and structural makeup of the democratic polity. With this, they legitimately signal the demand for a sociological analysis of a polity that is compatible with a highly differentiated society.

An innovative interpretation of the theory of deliberative democracy has been suggested by Simone Chambers, particularly in her contribution ‘A Critical Theory of Civil Society.’ To start with, Chambers declares her scientific affinity with the school of critical theory, which significantly determines her account of civil society. In general, adherents of critical theory<sup>22</sup> develop a “talk-centric” theory of democracy (Chambers 2002: 98), as they aspire to investigate “the way in which domination and alienation insinuate themselves into the social lives of citizens” (Chambers 2002: 96). In contrast to voting-centric democratic theories, the talk-centric theory focuses on the communicative processes of opinion and will-formation, which precede voting. For talk-centric theorists of democracy, the leading question is how deliberation can shape preferences, moderate self-interests, and maintain conditions of equality (Chambers 2002: 99).

From the perspective of the “talk-centric” theory of democracy, civil society is conceived as possessing a huge emancipatory potential shared by all citizens, which is manifested when citizens freely enter the public sphere to announce their ideas, values, and ideologies and thus to make them politically efficacious. The primary function of public opinion pertains to “simply public criticism,” which becomes “a test of rationality and right.” This is the reason why there is a strong plea among critical theorists for the diversity and the density of civil society. Insofar as critical public debate “emerges only out of a diverse civil society,” “the more diverse is civil

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<sup>22</sup> Chambers names some significant contributions to the talk-centric critical theory of democracy: Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (1996); James Bohman, *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity, and Democracy* (1996); Simone Chambers, *Reasonable Democracy: Jürgen Habermas and the Politics of Discourse* (1996).

society, the more critical will be the public sphere.” Concisely, Chambers concludes, “Diversity is the watchdog of democracy, ensuring that outcomes are viewed and tested from many different perspectives” (Chambers 2002: 100).

The scholars working within the talk-centric theory of democracy ground their normative conception of civil society in the presumptions quite different from those of classical liberalism. Chambers clarifies, “While liberals see individual voluntarism as the defining feature of civil society, however, critical theorists see communicative autonomy.” On this view, she systematically contrasts the critical theory’s conception of civil society as based on the principle of communicative autonomy to the liberal theory of civil society, which promulgates individual right to voluntary association. Communicative autonomy is pivotal to the talk-centric theory of civil society, as it refers to “the freedom of actors in society to shape, criticize and reproduce essential norms, meanings, values, and identities through communicative (as opposed to coercive) interaction. Communicative autonomy is linked to individual autonomy in that the former is a condition of the latter.” Citizens exercise their autonomy when they start to communicate about their life plans in the public space and in interaction with each other. In this process, communication is “the unifying link within civil society,” as it provides the institutional background for free communication among reasoning autonomous individuals. Civil society is thus “the lifeworld as it is expressed in institutions” (Chambers 2002: 93).

If Chambers juxtaposes individual voluntarism with communicative autonomy, Cohen and Arato consider synthesizing these two principles unproblematic. Even stronger, they are convinced that “the public spheres of societal communication and voluntary association” are the central institutions of civil society (Cohen and Arato 1992: 411). Moreover, Cohen and Arato refute Kymlicka’s critique of Habermas’s conception of civil society. Kymlicka criticizes Habermas for relating civil society exclusively to the public sphere and neglecting associations of private interest (Kymlicka 2002b: 82). Cohen and Arato mend the situation by including the private sphere in their account of civil society. They understand the private sphere as “the domain of autonomous individual judgment,” which is crucial to modern civil society (Cohen and Arato 1992: 411). On this view, I suggest resolving the misunderstanding that ensues from Kymlicka’s critique by understanding the different theoretical backgrounds of the concerned scholars. If Kymlicka works within the paradigm of political theory and defines civil society in descriptive terms, as comprising associations of both

the private and the public spheres, Cohen and Arato attempt, alternatively, at a normative ethical conception of civil society. They define the private sphere as a domain reserved for private moral deliberation, which is no less constitutive to the overall conceptualization of civil society.

Cohen and Arato's attempt at reconciling public communication and individual voluntarism touches upon another outstanding problem, potentially very worrying. This problem pertains to the classic tension between individuality and sociability that tends to undermine any coherent theory of civil society. As we can recall from Seligman's analysis, the scholar remains skeptical in the question whether any political-philosophical theory has sufficient moral resources to sustain an enduring normative ideal of civil society. On the contrary, Cohen and Arato try to resolve this seemingly insurmountable difficulty by resorting to Habermas's theory of discourse ethics. The cardinal antinomy between rights-oriented liberalism and solidarity-oriented communitarianism can be resolved, the scholars claim, within the theory of discourse ethics because this theory elucidates the concepts of universality and autonomy in a new light. The process of universalization does not necessarily require that one must abstract from one's concrete situation in order to engage in "an unbiased moral testing of principles." Universality is rather a regulative principle that underlies the discursive process in and through which participants attain the possibility to reason together about "which values, principles, need-interpretations merit being institutionalized as common norms." Cohen and Arato explain why Habermas's theory possesses such a great potential for their intended dynamic conception of civil society, "Assuming that individual and collective identities are acquired through complex processes of socialization that involve both internalizing social norms or traditions and developing reflective and critical capacities vis-à-vis norms, principles and traditions, this theory has as its core an intersubjective, interactive conception of both individuality and autonomy" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 21).

### 2.3.2 Civil Society, the State, and the Economy. A Tripartite Model of Relations

In order to see how civil society is related to the spheres of the state and the economy, Cohen and Arato elaborate a tripartite model of relations, emphasizing that their model is "neither state-centered, as was Hegel's" nor "economy-centered, as was Marx's," but rather is a society-centered model (Cohen and Arato 1992: 411).

Before discussing this model, it is necessary to avoid a potential misunderstanding that may arise from the different terms used by the scholars whose works I rely on. Cohen and Arato clearly distinguish their position from what they call “the neo-conservative model of civil society,” which presumes a dichotomous opposition of society against the state and equals civil society to a bourgeois society (Cohen and Arato 1992: 23). This dichotomous model is also criticized by Chambers, when she speaks about the liberal approach (Chambers 2002: 93-94). For clarification, we can refer to Walzer’s critical classification of different conceptualizations of civil society in which he demonstrates that the partial identification of civil society with the sphere of the economy occurs both in the Marxist and in the right-wing liberal tradition. On that account, Chambers’s critique of liberalism becomes clear. The political-philosophical tradition of liberalism can be divided into two categories. Firstly, it has the form of libertarianism and/or rights-oriented liberalism of John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin; secondly, it approaches the egalitarian liberalism of Kymlicka, Walzer, and Keane who depart from the principle of individual freedom and voluntarism but restrict it with concerns of the public good and social justice. Hence, the critique of liberalism as articulated by Cohen, Arato, and Chambers is clearly oriented against the right-of-center form of liberalism.

Theorists of deliberative democracy reject the dichotomous model that underlies the right-wing liberal and Marxist conceptions of civil society. Instead, they attempt at separating the sphere of civil society from the spheres of the economy and politics. The question arises why this distinction is so crucial. Cohen explains that the erroneous view of civil society as devoid of “any critical potential vis-à-vis the dysfunctions and injustices in our type of society” ensues from the dichotomous model that opposes civil society to the state. In contradistinction to Seligman’s conception of civil society as possessing insufficient theoretical resources to resolve social-moral dilemmas, Cohen considers the concept of civil society as imbued with an appropriate theoretical adequacy, under the condition that the concept is correctly interpreted. For that reason, she insists on the tripartite model that allows distinguishing between the “civil” and the “bourgeois,” and securing the autonomy of civil society from the expansion of the economy. Cohen emphasizes the necessity of the tripartite model because “as we know from the West, economic power can represent as great a danger to social solidarity, social justice, and autonomy as the power of the modern state” (Cohen 1995: 36).

Discussing the tripartite relationship between the state, the market, and civil society, Cohen and Arato demonstrate that “the resources for meaning, authority, and social integration are undermined not by cultural or political modernity (based on the principles of critical reflection, discursive conflict resolution, equality, autonomy, participation and justice) but, rather, by the expansion of an increasingly illiberal corporate economy as well as by the overextension of the administrative apparatus of the interventionist state into the social realm” (Cohen and Arato 1992: 24). Thus, civil society is jeopardized by the forces of the market on the one hand, and by the forces of the bureaucracy on the other. The intervention of both the market and the welfare state can fragment collectives and thus destroy horizontal solidarities established in the social realm of civil society.

In modern societies, the economy has developed an enormous capacity to penetrate other spheres of life and moderate social behavior according to its internal logic. As it has been exhibited by Weber in his ideal-typical classification of rationalities, instrumental rationality tends to overwhelm, in modern capitalist societies, value rationality and affective rationality. The expansion of the economic interest is considered by critical theorists as jeopardy to individual freedom, which constitutes the basis for a healthy democracy (Chambers 2002: 93-94).

Nonetheless, some of us might still wonder what is wrong with economic expansion in modern societies. Critical theorists depart rather from the communicative than the voluntarist nature of society, arguing that the pre-eminence of the state and the market over civil society tends to distort communication in the society on the whole. They are convinced that each separate sphere of society has its own internal logic and means of communication. If one sphere dominates another, it undermines its inherent communicative channels of meaning. Insofar as actors and institutions of political and economic society are directly involved in power or economic production, “they cannot afford to subordinate strategic and instrumental criteria to the patterns of normative integration and open-ended communication characteristic of civil society” (Cohen 1995: 38). On this consideration, the specific form of communication necessitates the distinction of civil society from both economic and political society. If the market operates by means of money and aims to increase the turnover, and politics operates by means of coercive power structures and aims respectively at generation, reproduction, and increase of power, civil society aims at facilitating free communication among citizens about the common good and acceptable ways to achieve it. Accordingly, “for critical theorists, a

healthy civil society is one that is steered by its members through shared meanings. An unhealthy civil society is one that has been colonized by power or money or both” (Chambers 2002: 94). In order to safeguard civil society from the intervention of the state and of the market, Cohen and Arato emphasize the procedural character of communication within civil society, “The procedural principles underlying the possibility of arriving at a rational consensus on the validity of a norm involve *symmetry*, *reciprocity*, and *reflexivity*” (Cohen and Arato 1992: 348). On this view, the scholars advocate a self-reflexive conception of civil society.

To sum it up, critical theorists endorse the tripartite model of relations between civil society, the state, and the economy. Refuting the dichotomous model that identifies civil society with economic society, they strive to safeguard civil society from the sphere of the economy because of the market’s potential threat to distort free communication among citizens on matters of public concern. This motivation is quite different, however, from liberal-egalitarian theorists who warn against the market’s expansion because the market presumes a mass-scale mobilization of resources, which may augment the effects of inequality and thus work against distributive justice. In such a scenario, weak associations of civil society simply face the danger of exclusion (Walzer 2002: 41).

### 2.3.3 ‘Bad Civil Society’

The normative understanding of civil society has not been unencumbered by critical assaults. Cohen and Arato take much trouble to address the normative critique of civil society uttered by Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, and Niklas Luhmann. Despite the intriguing nature of their critical accounts and the brilliant contra-argument of Cohen and Arato, I leave this debate beyond the scope of my study and rather focus on empirically tangible pitfalls of the normative idea of civil society.

The exposition of possible negative upshots of civil society has been undertaken by the scholars affiliated with the talk-centric theory of democracy. This theory presupposes a dense and diverse civil society that accounts for a vibrant and critical public debate. Insofar as it advocates a plurality of ideas represented in the public sphere, it tries to define the extent to which civil society may accommodate this “infinitely expanding diversity.” Thereby, the talk-centric theory of democracy strives to define the borderline at which the “difference is so wide that we can no longer call

civil society a society” (Chambers 2002: 101). These questions touch upon the vital problem of bad civil society.

However paradoxical it may sound, bad civil society can exist if we agree with critical theorists that not all active associational life is unconditionally good in and of itself. In contradistinction to this view, communitarians Putnam and Etzioni assert that associational engagement usually entails the idea of good citizenship. Critical theorists regard the communitarian claim empirically questionable, since they argue that certain groups operating under the shelter of civil society “can and do promote antidemocratic illiberal ideas and, when they do, bad civil society emerges.” On this account, Chambers defines bad civil society as “one that promotes or is hospitable to particularistic civility – that is, a civility that does not cross group boundaries” (Chambers 2002: 101). In the article ‘Bad Civil Society,’ Chambers and Kopstein develop this insight further by identifying the lack of reciprocity as a criterion for characterizing civil society as ‘bad.’ The value of reciprocity implies recognition of other citizens “as moral agents deserving civility.” Accordingly, the groups that actively and publicly challenge the value of reciprocity by advocating hate and bigotry constitute “one particular pathology of civil society” (Chambers & Kopstein 2001: 840).

Reflecting on the question why people join ‘bad’ organizations, Chambers and Kopstein point at the neglected importance of socio-economic factors and reinvolve the classical problem of social justice (Chambers & Kopstein 2001: 838-39). Referring specifically to the cases of bad society in contemporary Russia, such as right-wing skinheads, the scholars clarify, “It is not growing inequality alone that has fueled the support for antiliberal movements in the post-Communist world. Significant inequality always existed in the Soviet Union. What is new, however, is the upheaval associated with the prospect of unemployment and the potential for radical downward mobility, something that was virtually unknown in the Communist era” (Chambers & Kopstein 2001: 846). The threat of potential downward mobility in societies where people tend to define their self-worth in terms of economic success is indeed a decisive factor in mobilizing some citizens towards extremist views. Concisely, the perceptible lack of social justice motivates people to join bad civil society.

Chambers and Kopstein emphasize the need to study those material conditions that are relevant for the formation of citizens’ anti-democratic and anti-liberal opinions and attitudes. The scholars propose the so-called formative project as a medium to preclude the formation of bad civil

society. At the same time, they oppose a simplistic understanding of this formative project in exclusively materialistic terms. The formative project corresponds to the general goal of the critical theory, which is “to consider the forces at work shaping antidemocratic interests” and investigate why people opt for mean-spirited or hate-enthusing groups. Undertaking the formative project, critical theorists examine “the ways in which institutions, social structures, and economic forces shape identity, affect interest-formation, and influence value orientation” (Chambers 2002: 103).

Thus, although Chambers realistically admits that “there will be always a certain number of people who reject the core principles of liberal democracy” and “there is nothing much we can do about this hard core,” she sees a positive potential of critical theory in promoting those institutions of deliberative democracy that can offer “alternative venues of cultural formation” (Chambers 2002: 104-5). For instance, when she ascribes one of the causes of bad civil society to unfortunate economic conditions, she proposes democratic deliberation as “a noncoercive means of creating the social solidarity necessary to overcome a culture of inequality” (Chambers 2002: 107).

The project of cultural formation of citizens who are capable of democratic deliberation seems to me, however, a distant normative ideal. It should be taken into consideration when we discuss possible improvements in actual policies of democratizing countries, but it should not overshadow empirical analysis of real problems. On this view, I am inclined to endorse the realistic view articulated by Chambers and Kopstein, “Poverty, downward social mobility, diminished economic expectations, and even basic inequality [...] create illiberal citizen that no amount of deliberation will convince otherwise” (Chambers & Kopstein 2001: 848). Moreover, it is also important for policy-makers and politicians to realize that reshaping civil society with the aid of government subsidies is not a good strategy either. As the recent example of post-communist Russia has revealed, the expansion of various externally funded programs designed to promote associational life has not changed communist society into a liberal democratic society. Instead, the creation of civic groups by external funding has resulted in a patron/client relationship and facilitated the formation of small, isolated islands of liberalism and tolerance (Chambers & Kopstein 2001: 855-56). Although these islands of liberalism and tolerance are essential for emerging democracies, they are not meant, in my opinion, to remain just islands. These initiatives should expand their public reach and influence, work on generating public trust and on strengthening cross group

boundaries. For this purpose, a complex approach embracing political, economic, ethical, and cultural reforms is needed.

The analysis of bad civil society from the perspective of critical theory underscores certain shortcomings in our contemporary understanding of civil society and democratic polity. The problem of bad civil society invigorates a discussion on urgent social-moral dilemmas that originate from the tension between solidarity and individual autonomy, the common good and individual freedom. It also addresses such pertinent issues as social justice, distribution of resources, and the limits of state intervention in restricting contingent outbursts of citizens' uncivil behavior. In this regard, I believe Chambers and Kopstein are correct in supposing that "addressing the problems of bad civil society will mean returning to the issues of social justice that have been at the core of political theory since its inception" (Chambers & Kopstein 2001: 860).

### ***Conclusion***

The present chapter focused on the moral dimension of civil society theory. The analysis of moral dilemmas inherent in civil society has revealed certain requirements if the political-philosophical ideal of civil society were to be applied to the social realm.

Most importantly, the moral assessment of civil society theory has disclosed the permanent tension between the conceptions of civil society as the social reality and as the normative idea. Conceived within the liberal democratic theory, civil society is both a normative reflection of the established social order and an evolving realization of the normative idea about an ideal social order. In the present chapter, I intended, first of all, to elicit a description of civil society and clarify what and whom civil society includes. This empirically-oriented approach defines civil society in a minimal sense, in Taylor's words, as a web of voluntary associations autonomous from the tutelage of the state and distinguished from business corporations. In this sense, civil society refers to the existing network of public initiatives including various NGO's, trade unions, interest groups, religious organizations, not-for-profit organizations (such as charity foundations), neighborhood associations, hobby clubs, etc. In the context of liberal democracy, this network is legally protected by the constitution, recognized by state authorities and able to cooperate with the corporate sector. Such a network already exists in Western liberal democracies and is in the process of development in democratizing countries.

In addition to empirically-oriented analysis, I discussed conceptions of civil society that involve comprehensive philosophical visions. In this discussion, civil society rather embodies a normative concept, or an ethical vision of the ideal social order. It allows for a definition of civil society in a stronger sense, i.e. as a self-regulative and self-reflexive social body that is able of politically-effective decisions and actions. The normative understanding of civil society theory connects political analysis to the realm of values and beliefs. As “a phenomenon in the realm of values, beliefs, or symbolic action,” civil society reveals a certain “universalistic mode of orientations on the part of social actors.” Thus, it is affiliated with “the definition of citizenship in terms of universalistic, highly generalized moral bonds” (Seligman 1992a: 204). Perceived in normative terms, the notion of civil society touches upon the question as how individual should act within one’s social and political environment. In this sense, the idea of civil society reflects an ideal social order. The study of civil society as a political-philosophical ideal entails the search for a right balance between individual freedom and solidarity, private interests and the public good. By relating this balance to concrete structures and institutions of a democratic polity, scholars describe certain organizational features of social life and thereby connect the normative ideal to the social reality. This complex approach is justified because it does justice not only to the conceptual richness of civil society, but also to the plurality of its social forms.

The study of civil society as a social-moral concept has revealed certain moral dilemmas. One of the chief dilemmas ensues from the controversial relationship between civil society and the democratic state. The question at stake pertains to the supremacy in their relationship. Historically, the debate on this question has resulted, as Taylor has noticed, from “an amalgam of two rather different influences,” namely the influence of Locke and that of Montesquieu. Despite their different intellectual and political-historical background, both visions developed in the context of anti-absolutist struggle and thus ardently defended the distinction between civil society and the state. The distinction between political authority of the state and the living organism of civil society arose, in Taylor’s words, “as a necessary instrument of defense in face of the specific *threats* to freedom implicit in the Western tradition.” Since modern democratic states are “still drawn to a vocation of mobilizing and reorganizing its subjects’ lives, the distinction would seem to be guaranteed a continuing relevance” (Taylor 1995: 223). At the same time, this distinction poses an enduring moral quest of where to draw a legitimate line for potential state intervention in the life of society.

In addition to the state-society distinction, civil society discourse involves reflection on the moral problems that ensue from the principles of Western liberalism. Seligman brilliantly formulated the foremost moral dilemma of civil society as how to posit “a unified vision of the social order that, at the same time, recognized the legal, moral, and economic autonomy of its component parts.” In his analysis, civil society discourse approaches “first and foremost ethical edifice” aimed at clarifying the conflict between individual and society (Seligman 2002: 27; 1997: 110). The normative usage of the concept of civil society reveals the glaring tension between individualism and community, particular interests and universal law. Therefore, the analysis of civil society as a social-moral concept attempts at defining optimal conditions for the realization of individual freedom within liberal democratic order. At the same time, it also suggests a qualified way to deal with potential risks latently present in the liberal-individualistic principles upon which civil society theory is founded.

In the course of history, civil society theory absorbed two fundamental ideas, “Durkheimian emphasis on moral individualism as the basis of solidarity within modern, *gesellschaftlich* societies” and “Weberian emphasis on the increased rationality of modern forms of social organization as the embodiment of universal values” (Seligman 1992a: 204). The moral dilemma lying at the heart of civil society discourse continues to invigorate the debate between rights-oriented liberals and communitarians, with the problem of freedom and rights being at stake. The rights thesis, most vigorously advocated by John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice* (1971) and by Ronald Dworkin in *Taking Rights Seriously* (1977), has been criticized by communitarian democrats, like Taylor, Walzer, and Kymlicka, who argue that freedom must have its original locus not in the isolated individual, but in the society, which is the medium of individuation. Insofar as freedom is obtained at the level of social interactions, communitarian democrats claim civic virtue, the public good, and democratic participation to be pivotal to contemporary civil society discourse. They perceive the communal practice of citizenship as pervading not only societal institutions and structures, but also social behavior and moral sentiments of each individual citizen. By implication, communitarians warn that if the rights thesis is realized to its utmost, it would seriously undermine solidarity in societal community and would eventually lead to the project of alienated, anomic, privatized, competitive, and devoid of moral sentiments society.

The tension between rights-oriented liberalism and justice-oriented communitarianism entails an unresolved antinomy, succinctly explicated by

Cohen and Arato. On the one hand, rights-oriented liberalism appears as “the source of egoistic, disintegrative tendencies in modern society and hence the main impediment to achieving a democratic society predicated on civic virtue.” On the other hand, communitarians continue to defy the claim that modern societies are not precisely communities integrated around a single vision of the good life. Cohen and Arato clarify, “Modern societies are characterized by a plurality of forms of life as they are structurally differentiated and socially heterogeneous. Thus, to be able to lead a moral life, individual autonomy and individual rights must be secured” (Cohen & Arato 1992: 10). On this view, it is only democracy with its emphasis on rational deliberation and egalitarian acknowledgment of individual rights that can render modern pluralistic civil societies legitimate in the eyes of minorities.

The next chapter will address again the problem of social and political pluralism, but then from the perspective of sociological theory. I shall pursue the question what constitutes civil society as an enduring self-sustaining social system and what holds this complex system together. I shall discuss the theory of societal differentiation with a view to clarifying the role of values and the function of structures in the formation of civil society as a moral community and a social system. In preparation for this discussion, we can conclude from the analysis presented in the present chapter that civil society is essentially complex, dynamic, pluralistic, and not necessarily unencumbered by assaults of state violence or uncertainties of risk society. In real civil societies, the balance between individualism and solidarity is indeed fragile because it pertains to the condition of freedom. As Keane has compellingly argued, “The openness that is characteristic of all civil societies – their nurturing of a plurality of forms of life that are themselves experienced as contingent – is arguably at the root of their tendency to violence” (Keane 1998: 147). That is the reason why the problem of bad civil society, manifested in various anti-democratic, intolerant and extremist movements, is inherent in liberal democratic polities. It requires an understanding of civil society as imbued with capacity of self-reflexivity and self-sustenance. The pursuit of such an understanding motivates the further analysis of the institutions and structures of civil society.

Finally, I want to address the question whether civil society, which is essentially an authentic feature of Western liberal democracies, can be employed as an adequate instrument for evaluating democratic projects in post-communist countries. For instance, Seligman is unambiguously critical

of such usage. He asserts that the idea of civil society as “a model for overcoming contemporary impasses of social life” is irrelevant to the current situation both in the East and in the West (Seligman 1992b: 5). In my view, the concept of civil society should be used if we want to assess the democratic experience in the countries of Eastern Europe.

This objective posits the study of civil society as a social-moral concept in a transcultural context. Referring to the focus on my study on contemporary Russia, I consider civil society to be indeed an indispensable instrument for evaluating Russia’s democratic project. However, I do not think it is a fully adequate instrument. Insofar as Russia accepted the constitutional form of liberal democracy, it needs civil society as an integral part of the accepted polity. In this sense, civil society is expected to provide democratic politics with legitimacy and serve as a vital link between the state and society. On these grounds, civil society is an indispensable criterion for the evaluation. Nonetheless, the conceptual level of evaluation would confront us with an obvious contrast between the normative content ascribed to civil society in Western established democracies and the normative content ascribed to civil society in East-European emergent democracies. As these two distinct forms of democratic polity cope with quite different kinds of social-moral problems, civil society has different connotations in the two concerned contexts.

Most vividly, the contrast has been portrayed by Seligman. In the West, the classical liberal-individualistic model is confronted with such upshots of mass democratic societies as diminishing trust, mutuality, and social cohesion (Seligman 1992a: 200). In this context, “the idea of civil society invokes a greater stress on community” and the discussion is meant to provide a definition of civil society in terms of “some set of highly generalized and universalistic moral bonds obtaining between social actors.” The universal moral cohesion accounts for a conception of civil society as “a self-regulating community existing between individuals yet distinct from their existence as citizens of the nation-state” (Seligman 1992b: 6).

In contrast to the Western context, in newly established democracies of Eastern Europe, “the (practical) conditions for the emergence of the classical Western liberal-individualist model of civil society do not fully exist.” Hence, the discussion on civil society expresses primarily “a call for the institutionalization of those principles of citizenship upon which modern liberal, democratic polities in the West are based” (Seligman 1992b: 5). These are the principles of individualism and pluralism that so many in the West identify with the idea of civil society, but that are lacking in the

East. For East European democracies, “civil society evokes a strong communal attribute that, while apart from the State, is also equally distant from the idea of autonomous and agentic individual upon which the idea of civil society rests in the West.” Seligman correctly observes that the individual actor within civil society is still seen in the East as “firmly embedded within communal, mostly primordial attributes that define the individual in his or her opposition to the state.” This community-engraved understanding of the individual in the East, which is especially true with regard to Russian political culture, is opposite to the Western “idea of the individual as infused with moral and transcendental attributes” (Seligman 1992a: 202-3).

In a nutshell, if Western civil societies are mainly confronted with the moral problem of increasing individualism and diminishing social cohesion, Eastern nascent civil societies bear a strong community orientation and suffer from the insufficient public recognition of individual rights and the underdevelopment of legal culture.



# Sociological Embedding of Civil Society Theory

## *Introduction*

If in the previous chapter, the concept of civil society was studied as a social-moral concept from the perspective of political-philosophical theory, the present chapter examines the idea and the reality of civil society in the light of sociological theory. This choice is motivated by the following consideration: Insofar as every normative theory of democracy presupposes a corresponding model of society, we need to complement normative analysis by social-scientific analysis of societal structures and institutions. In this respect, I draw inspiration from the insight suggested by Cohen and Arato, “Without a social-scientific analysis of the structure and dynamics of modern society, we have no way of evaluating the generality of a given identity or the global constraints operating behind the back of social actors” (Cohen and Arato 1992: xvi). Following this apprehension, I intend to examine the structures and dynamics of modern society and thereby to provide a sociological embedding for the idea of civil society.

The primary aim is thus to reconstruct major sociological descriptions of modern civil society. For this purpose, I employ the conception of civil society in the stronger sense, whereby civil society is understood as a typical feature of Western civilization and as an heir to the societal processes that occurred in the West (Taylor 1995: 208). In accordance with this conception, the intended sociological embedding is meant to provide an understanding of civil society as a spin-off of the process of societal

differentiation. Having said this, I need to explain why the model of a differentiated society corresponds, in my view, to the concept of civil society.

My basic presumption, which I have gained from Cohen and Arato's study, is that the key notion in any sociological description of modern civil society pertains to differentiation. Insofar as the egalitarian edifice of civic culture presumes a high degree of differentiation of society, societal differentiation provides the idea of civil society with an empirical referent and allows matching a political ideal with descriptive material. Accordingly, Cohen and Arato "locate the genesis of democratic legitimacy and the chances for direct participation [...] within a highly differentiated model of civil society itself. This shifts the core problematic of democratic theory away from descriptive and/or speculative models to the issue of the relation and channels of influence between civil and political society and between both and the state, on the one side, and to the institutional makeup and internal articulation of civil society itself, on the other" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 19). The connection of democratic theory with the model of a highly differentiated civil society necessitates thorough studying of the very concept of differentiation. The scholars corroborate, "Given the challenges to the very model of differentiation that is at the heart of the discourse of civil society, it is essential to provide a systemic reconstruction of its structural presuppositions" (Cohen and Arato 1992: xvi). This reconstruction is meant to reveal how the normative principles underlying the idea of civil society, such as plurality, publicity, legality, equality, justice, voluntary association, and individual autonomy, constitute a demand for a plurality of democratic forms, a complex set of social, civil, and political rights compatible with a highly differentiated society (Cohen 1995: 37).

In view of these considerations, I define the central question of the present chapter as how one can revise the idea and the reality of civil society in the light of the theory of societal differentiation. The following subquestions ensue from the central question: What are the key concepts that allow reconstructing the sociological description of civil society in the modern West? What does the sociological analysis of civil society clarify in the theory of democracy and what are the main pitfalls of sociological analysis? More specifically, does sociological analysis still harbor the tension between descriptive and normative elements? Alternatively, has it been able to overcome this tension and construct a satisfying coherent conception of civil society?

Providing the sociological embedding of civil society, we should be aware of the criticism articulated by Cohen and Arato, “Because of the normatively marked heritage of the concept, it is difficult to find systematic social theorists who take up the issue of civil society” (Cohen and Arato 1992: 300). Indeed the notion of civil society has an unequivocal normative connotation, whereas sociologists seek to develop a value-free theory of society. Nevertheless, I shall pursue my goal and do it by elucidating how civil society has been conceptualized in the history of modern sociological science. First, I shall focus on the theory of social action developed by Max Weber (1864-1920) and by Talcott Parsons (1902-79); subsequently, I shall examine the systems theory developed by Niklas Luhmann (1927-98). The names of Weber, Parsons, and Luhmann certainly belong to the pantheon of twentieth century sociological classics. Because the limitations of the scope of my study do not allow to do full justice to their enormous contributions, I aim at spelling out only those specific concepts that provide sociological evidence for the rise and function of modern civil society.

Although one can hardly find in Weber’s impressive oeuvre any explicit reference to the term ‘civil society,’ let alone a substantive analysis of the notion, I believe that it is possible to discover in his theory two fundamental hypotheses about the dynamics of Western civil society, namely the thesis of rationalization and the thesis of the increasing “disenchantment of the world” (3.1). For their part, Parsons and Luhmann do not center their sociological theories on the concept of civil society either. Nevertheless, I shall select certain insights from their extensive studies to reveal sociological credibility of the idea of civil society. Specifically, I shall revise Parsons’s concept of societal community, which he believed to produce collectively shared norms and value patterns, providing thus modern differentiated society with cohesion (3.2). Finally, I shall examine how Luhmann extended Parsons’s original paradigm toward a sophisticated theory of differentiation (3.3). If Parsons associated the concept of civil society with a subsystem of society aimed at performing the function of integration in the system of society, Luhmann refuted confining civil society to any particular subsystem of society and opted for a value-free conception of civil society in terms of modern *Gesellschaft*. By focusing on each of the mentioned theories, I intend to trace the evolution of sociological conceptions of modern civil society.

A few words should be said about the genesis of the concept of differentiation in modern social science. When describing the complex structural-institutional edifice of modern societies, certain sociologists use the term ‘differentiation.’ In the article ‘Differentiation as Absolute

Concept? Toward the Revision of a Sociological Category,' Gerhard Wagner undertakes to trace what he calls "the interrupted tradition" of this theoretical category. Wagner associates the inception of differentiation-oriented thinking with the name of Herbert Spencer, who was the first sociologist to provide a systematic elaboration of the concept. Borrowing his theoretical perspective from biology, Spencer defined differentiation in terms of organic process in the primitive germ-cell, which denotes the process of transformation from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous. Insofar as Spencer believed that what applies to biological organisms also holds for societies, he employed the concept of differentiation as a universal principle to explicate the social realm. In his theoretical framework, differentiation signified a process initiated by an increase in size and resulting in a very specific transformation of a homogeneous state into a heterogeneous one (Wagner 1998: 451-52). Although Spencer's *Principles of Sociology* was frequently accused of simplistic analogies, he did establish, as Wagner contends, a continuous theoretical tradition.

In social science, the concept of differentiation came to mean the process of division of society into autonomous social subsystems according to their primary functions. Hence, societal differentiation involves the increasing specialization of different subsystems and institutions within modern society. On the other hand, it also implies that the structures have autonomous nature and are able to sustain themselves during the process of differentiation. The concept of differentiation was for the first time extensively researched by sociologists Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons. Nowadays, it continues to inspire the current academic discussion held by Jeffrey Alexander, Paul Colomy, Wolfgang Schluchter, and Richard Münch.<sup>23</sup> However, the leading position in the theory of differentiation belongs to Niklas Luhmann, who, as Wagner correctly notices, "makes the concept of differentiation the foundation of an elaborate sociological theory that far surpasses the works of all the aforementioned authors in its complexity" (Wagner 1998: 452).

My choice to focus on the theories of society produced by Weber, Parsons, and Luhmann is motivated by the following considerations. Notwithstanding all radical differences, these sociologists share an understanding of society in terms of an encompassing system, constituted by a multiplicity of interconnected analytical components, or subsystems.

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<sup>23</sup> Wagner also indicates that the concept of differentiation has provoked much criticism in sociology, for instance, by Karin Knorr-Cetina and Renate Mayntz.

The systemic purview allows these theorists to overcome piecemeal analysis of society and interconnect all different social and historical processes into one unifying vision of society.

### 3.1 Max Weber's Theory of Rationalization

Max Weber is justly regarded as “the most troublesome figure in twentieth century social and political thought” (Nielsen 1996: 375). His work has continuously constituted an inexhaustible source of inspiration for a wide range of social scientists, irrespective of their theoretical orientations. My interest in Weber's oeuvre pertains to the question what determines the specifics of Western modern society. Central to Weber's account of modern society is his notion of rationality, which allows him to understand the process of societal modernization as the process of increasing rationalization of autonomous value spheres. Given the prolific vastness of Weber's work, I have to restrict my research to a number of writings where Weber has made rationality his major category: *Economy and Society*, *The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism*, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, especially the intermediary chapter ‘Zwischenbetrachtung,’ and a range of sociological essays, amongst which the essay ‘Politics as a Vocation.’ Strategically, I shall build up my analysis as follows. First, I shall discuss the concept of rationality as central to the Weberian diagnosis of Western modernity; next, I shall focus on the application of the Weberian concept of rationality to the complex and multidimensional process of the development of Western society; finally, I shall address critical accounts of Weber's theory of rationalization.

#### 3.1.1 Weber's Diagnosis of Western Modernity

My presumption is that Weber's sociological-historical account of modern society provides sociological evidence for Taylor's definition of civil society in a stronger sense (Taylor 1995: 205-6). Relying jointly on Weber and Taylor, I understand the emergence of civil society at the end of the seventeenth century as the result of all-encompassing societal transformations that occurred in the majority of Western countries throughout the Trans-Atlantic zone. The rise of the public sphere and the differentiation of society from the spheres of politics and the economy are the most salient consequences of the structural transformations in the newly established social order. If in the previous chapter, we have discussed the

philosophical and political implications of these transformations, now we need to attend to the sociological description of the shift in the social behavior of modern individuals. In this quest, Weber's typology of social action and legitimate order is elucidating.

Weber explains this change in the social behavior of modern individuals by attending to the thesis of increasing rationalization. Exploration of the rationalization thesis underlies Weber's voluminous sociological-historical investigations, where he persistently seeks for an empirical referent in order to provide his idea of increasing rationalization with some modicum of feasibility. Insofar as rationalization permeates the structural makeup of modern society, it renders society as differentiated into a multiplicity of social subsystems, each of them overridden with a specific rationality. Given this presumption, one can wonder how the increasing rationalization influenced the social behavior of individuals in the typically modern differentiated society.

Weber commences his comprehensive work *Economy and Society*<sup>24</sup> with an ideal-typical classification of four basic types of social action. He understands social action as saturated with a subjective meaning. Since acting individuals attach a subjective meaning to their behavior, they take into account the behavior of others and thereby consciously orient their action according to their specific motivations, interests, values, affections, etc. Due to his primary focus on Western type of social behavior, Weber discusses with noticeably less interest affectual and traditional forms of social action, the former determined by the emotional state of the actor and the latter – by the actor's habitual patterns of behavior. Of greater importance for the scholar is the interrelation between instrumentally-rational (*zweckrational*) and value-rational (*wertrational*) forms of social action. Instrumentally-rational action pertains to *Zweckrationalität* and is “determined by the expectations as to the behavior of objects in the environment and of other human beings; these expectations are used as ‘conditions’ or ‘means’ for the attainment of the actor's own rationally pursued and calculated ends.” Value-rational action is sustained, on the contrary, by the considerations of *Wertrationalität* and hence is “determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other form of behavior, independently of its prospects for success” (Weber 1978: 24-25).

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<sup>24</sup> Weber's *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* was first published in German in Tübingen (1922).

Although Weber's ideal-typical distinction between four basic types of action is characterized by a remarkable analytical elegance, Weber did acknowledge the fact that in reality any given social action involves a combination of elements belonging to different pure types of action. In particular, Weber's concession becomes even more important when he takes up the old controversial juxtaposition of *Gemeinschaft* against *Gesellschaft*. Addressing communal and associative relations within the theoretical framework of his typology of social action, Weber ascribes affectual and traditional rationality to the communal type of action. *Vergemeinschaftung* occurs when "the orientation of social action [...] is based on a subjective feeling of the parties, whether affectual or traditional, that they belong together." On the other hand, *Vergesellschaftung* characterizes social relations, which are determined by "a rationally motivated adjustment of interests to a similarly motivated agreement, whether the basis of rational judgment by absolute values or reasons of expediency" (Weber 1978: 40-41). Weber admits that although communal relations are sociologically observable in different sorts of bonds (family, religious community, military unit, or ethnic group), the majority of social relations retain characteristics of both communal and associative relations, which is obvious from Weber's argument:

No matter how calculating and hard-headed the ruling considerations in such a social relationship [...] may be, it is quite possible for it to involve emotional values which transcend its utilitarian significance. Every social relationship which goes beyond the pursuit of immediate permanent ends, which hence lasts for long periods, involves relatively permanent social relationships between the same persons, and these cannot be exclusively confined to the technically necessary activities. Hence, in such cases an association in the same military unit, in the same school class, in the same workshop or office, there is always some tendency in this direction, although the degree, to be sure, varies enormously (Weber 1978: 41).

As it is clear from the above quote, Weber's elevation of the opposition between the processes of *Vergesellschaftung* and *Vergemeinschaftung* renders the typically modern associative type of the relations amenable to the considerations of affectual and traditional nature. In other words, associations of modern civil society are spontaneously formed not only due to individuals' awareness, or sometimes rational decision, about their values, goals, and interests, but also due to the intuitive and often irrational motivations, traditionally entrenched habits, and sentiments, such as attachment, love, and longing for inclusiveness.

Besides, Weber resourcefully addresses the problem of legitimacy of social order within his analysis of social action. He concedes that social action is maintained by the belief in the existence of a legitimate order, and consequently that a social order is legitimate when it is “considered being binding” (Weber 1978: 31). Employing the ideal-typical method, he distinguishes three sources of legitimacy: rational, traditional, and charismatic. Authority legitimized by *tradition* is maintained by “an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions,” authority legitimized on *rational* grounds presumes “a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the rights of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands,” and finally, authority legitimized by *charisma* is sustained by the devotion of followers to the exceptional sanctity or outstanding personality of a political leader and to his proclaimed political vision (Weber 1978: 215). It is worth noticing that Weber’s political writings, considered in their totality, reflect a serpentine path of his changing political convictions; especially his later writings express the scholar’s fascination with the charismatic form of authority.

The three basic types of legitimate order have multifarious structural forms. One of the forms of rational-legal authority has continuously compelled Weber’s attention when he analyzed modern capitalistic society, namely the bureaucracy. The major structural shift towards rationalization and proceduration that emerged with the rise of early-modern liberalism reached its apex in the form of a modern bureaucratic state and unalterably changed societal relations between modern individuals. Weber confirms that bureaucratic rationalization relies on the techniques and procedures in maintaining social order: It “first changes the material and social orders and *through* them the people, by changing the conditions of adaptation, and perhaps the opportunities for adaptation, through a rational determination of means and ends” (Weber 1978: 116). Weber’s extensive study of bureaucracy brings us to the discussion of an inventive notion that Weber employed to describe the distinctiveness of modern Western society – the notion of formal rationality of modern social order.

Weber made a pioneering attempt to render the process of increasing rationalization and consequent differentiation of value spheres in sociological terms. Undertaking detailed studies of the structures and institutions of modern Western society, he provided a cogent framework for identifying a specific logic imbued in the process of differentiation. As Rogers Brubaker correctly observes in *The Limits of Rationality: An Essay on the Social and Moral Thought of Max Weber*, Weber was also the first to

conceive the essentially “multifaceted rationality of modern society” not as “simply a conceptual mosaic,” nor as “a mere aggregate of unrelated elements” (Brubaker 1984: 29), but as directed by the rationale of the formal type of rationality. Trying to get at the core of the Weberian concept of rationality,<sup>25</sup> Arnold Eisen identified in the article ‘The Meanings and Confusions of Weberian “Rationality” ’ six elements that constitute the semantic core of the concept. First, Eisen concedes that it is the purpose, or the conscious intent of the actor to achieve a given end, that underlies rationality. Second, he identifies the element of calculability as a criterion for maximum efficacy of an action for the achievement of a desired result. Next, rationality entails control over both a means to and an end of an action; it also hinges on logic that is necessary for making sense in terms of a given purpose and rendering action coherent and efficacious. Concisely, rationality is characterized by logical or teleological consistency. Besides, there is a formal element in logic, namely universality. Universality allows rationality to hold true its logical method regardless of what the empirical content in a particular case may be. Conversely, universality connotes abstractness and impersonality. Finally, rationality is characterized by systematicity, as it pertains to systematic methodical organization, relating parts to the whole in a manner most efficacious for the achievement of established goals (Eisen 1978: 58-61). Taken together, these features characterize the formal rationality that underlies modern Western society.

Weber’s pivotal claim is that formal rationality permeated, in modern Western civilization, each institutional component of the social order, including formalistic law, industrial capitalism, bureaucratic administration, ethic of vocation, and scientific-technological progress. As Stephen Kalberg explains in his article ‘Max Weber’s Types of Rationality: Cornerstones for

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<sup>25</sup> Remarkably, multiple attempts of Weberian scholars to clarify a deep conceptual ambivalence toward rationality have produced a gallery of distinguished Weberian sociologies, some of which are based on entirely opposite conceptions. Without addressing the specifics of the debate, I shall simply survey most prominent positions. Steven Lukes discusses the problem of rationality in relation to a set of beliefs that seem *prima facie* irrational and arrives at a confusing conclusion: Insofar as the concept of rationality cannot on itself produce a number of distinct criteria for assessing belief or motivations on the rational/irrational nexus, the concept is “hopelessly opaque” (Lukes 1974: 194). Alternatively, other scholars set forth a critical appraisal of the meaning of Weber’s rationality. Thus, Ann Swindler focused in 1973 on the semantic-conceptual specifications of the three terms ‘rationality,’ ‘rationalism,’ and ‘rationalization.’ Arnold Eisen discerned in 1978 six component elements of the concept, while Rogers Brubaker extended in 1984 the semantic domain of Weber’s concept of rationality toward sixteen possible meanings. Other important attempts at elucidating Weber’s somewhat evasive usage of the concept ‘rationality’ include contributions of Wolfgang Schluchter, Guenther Roth, Wolfgang Mommsen, Stephan Kalberg, and Joel Elliott.

the Analysis of Rationalization Processes in History,' formal rationality has delineated boundaries and attained an unprecedented perseverance in the course of industrialization and has come to legitimize "a similar means-end rational calculation by reference back to universally applied rules, laws, or regulation" (Kalberg 1980: 1158). Insofar as the inner logic of formal rationality is based on what Wolfgang Schluchter calls in the volume *Max Weber's Vision of History: Ethics and Politics* the "scientific-technological rationalism," pointing at "the capacity to control the world on basis of empirical knowledge by means of calculation" (Roth and Schluchter 1979: 14-15), the relations in modern social order become increasingly characterized by abstraction, impersonality and calculability.

In addition, Weber admits another upshot of his thesis of increasing rationalization, namely that the dominance of formal rationality gradually excludes substantive rationality. Formal rationality makes modern Western society progressively efficient but deprives it of its traditional foundations. The institutions of the market, bureaucracy, and law acquire, through using the techniques of increasing formalization and impersonal quantification, a higher degree of efficiency and control. However, at the same time, these institutions become increasingly impervious to the logic of substantive rationality and neglect the values of fraternity, equality, and compassion. Brubaker explains the causes of the diminishing role of substantive rationality in the modern West as follows, "The severe restriction of the scope and significance of brotherly conduct results [...] from the importance of demands for substantive rationality in a society dominated by objectified economic and political structures that perpetuate themselves according to an inexorable logic of purely formal rationality, a logic that excludes all considerations of substantive rationality, all questions of ultimate value" (Brubaker 1984: 86). More specifically, Joel Elliott draws a particular example of the depersonalizing influence of bureaucracy in his contribution 'The Fate of Reason: Max Weber and the Problem of (Ir)Rationality.'<sup>26</sup> He claims that bureaucracy, which is "the most salient example of formal rationality in the modern world" and thus is "indispensable to the orderly and efficient functioning of mass society," "increasingly dehumanizes life with its impersonality and quantification of values" (Elliott 1998: 21). This non-optimistic conclusion acquires a soberer tone in the formulation of Brubaker, "Never, in premodern times, had social and economic life been regulated by mechanisms so relentlessly

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<sup>26</sup> Internet publication, last visited on 28 July 2010.

indifferent to substantive ends and values; never before had means and procedures become so completely autonomous, so thoroughly divorced from ends” (Brubaker 1984: 44).

Concisely, the Weberian thesis of rationalization allows typifying modern social order as “uniquely rational” in the sense that it is based on the clear distinction between formal rationality and substantive rationality, between reason and conscience (Brubaker 1984: 43-44). Thus, although Weber originally intended to produce a conceptually unific framework apt for the historical-sociological analysis of modern society, his attempts were invariably countered by the irreconcilable conflict between formal and substantive rationalities. If formal rationality is primarily dominated by means and devoid of considerations of ends, substantive rationality is permeated by value considerations. Elliott describes formal rationality as denoting “the pursuit of the most efficient and technically correct means within the bounds of accepted scientific knowledge; it displays an inherent tendency toward maximum calculability, escalating impersonality and general indifference to all substantive considerations” (Elliott 1998: 8). On the contrary, substantive rationality operates in relation to the “value postulate” and thus is “a manifestation of man’s inherent capacity for value-rational action” (Kalberg 1980: 1155). Upon this consideration, Weber’s substantive rationality is compatible with Schluchter’s notion of “metaphysical-ethical rationalism,” under which he understands “the systematization of meaning patterns by means of intellectual elaboration and deliberate sublimation of ultimate ends” (Roth and Schluchter 1979: 14-15). Even such a short comparison makes clear that formal and substantive rationalities have different internal logics and consequently refute each other as irrational. Brubaker comments in this respect that formal rationality of modern capitalism, law, bureaucracy, and vocational asceticism “may be judged highly *irrational* from a substantive or evaluative point of view” (Brubaker 1984: 29-30).

It is the Weberian consistent juxtaposition between formal and substantive rationalities that constitutes the inexorable tension in his conception of society. This juxtaposition pertains to the essential antagonism between means and ends, formal efficiency and moral commitment, proceduration and substantiation. In the subsequent parts of his impressive *Economy and Society*, as well as in the numerous sociological essays, Weber is obsessively preoccupied with contemplating the foreboding consequences produced by the inexorable tension between instrumental rationality (*Zweckrationalität*) and substantive rationality (*Wertrationalität*).

Hence, he inquisitively stakes out the opposition between ethics of responsibility (*Verantwortungsethik*) and ethics of ultimate ends (*Gesinnungsethik*), trying to explain the predominance of instrumental rationality in the market and the predominance of substantive rationality in fraternal and personal relations.

The moral consequences of this conflict are far-reaching. None of the Weberian value spheres, be it politics, religion, science, ethics, aesthetics, or law, is redeemed of the indicated tension. On the contrary, as Elliot rightly observes, “the rationalizing tendency is operative in all spheres of human existence, pushing ideas and values toward their logical extremes, increasingly cultivating differentiation among value spheres that are progressively antagonistic with each other” (Elliott 1998: 22). Becoming increasingly devoid of the considerations of substantive rationality, differentiated value spheres evolve in relation to abstract laws, regulations, and external necessities. In result, “the overwhelming strength of sociologically entrenched spheres unable in principle to generate value-rationalization processes condemned the *unified personality* to exist ‘at the edge’ of modern society in small and intimate groups” (Kalberg 1980: 1176). This has led to a situation in which modern individuals should cope with the problem of moral choice and motivation alone, without reference to the desacralized cosmos as the ultimate source of substantive values. With the problem of individual moral choice and motivation, we have come to Weber’s famous diagnosis of “the disenchantment of the world.”

### 3.1.2 The Paradox of the Disenchanted Modernity

In order to understand Weber’s diagnosis of the disenchantment of Western modernity, we need first to clarify how Weber envisages the dynamics of Western civilization in connection to the indicated tendency toward increasing rationalization. For instance, Kalberg opts to “reconstruct, *at the purely conceptual level*, Weber’s vision of a *multiplicity* of rationalization processes that variously conflict and coalesce with one another at all societal and civilizational levels.” Accordingly, he regards four discrete types of rationality as the “cornerstones” for the corresponding rationalization processes (Kalberg 1980: 1147). On this view, Kalberg assumes that Weber, despite of his primary focus on the rationalization process in Western society, does not reject the idea that rationalization processes, albeit often of a different kind, take place in non-Western civilizations as well. Furthermore, in the course of his intellectual journey, Weber “came to

doubt all those theories that understood the advance of ‘rationality’ as a unilinear evolutionary process occurring with equal intensity in all societal spheres. He then began to investigate the manner in which action was rationalized in particular areas” (Kalberg 1980: 1149-51). Likewise, Elliott rightly asserts that any attempt to consider the process of Western development in terms of a “triumphalist, unilinear dynamic of sociocultural evolution” would fundamentally misconstrue Weber’s intentions and ignore his “frequently expressed uncertainties over the impact of rationalization on human freedom and autonomy.” According to Elliott, Weber is rather inclined to reveal “a multidimensional, multidirectional dynamic operative in the historical process that simplistic notions of cultural progress or developmental determinism could not accommodate” (Elliott 1998: 4).

Given these considerations, I contend that Weber did not intend to provide an understanding of the dynamics of modern society exclusively in terms of increasing rationalization. Instead, he understood the dynamics of society’s development as essentially determined by a dynamic relationship between formal and substantive rationalities. When applied to the historical progress, this means that an increase of one type of rationality leads to an inevitable decrease of the other type. However, it would be unpardonably simplistic to suppose that Weber described the process of historical development as one unilinear process, or, in other words, as a gradual progression from a civilization construed by substantive rationality toward a civilization determined by formal rationality. Rather, I would suggest that Weber envisaged historical progress as a diagram that registers various fluctuations in the proportional prevalence of substantive or formal rationality. The condition in which Western modernity currently occurs is characterized by a high degree of formal rationality and by a minimal degree of substantive rationality – the condition that Weber anxiously called “the disenchantment of the world” (*Entzauberung der Welt*).

It is also possible that Weber was extremely sensitive to the origin and dynamics of society’s development, instead of aiming at a static depiction of a certain stage in this development. Thus, Guenther Roth suggests that Weber has succeeded to elaborate only “a partial theory of modernity,” since he “spent more effort on studying its genesis than on diagnosing it” (Roth 1987: 75). Consequently, Roth is convinced that Weber’s explorations of alternative “socio-historical models were meant to facilitate the comparative study of world history in search of the distinctiveness of Western rationalism,” so that Weber’s historical synthesis appears to be

imbued by one unifying intent, namely to present Western modernity as “a product of a long rationalization and intellectualization” (Roth 1987: 90).

Schluchter converges with Roth on that Weber was simultaneously fascinated and appalled by his own depiction of the structures of modernity as pervaded by the consequences of increasing rationalization. Let us attend to the core of Schluchter’s interpretation:

Weber achieves a diagnosis of our situation on the basis of his socio-economic, political, and socio-cultural analysis of capitalism and of occidental rationalism. It is the diagnosis of the disenchantment of the world which has been going on for millennia and has now been completed, the diagnosis of the rationalization of its value spheres and of the intellectualization of our responses to them. But it is also the diagnosis of the paradox of this process which presents to modern society a problem not only of management but also of meaning (Roth and Schluchter 1979: 13).

An important shift from metaphysical-ethical rationalism that imbued the world with a transcendental meaning toward scientific-technological rationalism of the calculable, efficiency-oriented, and controllable modern world has become a confronting issue for those Weberian scholars who tend to interpret his theory of modernity in dialectical terms. However, they have not left this issue unsolved, as they proposed various concepts to alleviate the pressure of increasing rationalization. For instance, Kalberg suggests that the “axial shift” in modernity from religion to science established a new prevalence of formal rationality but determined, on the other hand, a corresponding type of modern *Lebensführung* of modern individuals (Kalberg 1980: 1173-75). *Lebensführung*, which can be inelegantly translated in English as ‘ways of life,’ denotes the system of attitudes that underlie the entire organization of life. The dominant role of formal rationality in modern *Lebensführung* entails rationalization of life-style in the direction to methodical action. Kalberg explains that “rationalization processes of historic significance in societies and in entire civilizations have often originated when a constellation of factors crystallized that rewarded *methodical* rational ways of life” (Kalberg 1980: 1149).

Consequently, the concept of *Lebensführung* can be reckoned as a unique Western invention aimed at reconciling the tension between formal and substantive rationalities. Schluchter, for his part, has demonstrated much resourcefulness in elaborating on this concept in his extensive study *Religion und Lebensführung*. Retracing the Weberian theory of rationalization, Schluchter posits his analysis at the level of “metaphysical-ethical rationalism” and focuses primarily on the relationship between economic

ethics and religion. Consequently, he seeks to endorse two fundamental arguments: First, that the life-style of modern individual is structured according to the considerations of “practical rationalism,” and second, that the achievement of this methodical way of life is an upshot of the institutionalization of configurations of meaning and interest (Roth and Schluchter 1979: 15).

Weberian scholars generally agree that the paradox of Western civilization consists in the unanticipated effect of the fluctuating balance between substantive and formal rationalities. According to Weber, the development of Western civilization was influenced by the rationalizing tendencies that were originally released into the world by the ethical prophets of Judeo-Christian religion. It was at the dawn of European modernity that the rationalizing potential of the religious-ethical complex caused an unanticipated effect. Then, economic rationality of capitalism prevailed over religious rationality of Protestantism. With an overwhelming convincingness, Weber unfolds this argument in *The Protestant Ethic and the ‘Spirit’ of Capitalism*, claiming that there is an extraordinary convergence between early the logic of modern capitalism and the religious-ethical logic of Protestantism, especially of its Puritan and Calvinist forms. The inextricable connection between the spirit of capitalism and the Protestant ethic has been brilliantly explicated by Kalberg, “Weber argues that the origin of modern capitalism cannot be fully understood without reference to the value-rational orientations of the Puritans to an ethical substantive rationality: the believer religiously inspired to value disciplined, methodical work and the accumulation and reinvestment of money brought a systematic component to economic activity that proved far more effective than the utilitarian considerations [...] of economic traditionalism” (Kalberg 1980: 1163).

Weber depicted the Puritan as an inner-worldly ascetic who rejects all forms of worldly attachments (such as tradition, art, and pleasure) that can potentially compromise his pursuit of personal salvation and devotes himself entirely to restless, consistent, and diligent work in a worldly vocation. That is the origin of the Weberian ideal-typical concept of *Berufsmensch*. Substantive rationality of Puritanism directed the formalistic understanding of money and economic success in terms of means toward the end-oriented understanding of any material gain as an equivocal sign of personal salvation. With the Protestant doctrine of predestination, economic success acquired a new substantive meaning as a manifestation of

God's favor in relation to the chosen individual in the pre-eternal plan of the worlds' salvation.

At the same time, Weber disclosed a deep paradox inherent in the intrinsic connectedness between the ethos of Protestantism and capitalism. The core of the Weberian paradox has been a challenge for many Weberian scholars. Amongst others, Bryan L. Turner eloquently described the genesis of the Weberian paradox:

Protestant values were, at least in the pristine doctrines of Luther and Calvin, opposed to the development of capitalist culture, which emphasized secular success and material advancement. However, the strains within Calvinist teaching, regarding the tension between the intense personal quest for salvation and the unknown outcome of the salvational drive for each isolated individual, produced a notion of calling or vocation which over time became, not only compatible with capitalist requirements, but actually drove capitalism along. The consequence was that Calvinism produced a characterology which was perfectly suited to the spirit of capitalism, especially with individualism and activism. This mixture was the 'fatefulness' of our times, namely the unintended consequence of the historic mixture of Calvinist discipline, instrumental rationality and modern capitalist organization was the iron cage of modernity (Turner 1993: 15).

Examining the enigmatic depth of the Weberian paradox, Elliot convincingly argues that the process of economic rationalization, which once was initiated by substantive rationality of Puritan-Calvinist religious ethic, eventually resulted in irrationalization of religion, as well as in radical de-sacralization of the world. Specifically, he claims, "In the serpentine course of Western rationalization those otherworldly values and commitments of Puritanism gradually lost both their metaphysical credibility and motivational significance." The inherent link between substantive rationality of Protestant ethic and instrumental rationality of the modern world has been decisively torn, so that "in the modern world this once pivotal nexus between 'the Protestant ethic' and 'the spirit of capitalism' no longer obtains." What has been left for the diligent *Berufsmensch* is the perfection of his mundane vocation. In result "the modern capitalist engaged in the endless accumulation of capital, the economic systematization of life in the service of greater profits, simply as an end in itself and for 'the irrational sense of having done his job well' " (Elliott 1998: 14). Formal rationality of capitalism and substantive rationality of Protestantism were bound to deny each other's inner logic as irrational.

With the general escalation of Western economic and cultural rationalism, “the world was increasingly transformed from an enchanted garden into a cause-and-effect mechanism, existing in a universe devoid of magical or mysterious forces,” whereas the sacral foundations of the medieval God-centered world “slowly crumbled before the ruthless and inexorable process of rationalization” (Elliott 1998: 15). The processes occurring in the mundane world are now regarded as mere events of nature, completely demystified and stripped of the sacred meaning, so that “the world eventually transformed from a meaningful totality into a disenchanting causal mechanism” (Elliott 1998: 22). This major transformation has exerted a paramount influence on the modern conception of social order. Since the world has lost its transcendental referent, the social order can no longer sustain its traditional foundations; instead, it is conceived as a pure creation of men. In fact, the de-sacralization of the worldview encouraged early modern thinkers to ground their doctrines of liberalism in such concepts as natural rights, individual autonomy, and freedom. These concepts provided foundations for the normative idea of civil society – the issue we have addressed earlier (§ 2.1.2).

The Weberian paradox continues to produce much confusion. One of the intriguing questions pertains to the circumstances under which substantive rationality of Protestantism was able to instigate, perhaps unintentionally, irrationalization of religion and secularization of the world. Put differently, how and why did religion contribute to its increasing marginalization and irrationalization? In my view, Elliot has suggested an insightful explanation, “The internal logic of formal rationality produces escalating indifference and outright hostility to all substantive considerations. This results, Weber argued, in a system where the cultivation and pursuit of efficient means is elevated to a position functionally equivalent to substantive value, increasingly exposing the system to accusations of substantive *irrationality*” (Elliott 1998: 9). Insofar as internal logic of religion becomes increasingly rationalized by the world devoid of any transcendent dimension, religious substantive values become increasingly inadequate for systematization and legitimation of the world order and of human conduct. Religion loses its rationalizing power in a secular world, and the world becomes explainable and calculable for modern individuals. On this view, the disenchantment of the world has turned, in Elliott’s words, “the ironic result of a religious orientation whose commitment to a transcendent deity and a meaningful cosmos appeared

increasingly irrelevant and irrational to a morally incredulous humanity” (Elliott 1998: 10).

The logical question rises whether the “morally incredulous humanity” is content to live in the disenchanted world. Until now, Weber’s suggestive answer remains enigmatically open to endless interpretations of what he actually intended to say by his famous characterization of modern society as an “iron cage,” “from which there is no escape, where humans are held hostage in an oppressively efficient, inexorable social order that subverts human freedom and dignity” (Elliott 1998: 10). In a disenchanted, morally disjointed cosmos, humans are left to choose their own values and beliefs, to invent their own moral criteria and construct a new rationally justified, meaningful cosmos. Weber’s diagnosis of instrumentally-rational modernity is far from comforting; instead, it seems confronting and incensing:

The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the ‘disenchantment of the world.’ Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations (Weber 1958a: 12).

Formal rationality of the modern world confronted humanity with the conditions of increasing abstraction, impersonality, and quantification of values.

How can we assess Weber’s gloomy diagnosis of modern society? For his part, Elliott argues that Weber’s diagnosis is a typical product of his age and that it reflects the cultural malaise that pervaded European intelligentsia in the early 1920s. Due to the rapid industrialization in Western countries, German academics started to worry about soullessness of the modern age and the malevolent potential lurking in an institutionalized and morally vacuous rationality of modern society (Elliott 1998: 16-17). If Elliot is right in positioning Weber’s theory in the historical-cultural context, we need to consider the influence of Weber’s ideas on the subsequent generations of Weberian scholars.

### 3.1.3 A Critical Revision of Weber’s Theory

In what follows, I shall survey the critical emendations of Weber’s theory of rationalization, which are essentially different from the dialectically oriented historical-ethical accounts by Roth, Schluchter, Kalberg, and Elliott.

In his contribution 'Personal Conduct and Societal Change' to the volume *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*, Wolfgang Mommsen revises the rationalization thesis, which contemporary Weberian theorists consider to be the axis of Weber's "grandiose attempt at a substantive reconstruction of Occidental history in terms of the origins of the specific and peculiar 'rationalism' of Western culture" (Mommsen 1987: 36). Given Weber's outspoken emphasis on the distinctiveness of Western civilization with which he commences *The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism* (Weber 1958b: 20-26), scholars have been continuously misled to interpret Weber's religious sociological analysis of other world religions "merely as a contrast to the specific character of Western civilization and as an indirect corroboration of the hypothesis of modern capitalism and the spirit of Protestantism" (Mommsen 1987: 37). Thus, Schluchter has been criticized by Donald Nielsen for providing a misleadingly "unifying account" of Weber's theory (Nielsen 1996: 386-88). Similarly, Mommsen reckons Schluchter's interpretation of the rationalization thesis as insufficient because, despite Schluchter's intention to "avoid the pitfalls of a straightforward evolutionary theory," his presentation of modern Western civilization still appears as "the apotheosis of the principle of rationality and modern rational science" (Mommsen 1987: 45). Mommsen argues that Schluchter, by extensively discussing formally rational methods of science, rational institutions of the capitalist industrial system and the bureaucratic and institutional state, sets forth an extolling description of these institutional features as exclusive achievements of Western civilization.

Instead, Mommsen opts for an alternative interpretation of the Weberian account of history. Drawing on Weber's later studies of societal change, legitimacy, and religion,<sup>27</sup> Mommsen demonstrates how Weber gradually arrived at a new evaluation of the concept of charisma. Initially, Weber was inclined to regard the charismatic foundations of political and social order as a typical phenomenon of the early history of humankind, but later, becoming more attentive to the influence of otherworldly attitudes on the historical development, Weber reinterpreted and extended his concept of charisma. Thereby, he demonstrated that major historical changes in social order have origin not only in the institutional makeup of a particular society, but also in "the highly personal behavior of a charismatic quality" (Mommsen 1987: 45). Mommsen asserts consequently that the societal change is induced by two antagonistic yet complementary forces –

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<sup>27</sup> The studies collected in *Economy and Society* and in the volume *From Max Weber*.

rationalization and charisma, “Charisma (which in Weber’s later sociological theory had come to replace both Jewish prophecy and Puritan asceticism in the early history of the modern world) makes the place where personality forces its way into the empirical processes of history. Rationalization, on the other hand, begins to take effect either as an adaptation to existing value ideas or as an adaptation to material interests or institutional conditions” (Mommsen 1987: 47).

If Mommsen rediscovers in Weber’s oeuvre the dialectical relationship between rationalization and charisma, Johannes Weiss focuses rather on the dialectic relationship between normative rationality and empirical irrationalities. In his article ‘On the Irreversibility of Western Rationalization and Max Weber’s Alleged Fatalism,’ Weiss argues that Weber’s theory of rationalization has “no place for a one-dimensional, unilinear and so ineluctable developmental process.” Thus, he undertakes to depict the process of increasing rationalization in the modern West as “pluralistic and conflictual,” imbued by internal tensions and contradictions between the extremes of rationality versus irrationality (Weiss 1987: 155). Weiss pinpoints some countervailing factors in the complex process of rationalization as inevitable material irrationalities such as recourse limitations, health factors, unexpected outcomes of the market economy, “all of which necessitate rational action but are outside the prescriptive rules of rationality” (Weiss 1987: 182). With that, the scholar instigates a very important discussion concerning the antagonistic tension between the normative orientation of the Weberian rationalization theory and the descriptive orientation of an empirical critique of this theory. Insofar as “any attempt to develop the theory of rationalization will need equally to theorize the irrationalities of the modern world,” Weiss concludes that “so long as human culture survives, rationality and irrationality are locked in a dialectic embrace” (Weiss 1987: 182).

The dubious status of rationality in Weber’s theory has been a hot issue in the social-scientific debate. On this view, Brubaker provocatively assumes that Weber disclosed “the extreme inhospitality of the modern formally rational social and economic order to the values of equality, fraternity and *caritas*” with so much vigor that his analysis seems to lack a “critical edge.” However, Brubaker concedes that the critical impulse in Weber’s work is present but remains “exclusively diagnostic,” since Weber never suggests a therapy. Sociological science, like any other Western social order, is a rational enterprise in a purely formal sense and thus unable to yield any values judgments, to define substantive rationality and provide normative

defense of a conception of the good life (Brubaker 1984: 44-45). Nonetheless, the value of Weber's diagnosis consist in that it has called into question the very possibility of leading a rational life in a pervasively rationalized world of modernity. If modern individual has to choose between the considerations of formal rationality or of substantive rationality, his choice cannot be rational, for "it is precisely criteria of rationality that must be chosen." Modern individual, as Brubaker concludes, "cannot escape making a criterionless and therefore irrational choice about the meaning of rationality" (Brubaker 1984: 87).

Weber's theory of rationality has been also reassessed in the light of the later achievements in social scientific theory. For instance, Barry Hindess agrees in the article 'Rationality and the Characterization of Modern Society' that "Weber's account of the rationality of the modern West depends on a specific model of the actor as a human individual, analyzed in terms of concepts of interests, values, a need for meaning and a potential for rational calculation." Relying on these concepts, Weber develops his well-known typology of social action, rationalism, and legitimate domination. However, "Weber's model of the actor operates with a limited and inadequate account of the conditions of action, and especially of the discursive conditions in which actors reach and formulate decisions." Hindess corroborates this conclusion by exposing the lapses of rational choice theories (Hindess 1987: 137-38). Perhaps, all these revealed shortcomings have inspired Benjamin Nelson to reconsider the present status of the Weberian rationalization thesis in contemporary Western society by introducing the concepts of conscience, cultural systems, and directive structures. Particularly, Nelson argues, "To understand the making of early modern cultures we need to understand the making of early modern minds, and therefore we need to have a proper sense of the changes in the central paradigms as well as the reconstructing of axial institutions of society" (Nelson 1981: 71).

Such an attempt at clarifying the psychological and social dimensions of Weberian rationalization has been undertaken by Walter Wallace, who researched in his insightful contribution 'Rationality, Human Nature, and Society in Weber's Theory' the relationship between rationality and human nature. Wallace argues that Weber's definition of rationality is grounded in "consciously rule-bound comparison and choice among alternative means to a given end." Insofar as Weber uses, whenever he speaks of rationality, terms like 'generalization,' 'systematization,' and 'methodical,' he associates rationality with the operations based on distinction, classification, and systematic comparison between primary and secondary elements (Wallace

1990: 206). However, Wallace is convinced that the human individual is unable to compare and choose among the ends because “the human individual, in Weber’s eyes, is by nature constitutionally *able* to conceptualize alternative means to a given end but *unable* reliably and precisely to compare and choose among these alternatives [...] without help from fellow humans.” Thus, Wallace emphasizes the importance of a social dimension in the Weberian concept of rationality, “It is on this foundation of combined abilities and inabilities of human nature that Weber’s theory of that collectivity of fellow humans called ‘society’ is constructed” (Wallace 1990: 220). Indeed, if Wallace’s analysis is correct, the Weberian notion of rationality is bound to touch upon the problematic balance between individual freedom and solidarity.

By way of conclusion, Weber’s theory of rationalization does not hold a place for the normative concept of civil society. Instead, Weber’s sociological theory remains primarily a classic value-free sociological account of the rise and dynamics of society in the modern West. On this view, Weber’s theory is necessary for the present study, as it provides sociological evidence for the structural edifice of real civil societies in the West and positions this structural edifice in a specific historical-cultural context. Weber belonged to the pioneering generation of social scientists who conceived of society as an essential product of human interactions and discovered much ingenuity in explaining social structures by the innovative concept of rationality. Employing Weber’s ideal-typical method of analysis, we can characterize the structure of modern Western society as permeated by a high degree of differentiation – differentiation between diverging rationalities of autonomous social spheres. The process of increasing differentiation corroborates the normative principle of pluralism, which is entrenched in the political-philosophical idea of civil society. Besides, it also clarifies why contemporary theorists of civil society agree on differentiating the sphere of civil society from the spheres of politics and the economy. The Weberian thesis of differentiation of rationalities endorses the tripartite model of relations between the three arenas of democratization – the analytical model I have discussed in the introduction to the previous chapter and specified further in § 2.3.2. The Weberian sociological diagnosis of a highly differentiated society elucidates the complex interrelations between the spheres of society, the economy, and politics from a dynamic religious-ethical perspective.

### 3.2 Talcott Parsons's Theory of Structural Differentiation of Society

In what follows, I intend to consider how Parsons has conceived of civil society in his theory of structural differentiation. Specifically, I shall try to indicate the strength and the weakness of his sociological approach with a view to clarifying whether Parsons has been able to overcome the tension between normative and descriptive conceptions of civil society.

#### 3.2.1 Civil Society in the Theory of Structural Differentiation

Parsons developed Weberian tentative theory of modern differentiated society in a much more pronounced manner. If Weber elaborated a conception of modern differentiated society in terms of increasing rationalization of different social spheres, Parsons positioned the concept of differentiation as the cornerstone of his theory of structural differentiation. Parsons himself repeatedly acknowledged his indebtedness to the Weberian ideas. For instance, in his book *The System of Modern Societies*, Parsons asserts, "The system constitutive of modern societies is the most rational yet achieved in historical development. It has an unsurpassable adaptive capacity rooted in multi-dimensionality" (Roth and Schluchter 1979: 11).

Indeed, Parsons elaborated his theory of society under the influence of his prominent predecessors in the sociological science. In his illuminating article 'Parsons's Structure (And Simmel) Revisited,' Donald Levine traced the impact of Pareto, Durkheim, and Weber on Parsons's ideas. Prior to Pareto, Durkheim and Weber, social theorists were divided between so-called "positivists," who viewed action as organized solely by the utilitarian pursuit of benefits, and "idealists," who viewed action as organized solely in terms of affectively grounded normative dispositions. Levine claims that despite profound divergences, Pareto, Durkheim, and Weber "converged behind a single theoretical orientation constituted by the view that action is shaped both by utilitarian interests and normative ideals (= 'voluntarist')" (Levine 1989: 111). For his part, Parsons was convinced that their sociologies "pioneered a conception of human action as two-dimensional." Consequently, he developed his theory of action by relying on the Weberian synthesis of utilitarian and normative considerations in social action. On this view, Levine concludes, Parsons's analysis is pitched on a high level of generality "regarding the duality of human nature and the two-dimensional character of human action" (Levine 1989: 113). Levine's conclusion is elucidating for my investigation of Parsons's attempt at reconciling

normative and descriptive conceptions of civil society. Based on the synthesis of utilitarian and normative considerations, Parsons's vision of society inevitably involves the amalgamation of descriptive-empirical and normative elements, and that is why it may be susceptible to certain controversies, which I intend to discuss in more detail later.

For now, it is important to emphasize Parsons's contribution to the development of civil society theory in general. Cohen and Arato unambiguously acknowledge the high value of Parsons's sociological approach to civil society theory. Parsons was in his time a progressive social scientist to understand the revival of associational life as "the re-creation of a fabric of societal intermediations [...] *in a new and posttraditional form*" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 425). More precisely, Parsons was the first to refute the dichotomous model of state and society used by Marxists and neoliberals, which reduced civil society to the economically-defined sphere of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* (Cohen and Arato 1992: 423). Parsons compellingly asserted the structural independence of civil society from the sphere of the economy. In his extensive analysis, he revealed that "contemporary society is reproduced not only through economic and political processes, or even their new or renewed fusion, but through the interaction of legal structures, social associations, institutions of communication, and cultural forms, all of which have a significant degree of autonomy" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 425).

Moreover, Parsons rehabilitated the concept of civil society in social theory. Arato and Cohen notice that the concept of civil society became unpopular in sociological science because of a deep-rooted habit to regard civil society as a remnant of pre-social-scientific discourse. The reappearance of the concept in Parsons's work is all the more remarkable, given that it reappeared in the framework of a new theory of differentiation. Cohen and Arato praise Parsons for revitalizing the notion of civil society in his authentic concept of a "societal community," which is differentiated from the state, the economy, and the cultural sphere and whose function is societal integration through normative frameworks of legality and plurality, or participation in associations (Cohen and Arato 1992: 118-19). Reviewing Cohen and Arato's book in the article 'The Return to Civil Society,' Jeffrey Alexander rightfully underlines that the scholars' constructive reception of Parsons's notion of "societal community" has been a major theoretical advance in the contemporary discourse on civil society because their work was aimed to provide "the key intellectual mediation between earlier philosophy and any contemporary effort to conceptualize civil society" (Alexander 1993: 798). Indeed, it is due to Parsons's notion of societal

community that Cohen and Arato managed to elaborate a convincing account of the tripartite model of relations between the state, the economy, and civil society. This is because Parsons's notion of societal community revealed "how, in an economically stratified and politically bureaucratic society, a differentiated and relatively autonomous social sphere can emerge that is based on influence and persuasion rather than money and power and that allows inclusion on the basis of institutionalized values of universal rights" (Alexander 1993: 798). With that, we need to consider how Parsons conceived of civil society in his general theory of structural differentiation.

To provide a structural-functionalistic conception of society, Parsons developed the 'AGIL paradigm,' which is central both to his earlier studies, such as *The Structure of Social Action* (1937), and to his later publications, amongst which I rely on *The System of Modern Societies* (1971), written as a companion to his *Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives* (1966). The AGIL-paradigm specifies four primary functions that are necessary for any system to sustain its inner stability: Adaptation, Goal attainment, Integration, and Latency pattern maintenance. Adaptation implies that the system needs to perform adaptive function with regard to the threats of the external environment. Goal attainment implies that the system needs to define and attain its goals. Integration implies that the system needs to perform an integrative function in order to regulate the interrelationship of its component parts. Finally, latency pattern maintenance implies that the system needs to generate, maintain, and renew motivation for individual participation, including the cultural patterns that create and sustain this motivation.

Applying the AGIL paradigm to the analysis of the system of social action, Parsons identifies four functional imperatives with four subsystems: behavioral organism, personality, society as a system of social organization, and culture. Next, Parsons settles his analytical tool of the AGIL paradigm at the level of society, which he considers "the type of social system characterized by the highest level of self-sufficiency relative to its environments, including other social systems" (Parsons 1971: 8). He proceeds with examining the social realm as structurally subdivided into four functions or subsystems: the economy, the polity, the societal community, and the fiduciary system. In the scheme below (*figure № 3*), I have ventured to visualize Parsons's social theory.

Parsons relates 'societal community' to the integrative subsystem of society, as its function is to integrate a differentiated social system by means of institutionalization of cultural values as socially accepted and applied

norms. Parsons believes that social integration can be achieved through increasing specialization and, at the same time, interdependence of the segments of social subsystems because social systems, while performing their specific functions, contribute to the whole. A complex and functionally differentiated social system is therefore to be integrated through common pursuing of abstract, normative values.

*Figure № 3: The system of social action*

| <b>A</b><br>Adaptation | <b>G</b><br>Goal Attainment | <b>I</b><br>Integration |          |                       |                     | <b>L</b><br>Latency pattern<br>maintenance |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|----------|-----------------------|---------------------|--|
| Behavioral<br>organism | Personality                 | Society                 |          |                       |                     | Culture                                    |
|                        |                             | <b>A</b>                | <b>G</b> | <b>I</b>              | <b>L</b>            |  |
|                        |                             | Economy                 | Polity   | Societal<br>community | Fiduciary<br>system |  |

Parsons conceives of societal community in a two-fold perspective, namely from the perspective of ‘normativity’ and from the perspective of ‘collectivity.’ With this, he attaches a normative meaning of societal community to the systems of legitimate order, which are produced by institutionalization of cultural values. In its turn, the element of collectivity results from envisaging societal community as an organism. Thus, Parsons identifies the prototype associational behavior within civil society with “the societal collectivity itself, considered as a corporate body of citizens holding primarily consensual relations to its normative order and to the authority of its leadership” (Parsons 1971: 24). Arato and Cohen critically comment in this respect that Parsons, in his advocacy of the element of collectivity, “is ready to see the whole as a ‘politically organized’ collectivity of collectivities.” On the other hand, because “such an overarching collective solidarity” is possible only in accordance with consensually agreed norms, Parsons endorses in his idea of societal community a kind of unification that is hardly characteristic of modern societies (Cohen and Arato 1992: 126). Asserting that social consensus and order requires an indispensable reference to substantive values, Parsons develops a relatively strong foundationalist view on the legitimacy of modern civil society. Hence, he

diverges from liberal theorists of civil society like Keane, Kymlicka, and Walzer, who advocate a liberal-egalitarian understanding of civil society and recognize post-foundationalist, pluralistic nature of liberal democracy.

To conclude the evaluation of Parsons's notion of 'societal community,' I want to emphasize that his vision of society is strongly influenced by the idea of unification and, for that reason, can be hardly applicable to the typically modern conditions of pluralization and differentiation. Civil society, in my opinion, is not what Parsons erroneously supposed to be a normative-legally regulated collective of collectives, but rather is the arena where conflicting individuals, groups, or, in the systems theoretical parlance, subsystems, collide and where the complex atlas of these differentiated elements is being constantly reconstituted. However, the pivotal issue of internal conflict resulting from the plurality of diverse social subgroups, which altogether constitute modern civil society, remains underemphasized in Parsons's balanced vision of societal community.

Cohen and Arato can also corroborate this presumption. The analysts discern two potentially worrying problems in Parsons's extolling account of American society and his normative exposition of societal community. The first troubling issue concerns Parsons's consistent refutation of the negative potential imbued to the modern institutions of civil society. Parsons is right, Cohen and Arato admit, "in insisting on the important normative implications of the pluralistic traditions of American society but his dismissal of the specific selectivity and asymmetry built into the existing practice of pluralism is both unsophisticated and misguided" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 137). Parsons's theory tends to bypass oligarchic trends inherent in political elite, as well as the asymmetric distribution of social control inherent in representative institutions. The second criticism concerns Parsons's insufficient analytical distinction between the democratically-informed concept of the public and its dangerous counterpart concept of mass culture. Cohen and Arato emphatically claim that even "after noting the possibilities of overconcentration, manipulation, decline of cultural standards and political apathy as possible consequences of the modern mass media, he [Parsons] dismisses, or at least vastly deemphasizes, the relevance of these trends to American society!" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 137). Given the above, one may have become gradually aware that Parsons's account of modern civil society, irrespective of its seemingly harmonized veneer and sociological credibility of a systemic theory of modern society, is still unable to elucidate and systematize the whole set of problems that emerge from the analysis of civil society as a

normative ideal and an empirical reality. This brings us to exploring the pitfalls of Parsons's theory of society.

### 3.2.2 Amalgamation of the Normative and Descriptive Analytical Methods

In the previous chapter, I discussed a range of contemporary political-philosophical theorizations of civil society and established the theoretical eligibility of the tripartite model of relations between the state, the market, and civil society. Parsons's theory of society corresponds in great lines with the tripartite model: It draws the distinction between societal community on the one hand, and the systems of politics and of the economy on the other hand. If association is a prototypical form of organization in societal community, the bureaucracy is the ideal form of political organization, and the market is the ideal form of economic organization. Accordingly, the structure of societal community is permeated by the solidaristic dimension, in contrast to the individualistic patterns of the analogical structures of the market and the bureaucracy. However, notwithstanding Parsons's distinction between the structural components and functional imperatives in the three subsystems of societal community, the economy, and politics, his intentionally descriptive analysis of society stakes out an unsustainable normative claim. This happens when Parsons slips into dangerous identification of "the normatively desirable with the actual functioning civil society of the present, thereby falling into an unconvincing apology for contemporary American society" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 118). This lapse is obviously the main issue of Cohen and Arato's<sup>28</sup> polemics against the simultaneously normative and empirical account of civil society. Cohen and Arato assert, "Parsons's theory of societal community is an excellent object of immanent criticism because he both elaborates the normative achievements of modernity and represents these as if they were already institutionalized" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 125).

Obviously, Parsons had his own reasons to refuse drawing a strict line between normative and descriptive elements in his analysis of civil society. Alexander agrees with Cohen and Arato that "Parsons failed to link his empirical theorizing about societal community either to the long history of normative philosophy about civil society or to contemporary theories of justice." However, Alexander suggests a different explanation for this

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<sup>28</sup> In the present discussion, I rely primarily on the chapter 'Theoretical Development in the Twentieth Century' by Andrew Arato.

alleged lapse. Namely, he states, “because of the vast institutional distance between contemporary academic disciplines, and also because of his particular anxiety about scientific neutrality, Parsons failed to thematize the moral roots and political ambitions of his empirical theory” (Alexander 1993: 800). In the article “Timeless Moral Imperatives in Causal Analysis of Social Functioning,”<sup>29</sup> Emanuel Smikun reveals that Parsons amalgamates “macro and micro-levels of social analysis,” as he attempts at providing an all-encompassing theory of social action that would comprise both the normative collective dimension and the individualistic motivation of social action. Smikun convincingly argues that Parsons blended “macro-institutional-behavioral and micro-voluntaristic-action elements” in one theory. Specifically, he shows that Parsons’s repetitive evocation to such terms as “teleological orientation” and “purposive behavior” testifies to the unattainable mixture between “attributes of subjectively intended purposeful action” and “descriptions of objectively observed social behavior.” In the end, Smikun assesses Parsons’s grand endeavor to attach the meaning of normative impersonal values to individually rationalized ends and means as “not fruitful” (Smikun 2000: 10).

Parsons’s concept of societal community reveals that the nexuses connecting civil society with the spheres of the economy and politics harbor certain ambiguity. Let us consider these two nexuses in more detail: first, the economy – civil society nexus, and second, the politics – civil society nexus.

As far as the economy – civil society nexus is concerned, Cohen and Arato insist that Parsons has not succeeded to resolve the problem of capitalism in his analysis of the democratic revolution. In contrast to his extended analysis of the dramatic process, in the course of which societal community, or civil society, declared independence from the state, Parsons does not exhaustively investigate the process of differentiation of societal community from the subsystem of the economy (Cohen and Arato 1992: 121). For that reason, Cohen and Arato juxtapose Parsons’s position with that of Karl Polányi’s who maintains the view that “a self-regulating market produces an ‘economization’ of society, against which a program of the self-defense of society emerged in the nineteenth century.” Nevertheless, instead of focusing on society’s self-defensive strategy against the devastating potential of classical capitalism, Parsons “considers the issue solved with the development of the welfare state.” This argument cannot be applied “in a consistent and convincing fashion to the economy-societal community axis”

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<sup>29</sup> Internet publication, last visited on 28 July 2010.

of Parsons's analysis (Cohen and Arato 1992: 121-23). Moreover, Cohen and Arato consider Parsons's exploration of the differentiation of societal community and the economy unsatisfactory because Parsons does not engage in the discussion of the multiple ways in which the associational trend penetrates the economy, for instance, in the form of professional associations and fiduciary boards.

The central point of Cohen and Arato's critique of Parsons's conception of civil society is again the treacherous amalgamation between Parsons's normative claims and his descriptive analysis of the contemporary American society. On the one hand, conceptualizing the relationship of societal community to the sphere of economy, Parsons tends to raise existing capitalist practice to the level of norm thus making a normative claim out of his descriptive analysis. On the other hand, Parsons's normative intention compels him to move his theory beyond the existing alternatives of capitalist economism and socialist statism (Cohen and Arato 1992: 133). Consequently, Parsons gets into the trap by describing American society as both a "postcapitalist" and a "postsocialist" society. Critically evaluating this attempt, Cohen and Arato astutely observe, "The astonishing part of this theory is the claim that such a postcapitalist, postsocialist model is not only the counterfactual normative construction of a social-political project but is already actualized, even not yet completely, in contemporary American society. Once again, the rational is the real, the real is the rational" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 134).

Why does Parsons understand American society as "the most hospitable terrain possible for the principle of associationism," and why does he believe that this principle has been already institutionalized, offering a strong normative-empirical alternative to both capitalist economism and socialist statism? Addressing this question, Cohen and Arato point at the ideological roots of Parsons's theory as grounded in Tocqueville's account of civil society. Both Parsons and Tocqueville consider civil society as represented by the pluralistic constellation of associations and believe this constellation to be authentically entrenched in American history (Cohen and Arato 1992: 135). Furthermore, being a pupil of Weber, Parsons connects this specific character of early-modern American associationism with the organization of American Protestantism and with the ensuing favoring of pluralism, toleration, and entrepreneurship. Indeed, a unique combination of religious ethics and secular patterns stimulated the amalgamation of different ethnic groups and thereby contributed to the rise of associationism in American societal community in early modernity. Turner also identifies

the origin of the permeating value emphasis of Parsons's account of society in the Weberian tradition, "Borrowing his terminology partly from Max Weber, Parsons argued that the dominant value in American society was 'instrumental activism.' Social action and institutions are positively valued if they are seen to contribute instrumentally to success, while activism has a higher value than passive adaptations to the environment." Parsons largely accepts the Weberian ideal-typical distinction between mysticism and inner-worldly asceticism. This is obvious from the claim that "America had been fundamentally shaped by Puritan values which were inner-worldly, activist, individualistic and instrumental" (Turner 1993: 6-7). It is this unique combination of Protestant values and the market principle of capitalism that inspired Parsons to envisage the principle of associationism as both a normative and empirical feature of American society and construct the economy – civil society nexus on this combination.

Addressing the politics – civil society nexus, Cohen and Arato point at the centrality of law. Insofar as Parsons conceives of societal community in terms of associations regulated by law, he argues that law substantiates the nexus between political society and civil society. For Parsons, "the most important step in the emergence of a modern legal system is the transition from law as an instrument of state policy to law as the 'mediating interface' between state and societal community, formally constitutive of their differentiation" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 127). Understanding citizenship complex as a direct "outgrowth of the system of laws," Parsons attaches to it a pronounced normative universalistic dimension as grounded in the egalitarian democratic ideals of equal rights and freedoms. Cohen and Arato comment in this respect, "The modern citizenship complex, with its egalitarian tendency to free membership from all ascriptive characteristics, is rooted in an important attempt to base the norms of modern societies in not only transsocietal but actually universal values, of which the first version was the doctrine of natural rights" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 127-28). Nevertheless, Parsons's attempt at construing the normative concept of citizenship is at odds with his sociological description of society "as the social system having the highest level of self-sufficiency." That is why, "the normative structures that define the identity of a society thus are never free of a dimension of particularism" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 127). As a result, Parsons's analysis of modern society suffers from the indicated tension between the normative understanding of society in terms of a societal community based on citizens' universal rights and the sociologically feasible

account of politically-organized society as constituted by ascriptive and particularistic membership.

An analogical amalgamation between normative and descriptive elements can be discerned in Parsons's conception of the procedural law. When discussing the important link between associations and procedural law, the theorist tends to confuse two distinct concepts, namely procedure and procedural law. This confusion gave Cohen and Arato sufficient ground to revise the cause of the indicated analytical error. The error lurches in Parsons's understanding of procedural law as legitimized not by the rule of procedures themselves, but also by a higher normative order, with a strong reference to religious-moral values. Consequently, "with the meta-level this occupied, Parsons apparently sees no important reason to distinguish between procedures themselves and the procedures that produce or regulate procedures. In other words, he cannot discover the meaning of procedural law as a specifically modern, reflexive and intersubjective regulation of the production of norms" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 141-42).<sup>30</sup> Thus, we can draw an important conclusion from Parsons's conception of civil society. While Parsons tends to conceive of procedural law in substantive terms, he overlooks the fact that the structures of modern civil society require rather procedural understanding of procedural law, which means that normative legitimation is produced without substantive external referent. The development of Parsons's explanation of societal processes and structures is a great intellectual challenge for Niklas Luhmann, whose systems theory I shall consider later.

Having discussed Parsons's tendency to amalgamate the normative and descriptive-empirical approaches in his theory of society, I can conclude that Parsons departs in his analysis from sociological observation and then stretches this sociological account toward a normative model. Specifically, he starts with the analysis of his contemporary American society in structural-functionalistic terms and consequently seeks to legitimize this empirical model of society by involving in the discussion normative concepts such as common values and the integrative function of societal community. Thus, as Cohen and Arato have convincingly demonstrated, Parsons amalgamates descriptive and normative elements. Evaluating

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<sup>30</sup> Discussing Parsons's polemical defense of his views on law, Cohen and Arato refer to the debate between Parsons and Unger presented in the following publications: T. Parsons 'Law as an Intellectual Stepchild,' *Sociological Inquiry* 47, no. 3 & 4 (1977), 11-57; R. M. Unger *Law in Modern Society* (New York: Free Press, 1976); Parsons's review of Unger's book in *Law and Society Review* 12, no. 1 (fall 1978), 145-49.

Cohen and Arato's volume *Civil Society and Political Theory* in his review 'The Return to Civil Society,' Alexander argued that while Cohen and Arato criticized Parsons for such an amalgamation, they themselves bridged "the gap between normative and empirical theorizing about civil society that the problems in Cohen and Arato's model emerge." On Alexander's estimation, the core problem consists in that "Cohen and Arato present a highly idealized and rationalistic understanding of the good (i.e., civil) society, and from this vision they ascribe empirical characteristics to actually existing societies that often are exaggerated and extreme" (Alexander 1993: 800). To simplify, Cohen and Arato start with conceptualizing civil society as a normative concept, and proceed with analyzing the structures and institutions of extant civil societies. This approach is different from that of Parsons, who starts with a structural-institutional analysis and proceeds with a normative legitimization of his empirical observations.

By pinpointing some crucial flaws in Parsons's explication of societal community within his structural functionalist approach, Cohen and Arato have produced, doubtlessly, an immense contribution to the sociological embedding of civil society theory. Their effort was rewarding because they criticized Parsons's conception of civil society from a vantage point entirely different from that of structural functionalism. Alexander expresses his aggravation in this respect that Cohen and Arato take their normative inspiration from Habermas's theory of communication, whereas, as a tool for their empirical incision to the quixotically harmonized veneer of Parsons's structural functionalist analysis, they refer to social movements, endorsing their diversity and oppositional strength. Accordingly, Alexander explains the cause of Cohen and Arato's persistent irritation by Parsons's positive assessment of American society. With their study, Cohen and Arato reinvigorate the role of social movements in contemporary political theory of civil society and "suggest that Parsons's equanimity about contemporary capitalist democracies, and particularly the American one, undermined the critical potential of his theory of societal community. For Parsons's increasingly conservative inclination to present the interchanges, or relations, between the economy and societal community, and polity and societal community as equilibrated and reciprocal obscured the inherent tensions between these spheres and seemed to obviate the need for any future, far-reaching societal reforms." Thus, if "Parsons stressed the degree to which universalism had been institutionalized in the civil sphere," Cohen and Arato, by producing their prominent study *Civil Society and Political Theory*, undertook an "ingenious and highly stimulating effort" to connect

social movement theory to the theory of civil society. Thereby, they made their “most important empirical emendations to the sociological model of civil society in its orthodox functional form” (Alexander 1993: 800).

Grounding their conception of civil society in Habermas’s theory of discourse ethics, Cohen and Arato convincingly reintroduces what Alexander calls “the salutary tension” between the ‘is’ and the ‘ought’ in the concerned theory. Cohen and Arato rediscover the Habermas-inspired concept of law, taking up the notion of law as “an institutionalized specification of the morality of civil society” and thus inextricably binding moral and juridical dimensions in their conception of civil society. However, Alexander does not contend with their decision because “if the independence and vitality of civil society are to be preserved, rights must function not only as legal rules but also as a moral resource upon which critical social movements and liberal reformers, can continuously draw” (Alexander 1993: 798). By subjugating public morality to the norms of civil society, Cohen and Arato insist on a distinctively normative understanding of civil society and law. This kind of moral indexation of law is entirely refuted, as we will see further, by Luhmann’s systems theoretical approach in the light of which law is understood as merely a self-referential organizing code.

To sum it up, Alexander sees the failure of the Habermasian approach in confusing analytic and empirical concepts of differentiation. Analytically, we need to differentiate between the profit-oriented sphere of the economy, the power-constituted sphere of politics, and the norms-generating sphere of civil society. However, functioning as empirical subsystems, these subsystems demonstrate a significant degree of interpenetration with the bordering subsystems. This continuous empirical interpenetration is obvious, for instance, when the functional specialization of the economy is underpinned by the values of solidarity, which are inherent in civil society, or when politics takes into account the meanings and values also generated in result of public reasoning. Cohen and Arato, on the contrary, draw on Habermas’s theory of discourse ethics and rational consensus, presenting “Habermas’s idealized theory of communication as empirically descriptive of the civil realm” (Alexander 1993: 801). In this sense, the theorists follow an illusive path that is similar to Parsons. By glossing “the mundane institutions and processes that structure discourses and solidarities in realm rather than idealized, social life,” Cohen and Arato depict the normative as the already empirically achieved and hence are trapped into a similar

treacherous amalgamation for which they have criticized Parsons's account of societal community.

In his publication *Real Civil Society*, Alexander suggests conceiving of civil society as a partially realized liberal democratic utopia. Qualifying Parsons's concept of societal community, the analyst identifies societal community with the institutionalized form of the integration subsystem in the system of modern differentiated society and hence understands civil society as "a relatively distinct institutional sphere portraying a logic quite distinct from that of the market, the state, and of other institutional areas" (Mouzelis 1999: 728). However, as Nicos Mouzelis explicates in his article 'Post-Parsons's Theory', Alexander rejects Parsons's emphasis on the balance between the distinct logics prevalent in each specific subsystem of society and on the interinstitutional balance inherent in the subsystem of societal community. Rather, he insists on the essential interinstitutional imbalance by exposing the constitutive value of civil society, i.e. the value of universalistic solidarity, as permanently jeopardized by the logic of the adaptive subsystem, i.e. by the increasing weight of economic considerations. For that reason, Alexander's account of civil society obtains the degree of empirical incision resembling in this sense Cohen and Arato's analysis. Nevertheless, if Cohen and Arato elevate the normative/empirical tension inherent in any discourse on civil society through the Habermasian concept of rational consensus, Alexander recognizes a merely partial realization of the normative idea of civil society. He argues that the model of a universalistically oriented solidary community is only partially realized in modern societies and "portrays relatively specific codes/values (e.g., democratic ideals), institutions (e.g., a free press), and integrative patterns (e.g., open, trusting, civil relationships)" (Mouzelis 1999: 729). Mouzelis suggests, in his turn, a possible emendation of Alexander's notion of civil society. In his opinion, "Alexander will have to distinguish more precisely between civil society as a very partially realized utopian democratic project, and a posttraditional, differentiated social sphere within which a variety of discourse and collective actors (civil, noncivil, anticivil) keep struggling for the establishment of different and often conflicting types of solidarity" (Mouzelis 1999; 733). Mouzelis's suggestion clearly takes up the issue of bad civil society, which we considered earlier.

### 3.2.3 Beyond Parsons: Theory of Interpenetration by Richard Münch

Richard Münch is currently one of the leading social scientists who work on the theory of action. Although Münch develops his theory of interpenetration under an obvious influence of Parsons's structural functionalism, his main scholarly aspiration is to build on the work of Parsons as "reaching beyond Weber's own achievement." In other words, Münch attempts at reinvigorating the explanatory achievement of Weber's account of Western modernity by viewing it from the perspective of Parsons's theory of structural differentiation. This is because, as he explains in the study *Understanding Modernity: Toward a New Perspective Going beyond Durkheim and Weber*, "a satisfactory explanation of modern occidental development must be based on Weber's explanatory achievement, viewed from the perspective of Parsons's theory of action" (Münch 1988: 241).

Indeed, Münch does not hesitate to borrow chief presumptions of Parsons's conception of structurally differentiated society, extensively discussing the four major subsystems of Parsons's classification. In order to elucidate the resembling concepts, I offer the schematic illustration (*figure № 4*).

*Figure № 4*

| PARSONS            | MÜNCH                |                          |                       |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Polity             | Goal-directed action | Situative activism       |                       |
| Economy            | Adaptive action      | Utilitarianism           |                       |
| Fiduciary system   | Cultural action      | Intellectual rationalism |                       |
| Societal community | Communal action      | Repressive sanctions     | Ethics of brotherhood |
|                    |                      | Piety                    | Ethical particularism |

In the principle of interpenetration that underlies Münch's theory of society, we can discern the integrative function that Parsons ascribed to societal community. Münch confirms, "Only modern Western society has developed an integrated order [...] which is the normative central structure of modern society, can only have been due to the spheres of communal action interpenetrating with those of cultural, economic and goal-setting (i.e. political) action" (Münch 1988: 239). However, Münch advances Parsons's theory of structural differentiation by integrating certain insights from Weber's theory of rationalization. With that, Münch reinterprets Weber's theory. If Weber arrived at the conclusion that modern society is

characterized by the conflict between formal and substantive rationalities, Münch suggests an innovative emendation to Weber's diagnosis by developing a theory of interpenetration. Specifically, Münch conceives the process of increasing rationalization of different value spheres as parallel to the process of their increasing interpenetration. Münch vigorously characterizes Western modern society by a high "amount of interpenetration between the differentiated spheres," which he sees as providing "the basis for the emergence of a common order governing the spheres and for the simultaneous development of the spheres beyond the previously existing limits to development" (Münch 1988: 235). Münch asserts that the logic of societal differentiation proceeds according to the specific "modern pattern of values," which rests on the typically Western conjunction of essentially opposing orientations to action – individualism and universalism, rationalism and inner-worldly activism – the conjunction that constitutes an integrative order embracing differentiated social spheres in one coherent whole (Münch 1988: 238).

Thus, Münch insists that Weber's account of Western modernity did not reveal the conflict between formal and substantive rationalities, but, alternatively, exhibited the mutual penetration of religious ethics and the world. As he asserts in his recent study *The Ethics of Modernity: Formation and Transformation in Britain, France, Germany and the United States*, this unique conjunction between *Zweckrationalität* and *Wertrationalität* occurred in the process of ethical shaping of the world by active penetration of religious ethics (Münch 2001: 24). Consequently, Münch envisages the process of modernization "not simply as the separation, rationalization, and dedifferentiation of domains of instrumental action from ethics, but as a normative transformation through interpenetration of ethics and the world of instrumental action" (Münch 2001: 27). The upshot of the "fundamental ethical transformation" in the modern West is "the establishment of an ever more comprehensive normative order" and the subsequent interpenetration of differentiated social spheres (Münch 2001: 25). Already in his earlier work *Die Kultur der Moderne*, Münch attempted to explain, with the aid of the concept of interpenetration, how every single worldly action is ethically qualified, and how the process of normative ethicization sustains both universal regulation of social actions and institutionalization of a universal ethical order (Münch 1986: 55). Later, Münch deepened his understanding of interpenetration of religious ethics and the world, arguing, "The various domains of action represent the material that is shaped by religious ethics, in

such a way that the practical action domains are ‘ethicized’ while religious ethics are made ‘practically relevant’ ” (Münch 2001: 25).

Münch relates the origin of the integrative social order of modern Western societies to a specific religious-ethical codex, insisting that “understanding of modernization as ethical transformation” can provide “a much better tool for explaining Western historical development” (Münch 2001: 3). Münch identifies the roots of Western modernity in the religious ethics of ancient Judaism and traces the subsequent development of religious ethics through the history of Western Christianity. Specifically, he discusses the impact of the Reformation and the Enlightenment. Although many social institutions have undergone, with the rise of modernity, significant changes, “the basic values and ethical principles that have characterized modernity as opposed to tradition have remained constant: freedom and self-responsibility, equality of rights and universalism, rational justification of action, and active intervention in the world in order to shape it according to ethical principles” (Münch 2001: 4).<sup>31</sup>

Crucial for the formation of modern Western society was, according to Münch, the conjunction between the religious-ethical complex of Protestantism and economic rationalism of capitalism as this conjunction signified the genesis of “modern rational, ethically and legally regulated capitalism” (Münch 2001: 255). In the cities of medieval Europe, where voluntary association of free citizens constituted relations based on private ownership and free contract, the characteristic interpenetration of religious ethics and economic rationalism was commenced by “the regulation of a society of voluntary contracting individuals by a common law made by practicing legal experts and the sharing of a common cult – the Christian religion – which committed the peoples to a commonly shared ethics” and which enabled “the all-embracing regulation of social relations by an ethics of equity and formal legality.” It is in this structural setting that “the character of ethics changes from traditionalism and the collectivist ethics of brotherhood to modernist and the individualistic ethics of equity” (Münch 2001: 254). In result, as Münch explains in his earlier comprehensive study *Die Struktur der Moderne*, economic rationality necessitated interaction with other mediating social systems (Münch 1984: 12-15). Thus, with the rise of the modern market economy, Protestant “ethics of equal individual freedom

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<sup>31</sup> Münch’s persistent juxtaposition between modernity and tradition seems disturbing to me. He hails modernity, especially in its Western form, as the highest achievement of social evolution, but neglects, at the same time, the significance and function of tradition in maintenance of social order.

and responsibility and civil law engaged in an enduring marriage and became a comprehensive normative order that reached beyond the economic sphere and penetrated every area of social life” (Münch 2001: 256).

Münch attends also to the crucial socio-cultural impact that the Reformation has had on the evolution of Western society. The Reformation signaled two major changes that contributed to the modern process of institutionalization and internalization of religious ethics. First, the Reformation initiated substitution of the ‘professional’ monopolization of the Catholic Church by effective opening of religious doctrine to the public; consequently, by invigorating community life of free religious sects, it facilitated institutionalization of religious pluralism (Münch 1986: 59). Without the Protestant refutation of the principle of “societal exclusivity” and its replacement by the principle of “societal inclusivity,” the process of universalization of ethics would have been (forever) delayed in the modern West.

Departing from the principle of interpenetration, Münch also attempts to revise Parsons’s structural-functionalistic theory of society. In the articles ‘Talcott Parsons and the Theory of Action. I. The Structure of the Kantian Core’ (1981) and ‘Talcott Parsons and the Theory of Action. II. The Continuity of the Development’ (1982), Münch retains the thesis that Parsons’s solution to the problem of social order is neither utilitarian nor normative but “lies instead in the notion of interpenetration of distinct subsystems of action” (Münch 1981: 709). Consistently revealing “a fundamental congruence of basic structure and method between the theory of action and Kant’s critical philosophy,” Münch argues that Parsons’s notion of interpenetration is derivative of Kantian transcendental philosophy and therefore essentially centered on the Kantian core.

Concisely, Münch understands social order as an upshot of interpenetration of between subjective rationality and collective normativity. If the only orientation of social action would be utilitarian, that is, conceived exclusively within the paradigm of the means-end rationality, it would fail to provide any substantial basis for social order because “a social order is possible only if there is a selective principle which exempts certain means and ends from utilitarian considerations and assigns to them a permanent priority” (Münch 1981: 724). In order to substantiate this permanent quality of utilitarian considerations, Münch invokes the Kantian notion of categorical principles and opposes them to hypothetical principles because, as he explains, “only categorical principles can produce a constancy of choice of actions through the variableness of situations of action.” Relying

on the Kantian transcendental referent in the moral motivation of action – the well-known “categorical imperative” – Münch qualifies Parsons’s argument of the maintenance of social order. He argues, “The social order is possible only if action is guided not solely by conditional selective principles, but also by normative selective principles which determine the scope of the validity of the conditional, hypothetical selective principles” (Münch 1981: 724).

Elaborating his vision of the theory of action, Münch admits that interpenetration “is only one of many possible relations which may obtain between analytically differentiable subsystems of action” (Münch 1982: 772). With that, Münch draws on Weber’s typology of the four ways in which the conflictual relations between differentiated values-spheres can be resolved. Weber’s typology “provides us with a ready set of categories for thinking about the various ways in which these can be eased: the accommodation of the potentially regulative subsystems to the dynamic subsystem, their reconciliation, their mutual isolations, their interpenetration, the one-sided constriction of the potentially dynamiting subsystem by the regulative subsystem.” Predictably enough, Münch opts for the model of interpenetration because it offers “the mechanism by which the potential of every system is converted into actuality; it is the mechanism of self-realization and evolution” (Münch 1982: 772-73).

The crux to the problem of social order lies, according to Münch, in the interpenetration of the subsystem of instrumental rationality and the subsystem of categorical-normative obligation, which occurs at the level of societal community. Insofar as societal community accommodates a personally internalized and culturally institutionalized complex of normative obligations, duties, and values, it provides this complex with continuity. Münch’s disclosure of the Kantian core in contemporary social theory is corroborated by Levine’s observation that the new generation of social scientists, starting from Weber, Pareto, and Durkheim, identified utilitarian and normative considerations, suggesting thus a voluntaristic approach to the theory of social action. If Parsons grounds his conception of social order on Weber’s postulate of the voluntaristic and intentional nature of social action, Münch demonstrates how this voluntaristic dimension is entrenched in the intentionality of social action, and how it allows establishing social order. Münch’s eloquently asserts, “As soon as we recognize that human action is intentional action, we can no longer understand it as completely causally determined by dynamic factors. On this plane of intentional action, order is possible only if the actors share

common values, which in principle they acknowledge of their own free will” (Münch 1982: 773).

Subjectively accepted values acquire a collective dimension as soon as they engage into the integrative social subsystem – societal community. It is the locus where the shared values of individual voluntaristic actors assume “an increasingly universal standpoint of collective solidarity,” which transcends not only utilitarian considerations of individual actors, but also the shared values of particular social groups. The shared values pertaining to the intentional and voluntaristic social behavior of human actors should be anchored in this collective solidarity. Münch maintains that the concept of interpenetration provides optimal conditions to solve the core dilemma of modern social order, namely how to reconcile the public good and the private interest. The merit of the concept of interpenetration, in his evaluation, consists in that it allows for the realization of individual freedom at the level of the dynamic spheres of action, as well as for the continuity of collective solidarity with the aid of a normative frame of reference. On this view, interpenetration appears as “a generalization from the normative ideas of the coexistence of the actions of autonomous individuals and social order which is, in the framework of action theory, the central idea of modernity” (Münch 1982: 733).

So far, we have been concerned with the sociological embedding of civil society theory within the theory of social action. Notwithstanding deep disagreements, the considered theorizations depart from the concept of actor and understand action as subjective and rational. The theorist I shall address next – Niklas Luhmann – has overthrown the paradigm of social action theory by positioning the *system*, and not the *human actor*, as the starting point for his theory of society. Accordingly, he has also overthrown the normative dimension attached to the previous accounts of society. What has he achieved with his value-free sociological account, and how can civil society be reconstructed from his sociological description of modern society? These questions determine the structure of further investigation.

### 3.3 Niklas Luhmann's Theory of Functional Differentiation of Society

Niklas Luhmann's contribution to contemporary sociology is immense.<sup>32</sup> Given the scope and focus of my study, I shall restrict myself to examining a modest selection of Luhmann's prolific writings: *Social Systems* (1995 [1984]), *The Differentiation of Society* (1982), *Political Theory in the Welfare State* (1990), and his articles 'The World Society as a Social System' (1982) and 'Differentiation of Society' (1977). I structure the analysis as follows. First, systems theory will be concisely sketched (§ 3.3.1); second, the changes that Luhmann introduced into the sociological theory of modern society will be examined (§ 3.3.2); third, his eminent theory of functional differentiation of society will be studied (§ 3.3.3). Next, I shall attend to the concrete implications of Luhmann's theory to the structure and function of democratic politics (§ 3.3.4), and finally, I shall reconstruct a Luhmann-based conception of civil society in accordance with the gained insights (§ 3.3.5).

#### 3.3.1 Systems Theory in a Nutshell

The catchword of Luhmann's idiosyncratic theory is differentiation. With his notion, he re-evaluates previous achievements of systems theory and introduces "a change in the conceptual framework in terms of which systems are conceived and analyzed" (Luhmann 1977: 30). Specifically, with the notion of differentiation, Luhmann insinuates a new understanding of the system in terms of difference from the environment and develops subsequently a new concept of an autopoietic, self-referential system. The theorist explains eloquently his innovative ideas as follows:

Systems are oriented by their environment not just occasionally and adaptively, but structurally, and they cannot exist without an environment. They constitute and maintain themselves by creating and maintaining a difference from their environment, and they use their boundaries to regulate this difference. Without difference from an environment, there would not even be self-reference, because difference is the functional premise of self-referential operations (Luhmann 1995: 16-17).

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<sup>32</sup> A comprehensive introduction to Luhmann's systems theory is provided, among others, by John Bernarz Jr. in his study *Niklas Luhmann* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

Instead of the traditional concept of system, i.e. a whole made up out of parts, Luhmann develops what W. T. Murthy calls in the article ‘Modern Times Niklas Luhmann on Law, Politics and Social Theory,’ “the relational and orientational view of systems” (Murphy 1984: 47), implying that a distinction is to be drawn between a system and its environment. With that, Luhmann advances Spencer’s original vague intuition that there is the contrast between the inner and the outer. This connectedness has been established by Gerhard Wagner in his article ‘Differentiation as Absolute Concept? Toward the Revision of a Sociological Category’ (Wagner 1998: 453). Luhmann comments on this paradigmatic shift:

The first move in this direction was to replace the traditional difference between *whole and part* with that between *system and environment*. This transformation, of which Ludwig von Bertalanffy<sup>33</sup> is the leading author, enabled to interrelate the theory of the organism, thermodynamics, and evolutionary theory. A difference between open and closed systems thereupon appeared in theoretical descriptions. Closed systems are defined as a limit case: as systems for which the environment has no significance or is significant only through specific channels (Luhmann 1995: 6-7).

As George Ritzer and Douglas Goodman assert in their volume *Sociological Theory*, the difference between a system and its environment is defined by *complexity* (Ritzer & Goodman 2004: 318). Namely, because the system is always less complex than its environment, it permanently tends to simplify environmental complexity. Otherwise, it would be overwhelmed by complexity and unable to function. In order to manage the complexity of its ever-changing environment, the system engages in a process of differentiation, whereby it copies the difference between itself and the environment. Put differently, differentiation is a method of managing environmental complexity by means of “a *replication, within a system, of the difference between a system and its environment*” (Luhmann 1982: 230). Luhmann explicates:

System differentiation is nothing more than the repetition within systems of the difference between system and environment [...]. Accordingly, a differentiated system is no longer simply composed of a certain number of parts and the relations among them; rather, it is composed of a relatively large number of operationally employable system/environment differences, which each, along different cutting lines, reconstructs the whole system as the unity of subsystem and environment (Luhmann 1995: 7).

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<sup>33</sup> The exact term of differentiation was coined by the biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the middle of the twentieth century.

System differentiation results thus in “multiplying specialized versions of the original system’s identity” and can be therefore understood as “a reflexive and recursive form of system building. It repeats the same mechanisms, using it to amplify its own results” (Luhmann 1982: 230-31). In the end, the fundamental principle of “what applies to the overall system also holds for subsystems” (Wagner 1998: 454) provides the system with systematicity and determines the unity of the system (Luhmann 1995: 18).

Technically, the system replicates itself by means of a “binary code,” whereby the system distinguishes its unique identity from the environment and from other neighboring systems. The binary code is a way to distinguish meaningful elements of a system from alien elements that do not belong to the system. At the same time, the mechanism of communication by means of binary codes entails contingency because it is impossible to predict how X will react to the message sent by Y.

Systems are able to react only to the input from their direct environment, while they are unable to decipher the code of other systems. That implies that systems are essentially closed with respect to external impulses coming from the environment. The outside ‘impinges’ on a system but remains unknown. The only effect these environmental perturbations, or “the noise,” exert on the system consists in catalyzing the operations of the system’s internal organization. Being essentially closed, systems are self-referential and therefore have autopoietic nature. According to Ritzer and Goodman, autopoiesis implies that “systems produce their own basic elements, they organize their own boundaries and the relationships among their internal structures, they are self-referential, and they are closed” (Ritzer & Goodman 2004: 332). Luhmann deduces the principle of autopoiesis from his distinction between system and environment, which entails the distinction between identity and difference. Luhmann argues, “Self-reference can be realized in the actual operations of a system only when a self [...] can be identified through itself and set off as different from others” (Luhmann 1995: 10). In this sense, systems can be called self-referential if they “have the ability to establish relations with themselves and to differentiate these relations from relations with their environment” (Luhmann 1995: 13). Therefore, the process of functional differentiation occurs at the level of self-referential systems because only the self-referential system “itself constitutes the elements that compose it as functional unities and runs reference to this self-constitution through all the relations among these elements, continuously reproducing its self-constitution in this way” (Luhmann 1995: 33-34).

To sum it up, Luhmann defines functional differentiation as a contingent process of multiplying the structural differences between systems and their environment aimed at managing environmental complexity. Given this sketchy introduction to Luhmann's systems theory, we can now proceed with applying Luhmann's theory to the analysis of specific structures and functions of modern society.

### 3.3.2 Luhmann's Shift of the Paradigm

Systems theory has acquired a prominent and independent position in contemporary sociology mainly due to the contribution of Luhmann. The key concept systems theorists use to describe and evaluate society is functional differentiation. In contrast, social action theorists tend to employ the concept of structural differentiation, relating the process of differentiation to social structures, and not to the functions of social subsystems. Despite their genetic affinity, systems theory and social action theory provide conflicting accounts of society. I presume, Luhmann has instigated two major changes in the sociological theory of modern society. On the one hand, Luhmann changed the focus and analytical components of sociological analysis and thereby provoked the shift of the paradigm; on the other hand, with his theory of functional differentiation, he 'rehabilitated' the notion of complexity in the sociological description of modern society. In what follows, I shall examine these two aspects in more detail.

Although Luhmann avers his indebtedness to Parsons, whose main task he appreciatively defines as "articulation and elaboration of conceptual models for describing interchanges between systems" (Luhmann 1982: 230), the theorist moves beyond his predecessor. This transfer has been explicated by the outstanding experts of Luhmann's social theory Michael King and Chris Thornhill in their recent study *Niklas Luhmann's Theory of Politics and Law*. Parsons departs from the idea of the unified system of society and constitutes his social theory on the analysis of "human action and the way that the integration of shared normative structures reflecting people's needs makes social order possible." He conceives of social systems as functional insofar as they underlie the established structures of a normatively construed societal realm. Focused on "the integration of particular people through norms and roles into society's structure," Parsons's theory was frequently criticized for its rigidity and inability to deal with social change (King and Thornhill 2003: 14). For his part, Luhmann

does not intend to uphold any unifying normative vision of society and undertakes to conceive the emergence of social systems from a new perspective. King and Thornhill explain, “for Luhmann, the evolution of society subsystems did not happen in any purposeful or rational way, but [...] through a process in which information was selected and given meaning as communication” (King and Thornhill 2003: 9).

On this view, Luhmann pinpoints two pertinent problems in Parsons’s theory of society: First, it excludes any possibility of society’s self-reference, and second, it explicitly obviates contingency. Exactly these two concepts, the self-referential capacity of society and contingency, lie at the foundation of Luhmann’s systems theoretical view of society. Specifically, Luhmann asserts the preeminence of functional structures over empirical processes, adopting an entirely different perspective from that of Parsons. Ritzer and Goodman elucidate, “System theorists reject the idea that society or other large-scale components of society should be treated as unified social facts. Instead, the focus is on relationships or processes at various levels within the social system” (Ritzer & Goodman 2004: 315). Thus, Luhmann affirms primacy of empirical reality over theoretical deliberation on social structures and processes. This outspoken empiricist standpoint has given Cohen and Arato a good cause to portray Luhmann as “a staunchly realistic analyst of existing society” (Cohen and Arato 1992: 422).

Luhmann’s fixation on empirical processes determined his choice of alternative analytical components. Luhmann’s theory is not about people or their actions, like Parsons’s theory, but about systems and their communications. Indeed, as most Luhmann’s critics rightly notice, his primary unit of analysis is not the individual or social group, but the system. Technically, Luhmann distinguishes three basic types of systems: living systems (constituted by organic entities), psychic systems (constituted by consciousness), and social systems (consisting of societies, organizations, and interactions constituted by communications). The social system of society is further differentiated into subsystems of politics, law, religion, science, art, education, etc. According to this classification, Luhmann defines society as “the encompassing social system which includes all communications, reproduces all communications and constitutes meaningful horizons for further communication” (Luhmann 1982: 131).

On this view, Luhmann analyzes social relationships as relationships between a social system and its environment, and not as relationships between individual and society. This is the reason why Luhmann’s analysis may seem “anti-humanist” and “anti-individualistic” (King and Thornhill

2003: 2). Alex Viskovatoff clarifies in the article 'Foundations of Niklas Luhmann's Theory of Social Systems' that the indicated idiosyncrasy of Luhmann's account has to do with a two-fold intention of the theorist. Namely, "Luhmann was trying to do two things, among others: to find a theory that spans the social and defines it in a positive way and (derivative of the former) to find one that is self-reflexive" (Viskovatoff 1999: 508). This two-fold intention resulted in the loss of both realism and individualism. Viskovatoff argues that "by allowing a reentry of subjects' own self-understanding into social theorizing, our theoretical framework bridges common sense and social and natural science" so that the classic sociological notion of subject becomes obsolete (Viskovatoff 1999: 509).

In his theory, Luhmann described society as the all-encompassing social system constituted by functionally differentiated systems, which "represent a collection of autonomous but interdependent processes" (King and Thornhill 2003: 11) and which communicate through binary codes. The relevant question rises to how functionally differentiated subsystems of society actually emerge and what makes them functional? King and Thornhill offer an exhaustive explanation. Luhmann's systems become functional "insofar as they are able to organize communications and disseminate them in ways that they and other communicative systems may make use of them. In very general terms, *functional systems create order out of chaos*: they give meaning to events which otherwise would be meaningless for society. Their functionality relates exclusively to communications" (King and Thornhill 2003: 9). Luhmann relates functions of differentiated social subsystems to the organization of meaning because the meaning imbues functions to the specific societal structures and directs communication processes. Concisely, systems' functionality depends on their ability to create the meaning out of intersecting flows of communication.

Moreover, the organization of meaning, which is specific to each system, determines the uniqueness of binary codes, through which social systems perform their function. King and Thornhill comment, "These organizations of meaning evolve as specific to each system, so that one system's particular way of organizing cannot take over those of other systems" (King and Thornhill 2003: 11). Luhmann insists that coding is always binary in nature because it makes a distinction between two opposing values; thereby, it effectively excludes other semantic opportunities of transforming noise from the outside into meaningful communication within the system. That is why, binary codes do not overlap. In the study *Niklas Luhmann's Modernity: The Paradoxes of Differentiation*, William Rasch correctly indicated the upshot

of the indispensable uniqueness of binary codes, “Since Luhmann considers communication [...] to be the basic element of social systems, the notion of systemic closure and functional differentiation can be conveyed by saying that the ‘language’ of one system cannot be adequately translated into the ‘language’ of another system [...]. Luhmann’s system languages are incommensurable, a fact that guaranteed their autonomy” (Rasch 2000: 144-45). For instance, the system of science may process information according to a true/false schema, economics – according to a profitable/unprofitable one, and art – according to a beautiful/ugly one. The binary codes stand in an “orthogonal” relationship to one another, ensuring that ‘beautiful’ cannot be automatically associated with ‘profitable’ or ‘true.’ Processing communication via the binary codes that are specific to social systems determines “the incommensurability, autonomy, and autopoietic closure of social systems” in modern society (Rasch 2000: 145).

In addition to changing analytical components in the analysis of society, Luhmann also changed the view on modernity. With his systems theoretical approach, Luhmann rehabilitated the notion of complexity in the sociological description of modern society and related this revisited sociological description to the philosophical discourse on modernity. Instead, Luhmann’s theory of society is highly complex. However, King and Thornhill consider this complexity to be consciously intended by Luhmann himself. The scholars argue that Luhmann aimed to depict modern society as essentially complex because he “saw the task of a social theorist as observing complexity for what it is and avoiding simplified or reductionist accounts of the social world. He wanted to avoid above all else the idea that one could capture ‘the truth’ or essence of modern society in one theoretical account” (King and Thornhill 2003: 1).

Hence, if Parsons was preoccupied with providing a unifying vision of society and advocated integration, Luhmann opted for the semantics of differentiation and dynamism. He attempted to amend Parsons’s structural functionalism by introducing a distinction between system and environment. Consequently, Luhmann moved away from understanding society as a network of individuals united by shared values and norms, towards understanding society as a complex totality of communications that contingently create the matrix of intersystemic relations. Describing modern society in terms of autonomous, self-referential social systems, which are related to each other by means of their environments, Luhmann defended thereby the empiricist value-free observation technique. His greatest

ambition was to provide an account of modern society that would be free of any normative framework.

Once called by Rasch “modernity’s most meticulous theorist,” Luhmann obviously deserves this title, as he took up the challenge of explaining, with his systems theory, the key characteristics of modernity: contingency, rationalization, and pluralization. Rasch brilliantly explicates a deep interconnectedness between Luhmann’s social theory and the multifarious philosophical discourse on modernity. Luhmann was sensitive to the unresolved antinomies and imminent loss of unity that already began to slip into philosophical accounts of society in the eighteenth century and determined the modern condition. If the unifying center for the pre-modern worldview was God, the modern worldview has lost this unifying centric vision and experienced an expansion of alternative visions, none of which could claim its centrality. Modernity’s greatest challenge consists thus in grappling with the antinomies caused by “the lamented inability to think the absolute, which is to say, the inability to justify reason rationally or even historically” (Rasch 2000: 12-13).

Luhmann took much inspiration in Weber’s diagnosis of Western modernity. In this sense, I agree with Rasch that hovering in the background throughout Luhmann’s work is the spirit of Weber. Weber correctly grasped the crux of modernity by suggesting his metaphor of an immanent polytheism of warring gods who represent competing and incommensurable values-spheres. With his key concepts of rationalization and pluralization, Weber conceived of Western modernity as engendered by “the very splintering of reason into a plurality of system rationalities” and hence as essentially characterized by the irreconcilable “polytheism” of values of the disenchanted and demythologized world (Rasch 2000: 2). Rasch convincingly reveals that even after the postmodern critique of modernity with such terms as reification, alienation, and fragmentation, we still “find ourselves once again in the middle of the coolly calculable modernity that was diagnosed by sociology in its early-twentieth-century infancy.” Obviously, “neither our quasi-theological rejection of the world nor our political theodicies and ethical lifeworlds have been able to move beyond the barren landscape of rationalization and pluralization.” On this account, Rasch regards Luhmann as “best guide in this ever-expanding wilderness” (Rasch 2000: 2-3)

Drawing on Weber’s diagnosis of modernity, Luhmann acknowledges the loss of metanarratives in social science and, accordingly, the impossibility for a social scientist to occupy a vantage point from which

modern society can be examined as an external object. On this view, Luhmann asserts that analysts of modern society will always work from an internal perspective, observing society from within. Even more importantly, Luhmann rehabilitated Weber's thesis of the differentiation of rationalities. Rasch confirms that in Luhmann's theory of modern society the polytheism of values-spheres transforms into "the plurality of systemic rationalities that construct an observable world by drawing and designating distinctions." Luhmann depicts modern society as "a complex, internally differentiated system that further subdivides with every new attempt to observe its operations." Given that we already live in the midst of a plurality of competing rationalities, Luhmann calls for "emancipation from reason" instead of the Enlightenment "emancipation of reason," because he insists that emancipation from reason is "really an emancipation from nostalgia and anxiety." Rasch concludes, "Luhmann's trajectory of modernity therefore is much like the trajectories traced by Weber and Habermas, who chart the unique development of a European or Western rationality" (Rasch 2000: 13).

However, Rasch draws a clear distinction between Habermas's and Luhmann's accounts of modernity. If Habermas regards modernity as evolving towards "constructing a functional equivalent for the lost unity of reason" by means of an innovative project of discourse ethics, Luhmann believes that modernity leads to "the operations and *mitosis*-like self-divisions of modern rationality by describing how those operations function" (Rasch 2000: 11). Rasch evocatively explicates the distinction. Habermas, like most theorists of modernity, conclude from Weber's earlier account that ethics has undergone, with the rise of modern differentiation, an unprecedented specialization, in result of which it has been enclosed into one particular life-sphere. Consequently, these theorists understand "this compartmentalization of morality as a cause for anxiety" and threat to moral integration of society. In contradistinction, Luhmann "unabashedly endorses it" because for him the decentralization of morality "is the only way to preserve what he considers to be the hard-won and improbable victory of systemic autonomy that marks differentiated modernity" (Rasch 2000: 144). In essence, Luhmann assesses modern differentiation positively, envisaging it as an inevitable and contingent process of evolutionary development of human society. The emphasis on differentiation in Luhmann's systems theory has had a great impact not only on the subsequent developments in the field of social theory, but also on philosophical reflection on the nature of modernity and post modernity. In

this respect, Wagner had a good reason to affirm that “Luhmann bears a good deal of the responsibility for the inflated status of differentiation now prevalent in sociology. The attractiveness of the concept seems enhanced by its phonetic affinity with the enigmatic discourse of the postmodern” (Wagner 1998: 456).

### 3.3.3 Functional Differentiation of Modern Society

Having discussed analytical components of Luhmann’s account of modern society and having positioned it within the academic discourse on modernity, I intend now to examine how Luhmann applies his theory of functional differentiation to the historical reality of societal progress. Luhmann uses the criterion of differentiation to evaluate society’s capacity to manage environmental complexity. Accordingly, differentiation becomes the criterion to define society’s position on the evolutionary scale. The more advanced complexity-managing ability society exhibits, the more differentiated and advanced its structure is. Upholding this evolutionary perspective, Luhmann distinguishes three major subsequent stages in the evolutionary development of society.

At the lowest stage of societal development, Luhmann poses archaic societies. These societies consist of independent groups or tribes that operate in a parallel and essentially independent way with no division of labor. The principles of approximate equality underlay the organizational structure of early societies. This type of society is characterized by *segmentary* differentiation: The system of society is split into *equal* subsystems that are supposed to fulfill recurrently identical functions (Luhmann 1982: 233).

The emergence of traditional, hierarchically structured societies signifies a shift towards *stratificatory* differentiation. Historically, this shift occurred with the transition from small-scale Neolithic settlements to centrally organized agricultural societies in Mesopotamia and Egypt. These hierarchical societies survived until the end of the eighteenth century in Europe when the development of the market and the division of labor emerged, causing reorganization of society according to functional differentiation. Stratification differentiates society into *unequal* subsystems and therefore refers to a vertical differentiation according to rank or status in a hierarchically ordered system of society. Insofar as stratified society is characterized by top-down centralized authority and inequality, it needs some central controlling organ that intertwines economic, religious, military, and other aspects of social life. If in segmentary differentiation, inequality

results from accidental variations in environments, in stratified societies, alternatively, inequality is inherent in the social system. The higher ranks have more access to resources and thus a greater potential to influence the communication in society (Ritzer & Goodman 2004: 326). On this view, Luhmann concludes, “the structural problem of stratified societies is that the identification of subsystems requires a hierarchical definition of their environment in terms of rank order or equality/inequality” (Luhmann 1982: 235).<sup>34</sup>

Luhmann associates the transition to modern type of society with *functional differentiation*. Luhmann describes this transition as follows:

A societal system that is vertically differentiated according to the principle of stratification presupposes that societal differentiation is directed by kinds of persons, by their “quality,” by their determination to live in specific castes or ranked groups. By contrast, with the transition to functional differentiation, the schematic of differentiation is chosen autonomously; it is directed only by the functional problems of the societal realm itself, without any correspondences in the environment (Luhmann 1995: 193).

Eva Knodt insightfully comments in her foreword to the English edition of Luhmann’s *Social Systems*, “In the course of this structural transformation, which was essentially completed by the end of the eighteenth century, the hierarchically ordered, ‘monocontextural’ universe of premodern society broke apart, and the reproduction of society was distributed among a plurality of non-redundant functional systems such as the economy, art, science, law, and politics, each of which operates on the basis of its own, system-specific code” (Luhmann 1995: xxxv). Luhmann understands this kind of differentiation of functional systems as the most complex form of differentiation and as “the latest outcome of sociocultural evolution,” as it is the one that dominates modern society (Luhmann 1982: 236). Functional differentiation means that in a modern ‘polycontextural’ society no function system can control, dominate, or substitute for any other. Society consists of a number of relatively autonomous subsystems that configure their own rationality according to their internal goals and therefore fulfill their specific functions. Due to the relative autonomy of differentiated subsystems, central control is needed no longer, and the coordination between the subsystems can be resolved locally (Luhmann 1977: 35).

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<sup>34</sup> Luhmann also distinguishes to the transitory stage between the two abovementioned types of differentiation, which he signifies as *center-periphery differentiation*.

One of the implications of functional differentiation of modern society pertains to the irreversible loss of hierarchical structure. If prior to modern situation, as Rasch succinctly remarks, “one part of society – the ‘top’ part, the aristocracy of the court – assumed the privilege and responsibility of representing the whole,” with the rise of Western modernity, “the social world has been ‘flattened,’ in the sense that no single social entity or system enjoys a fixed relationship of hierarchical dominance over all the others, as in premodern, ‘feudal’ societies.” Rasch endorses his thesis by an exemplary citation from Luhmann’s work, “We live in a society which cannot represent its unity within itself because this world contradicts the logic of functional differentiation. We live in a society without a top and without a center. The unity of society no longer appears within this society” (Luhmann 1990: 16; Rasch 2000: 102).

When applied to the actual processes to the social realm, Luhmann’s theory of functional differentiation imbues the normative idea of society with unique sociological credibility. The loss of a hierarchical top in modern functionally differentiated society led to the reorganization of the societal realm according the principles of egalitarianism, equality, inclusion, and accessibility. Luhmann argues that functional differentiation, in contrast to segmentary and stratificatory types of differentiation, shifts the distribution of equality and inequality, as it essentially combines inequality, i.e. the persistence of hierarchical political structures, and equality, i.e. an equal access to opportunity with regard to the market, property, and law. In modern functionally differentiated society, “functions have to be unequal, but the access to functions has to be equal, that is, independent, of any relations to other functions” (Luhmann 1982: 236). This means that certain social subsystems acquire only partial functional primacy for a limited span of time, like the political system in the early modernity, followed by the economy in the nineteenth century. Currently, Luhmann asserts, the sphere of science retains relative primacy. Notwithstanding partial dissimilarities in systems functional supremacy, none of the systems remains inaccessible – all social systems are equally accessible for free individual participation and inclusion. Consequently, discrimination occurs only in the distinction between system and environment, whereas environment itself remains equally neutral to all systems. Luhmann concludes, “A functionally differentiated society, as a result, will become, or will have to pretend to be, *a society of equals* insofar as it is *the aggregate set of environments for its functional subsystems*” (Luhmann 1982: 236).

One of the best applications of Luhmann's systems theory to the transformations in the social realm can be found in the recent article 'Niklas Luhmann's Systems Theoretical Redescription of the Inclusion/Exclusion Debate' by Antoon Braeckman. Relying on Luhmann's theory, Braeckman explicates the cardinal rupture between the pre-modern and modern societal types, "If in pre-modern forms of differentiation, where distinctions are made between equal clans (segmentary differentiation) or between unequal states (stratification), the boundaries of the societal subsystems run parallel with the boundaries between people. With the transition to the functional differentiation of modern society this situation changes completely: people do not longer belong to only one subsystem (clan or estate), but participate simultaneously in different subsystems" (Braeckman 2006: 67-68). This societal transformation has, on Braeckman's view, far-reaching consequences for the conditions of inclusion and exclusion. In stratified societies, inclusion occurred at the level of social strata, since the individual's identity was ascriptively determined by its complete inclusion in a certain subsystem. In modern functionally differentiated societies, the individual's identity "falls *outside* all subsystems, for as an individual it no longer belongs (fully) to any of them," so that "the boundaries of societal differentiation this time run straight through the individual." Hence, if in stratified societies, the individual "belonged to only one *multifunctional* societal subsystem – the pre-modern household – it is now supposed to participate in various subsystems" (Braeckman 2006: 69-70). In addition, this fundamentally new awareness of the individual that he/she does not any longer belong to society became, as Braeckman justly observes, the cause of "the tragic relationship between modern individuality and society," which has been vivaciously discussed by such prominent scholars as Charles Taylor, Ulrich Beck, and Anthony Giddens.

Returning to the structural-analytical level of analysis, I want to revise Luhmann's argument why he considered functional differentiation to be "the latest outcome of sociocultural evolution." The key to Luhmann's account of modern functionally differentiated society is its complex structure that results from "the increased process of system differentiation as a way of dealing with the complexity of its environment" (Ritzer & Goodman 2004: 325). Rasch concedes accordingly, "Through this functional differentiation – that is, the self-division of society into the specialized systems of politics, economics, art, science, law, religion, pedagogy, and so on – modernity develops the 'resiliency' to withstand

environmental assaults and deal with increased environmental complexity” (Rasch 2000: 144).

For Luhmann, “the important condition for stabilizing a differentiated and functionally specified system is that it maintains its own complexity at a level corresponding to that of its social environment” (Luhmann 1982: 147). Put differently, the crucial condition is society’s capacity to manage complexity in a way compatible with the structure inherent in its system. Insofar as a social system needs to maintain its boundaries in relation to unpredictable environmental variations, it needs to increase its internal complexity by allowing its component subsystems to differentiate. In result, a new social system evolves in order to cope with a new problem posed by the environment. Luhmann juxtaposes complexity as “the totality of possible events” with the concept, which Murphy resourcefully the “possibilization” of the world, implying specific mechanisms that render the world’s complexity possible and manageable (Murphy 1984: 604). Luhmann brilliantly articulates the argument:

A high internal complexity entails allowing alternatives, possibilities of variation, dissent, and conflicts in the system. For that to be possible the structure of the system must be, to a certain degree, indeterminate, contradictory, and institutionalized in a flexible way. Against the natural tendency toward simplification and the removal of all uncertainties it must be kept artificially open and remain underspecified (Luhmann 1982: 147-48).

Given that modern society evolves in the direction of increasing systems differentiation, it is supposed to possess some essential skills for managing the ever-increasing complexity. Murthy explains how this seemingly contradictory idea that “modern societies are highly complex and have highly developed mechanisms for reducing complexity” is in fact not contradictory at all. Luhmann does not use the notion “complexity-reducing” as synonymous to “complexity-eliminating” to signify decomplication of society. This is because “continued evolution requires even greater complexity: but greater complexity requires yet more adequate means of *pro tem.* complexity-reduction.” Decomplication (as a future possibility) is associated with a ‘dedifferentiation’ of society, which means a *decline* in the capacity of complexity-reducing mechanisms (Murphy 1984: 605). A vivid example of dedifferentiation is the identification of the political code with the moral code, which leads to inevitable moralization of the political code (Luhmann 1982: 187).

The complex internal structure imbues functionally differentiated society with the capacity to structure possibilities. Luhmann contends, “The function of system differentiation can be described as *the enhancement of selectivity*, that is, the increase in available possibilities for variation or choice.” It allows autonomous social systems to determine “in what further ways a system can structure various processes, regulate itself, and strengthen its selectivity”; it is therefore “a form of strengthening selectivity” (Luhmann 1982: 214). Although the system of society is continuously copying with contingent environmental changes, the system itself has “nevertheless already domesticated internal environment which serves as a condition for the development of further social systems” (Luhmann 1982: 231). Consequently, Luhmann asserts, “the principal function of the all-encompassing system of society therefore is simultaneously to enlarge and reduce (i.e., to provide a prepatterned and orderly access to) the complexity of external and internal environments, so that smaller systems will find enough substructure to support their higher selectivity or increased freedoms.” Again, Luhmann persuades us that the radical flattening of the social realm allows component subsystems to constitute “specialized organizations and forms of interaction” (Luhmann 1982: 231-32). Luhmann reveals that it is exactly the mechanism of increasing specialization that makes problem-solving techniques of modern differentiated society so advanced:

Functional differentiation leads to a condition in which the *genesis of* problems and the *solution to* problems fall asunder. Problems can no longer be solved by the system that produces them. They have to be transferred to the system that is best equipped and specialized to solve them. There is, on the level of subsystems, less autarchy and self-sufficiency but higher autonomy in applying specific rules and procedures to special problems (Luhmann 1982: 249).

On this view, modern society is likely to be equipped with superior problem-solving techniques, as it is able to locate a malfunction within one system and assign its solution to another (sub)system. This becomes possible only in a functionally differentiated society that is able simultaneously to enhance the specificity of functional subsystems and loosen the boundaries of relatively autonomous subsystems with regard to new inputs from the environment. Luhmann explains, “By specifying and institutionalizing functions, society *increases* its internal interdependencies,” whereas “by loosening the structural complementarities of systems and

environments and by providing for more and more indifference, society *decreases* internal interdependencies” (Luhmann 1982: 237).

Obviously, there has been much criticism of Luhmann’s apparently positive assessment of modern differentiation. Primarily, critics pointed at the consequences of Luhmann’s theory for sociological science. Insofar as Luhmann’s elimination of the hierarchical top does not allow any system to provide a perspective from which the system can pursue the project of universal theory, his theory of modern differentiation “rejects the part/whole way of dealing with the modern puzzle of perspective” (Rasch 2000: 87). The system/environment distinction presupposes that environment does not preexist systems, but rather is called into being through exclusion, whereby systems differentiate themselves from environment. Consequently, no system can claim priority over others; neither can it provide a vantage point from which one could observe all other systems as parts of the whole. This elimination of functional primacies significantly affects sociology as a science. In the process of observation and description, “even the criticisms of society must be carried out within society” (Luhmann 1990: 17), which leaves for sociology only one possible solution – to accept self-reference as its fundamental methodological procedure. Universal theories, systems theory is one of which, cannot claim to provide an absolute vision, because it is impossible to observe the totality of systems from anywhere outside the systems totality. On this view, universal social theories include themselves in the domain they observe and thus subject themselves to their own methods of observation (Rasch 2000: 103).

Secondly, Luhmann’s systems theory has been criticized, for instance by Ritzer and Goodman, for its vulnerability. The scholars argue that the complex structure of functionally differentiated society reveals a mixture of dependence and independence. On this view, the evolution of modern society relies on the excellence and the result of functioning of its autonomous subsystems. Notwithstanding a greater flexibility and independence of systems, functional differentiation also entails an imminent danger: If one functionally differentiated sub-system fails to perform its function, the system as a whole may fail. Hence, structural complexity of the system increases the risk of a system breakdown if any specific function is not properly fulfilled. The corollary of greater independence of functional subsystems is greater vulnerability of the social system as a whole (Ritzer & Goodman 2004: 327).

Finally, Luhmann's theory has been considered by certain scholars as one-sided and inflexible to analyze the social realm in its dynamics and 'existential' complexity. For instance, Ritzer & Goodman assert that Luhmann's theory "seems limited in its ability to describe relations between systems. Not all systems appear to be as closed and autonomous as Luhmann assumes" (Ritzer & Goodman 2004: 329). The scholars point at the process of de-differentiation, i.e. the process of dissolving boundaries between social systems, as an alternative to Luhmann's purely systemic view. Even stronger, Münch's theory of interpenetration, which we have explored earlier, can be also regarded as another counter-account to Luhmann, for it attempts at understanding the intercessions between differentiated social systems.

### 3.3.4 Differentiation in a Democratic System

In what follows, I want to apply Luhmann's theory to the practical question as how we can assess the role and function of politics and of civil society in a modern functionally differentiated society. I believe that Luhmann's theory, besides providing innovative insights and helpful analytical tools to address this question, also renders the key ideals of democracy and civil society sociologically credible. Researching these issues, I have taken much inspiration from the study by King and Thornhill who convincingly argued that the process of functional differentiation created "broad-ranging societal conditions of liberty, pluralism and autonomy, which are usually construed as the features of democracy" (King and Thornhill 2003: 69). Indeed, notwithstanding Luhmann's intention to provide a value-free theory of society, his theory contains a normative-evaluative dimension, which the scholars rightly discern in Luhmann's contrasting "advanced differentiation as the most adequate condition of modern social life" to "undifferentiated societies as in some respect deficient and prone to inappropriate and unsustainably centralized modes of legislation and power-application." As we have concluded earlier, Luhmann considers functional differentiation as the most optimal form of societal structure that has been attained in the history of humankind so far. This latent normativity of Luhmann's theory becomes even more evident in his view on democratic politics, political legitimacy, and law. Uttering certain prescriptions on how the system of politics should properly perform its function in the democratic polity, Luhmann's theory provides at the same time an excellent tool to reveal "how a political system might fall behind or even obstruct the democratic

conditions already existing through the reality of differentiation” (King and Thornhill 2003: 70).

Most importantly, Luhmann argues that it is a functionalistic understanding of politics that is appropriate in modern democracies. Insofar as the subsystem of politics has attained in the process of functional differentiation a high degree of autonomy, it lost its former substantive foundation. Luhmann agrees with Weber that in modern differentiated societies the political system can no longer sustain substantive rationality. In contrast to the substantive validation of politics in stratified societies, in modern functionally differentiated societies politics can be substantiated only by its functional excellence. On this account, Luhmann maintains that “the political system of a highly differentiated society can no longer be understood as a means to an end and can no longer be regulated by rigid external guidance,” otherwise it would result in the moralization of politics (Luhmann 1982: 158). In order to perform its primary political function, that is to produce collectively binding decisions and control proper enactment of these decisions, the political system “has become so differentiated from the rest of society, so autonomous and complex, that it can no longer base its stability on fixed foundations, practices, or values” (Luhmann 1982: 158).

A similar crisis of substantive rationality emerges in the system of law. Functional differentiation necessitates the transformation of the legal structure according to the political-legal principle of the rule of law. In the article ‘Substantive and Reflexive Elements in Modern Law,’ Gunther Teubner analyzes the upshots of the crisis of substantive legal rationality. The scholar seeks to renew the science of sociological jurisprudence by introducing the Luhmannian concept of “reflexive law.” Teubner argues that in modern societies substantive rationality of law is not viable any longer, as it is substituted by reflexive legal rationality, which “requires the legal system to view itself as a system-in-an-environment and to take account of the limits of its own capacity as it attempts to regulate the functions and performances of other social subsystems” (Teubner 1983: 280). Indeed, Luhmann confirmed with his theory that “functional differentiation of society requires a displacement of integrative mechanisms from the level of the society to the level of the subsystems” (Luhmann 1982: 229). Applying the requirement to the system of law, Teubner argues that “reflexive law is characterized by a new kind of legal self-restraint. Instead of taking over regulatory responsibility for the outcome of social processes, reflexive law restricts itself to the installation, correction, and

redefinition of democratic self-regulatory mechanisms” (Teubner 1983: 239). Accordingly, “corresponding restrictions must be built into the reflexion structure of every functional subsystem,” so that these reflexion structures become “the key to determining how responsive law can play a role in functionally differentiated societies” (Teubner 1983: 272). Succinctly, a reflexive type of law fulfills its legal-regulatory function by transferring reflexive processes in other social subsystems.

If reflexivity is the mechanism whereby the system of law manages the complexity of its environment, the question is whether the system of democratic politics employs an analogous mechanism. While studying Luhmann’s critics, I have concluded that the system of politics manages environmental complexity through engaging in the process of continuous self-legitimation. With regard to the system of politics, Luhmann also employs the general principle of managing complexity as a criterion to evaluate the system’s superior capacity simultaneously to increase and reduce the degree of internal complexity. With regard to the system of politics, the theorist maintains that the system’s ability to absorb social conflicts testifies to stability and viability of the political system. Accordingly, “more complex political systems have a better chance for adapting to an increasingly more complex environment” (Luhmann 1982: 164).

However, the specific function of the political system, which is to produce collectively binding decisions and thereby to produce political power, becomes troublesome when the system enforces decisions on other systems. Commenting on the prevalence of the regulative function, King and Thornhill reveal that Luhmann ascribes a very limited significance to the political system because he considers politics to be not the only social system to determine the whole sphere of human activity. Instead, politics is only one system among others whose function is at most “to provide broad orientations in questions which cannot be adequately resolved in the autopoietic systems of economics, medicine, art, law, and so on” (King and Thornhill 2003: 70). For that reason, Luhmann’s conception of political legitimacy “revolves around both a theoretical and a practical restriction of the scope and remit of political decision-making” (King and Thornhill 2003: 76) and ultimately aims at maximal limitation of politics. On this view, Luhmann refutes to envisage the political system as the only brain behind political decision-making in democratic societies.

Notwithstanding this normative view, Luhmann is deeply concerned about possible interpenetration of politics and morality in modern societies.

That is why “the insistence on the incommensurability, autonomy, and autopoietic closure of social systems like science, economics, and politics [...] is of crucial importance for Luhmann’s handling of the problem of morality in modern society” (Rasch 2000: 145). Particularly, Luhmann criticizes morality for its unquenchable orientation towards a certain ‘metacode’ that eventually aims at totalization. Rasch vividly describes the theorist’s apprehension, “The danger comes, according to Luhmann, when the moral code – good/bad – attaches itself ‘isomorphically’ [...] to the prevailing codes of the respective function systems, when it seeks, that is, to impose a binding translating of ‘true’ or ‘government’ or ‘profitable’ into ‘good’ (or ‘bad’). Such a debilitating moral ‘infection,’ or parasitic overlay of the good/bad grid, would paralyze the autonomous functioning of the system, eventually causing it to lose its identity and disappear” (Rasch 2000: 146). Hence, Luhmann insists that in parliamentary democracies the political binary code of government/opposition should be separated from the moral code of good/bad. Neither government nor opposition should entangle the code of government/opposition in a moral discussion, so that both systems can obtain their legitimacy within the limitations of their unique binary code.

Luhmann grounds his value-free functionalistic understanding of politics in Weber’s typology of legitimate order. Like Weber, Luhmann postulates that legitimacy can be obtained by political authority’s appeal to tradition, charisma, and rationality. Again, Luhmann stipulates the evolutionary road from legitimate orders based on charisma and tradition toward the modern type of legitimate order based on procedure and rationality. In pre-modern societies, the political organization of society was not yet differentiated from personal-hierarchical traditions of rule, and hence the political system legitimized itself by appealing to the immutable principles of tradition and divine law. Due to the functional differentiation of the system of politics from other systems, such as law, religion, culture, and the economy, the sources of legitimacy were transmitted to rational debate and procedures. King and Thornhill clarify that the process of functional differentiation stimulated the emergence of “fully differentiated, autonomous political systems which are required to explain themselves to themselves in internally consistent terms, and which thus depend upon the formula of legitimacy” (King and Thornhill 2003: 73). Conversely, Luhmann admits that social systems in general “have the natural tendency to eliminate great complexity and insecurity by means of emotionally based identifications and fixations, personalized mechanisms of domination [...], tactical simplifications, and

the construction of a historical tradition of generalized experience.” On this view, he insists that this tendency, especially in the political system, should be counteracted because “incentives for continually creating new alternatives must be built into the system in such a way that they survive individual goal-oriented actions and can generate themselves” (Luhmann 1982: 158).

Such incentives are created when the system of politics engages into the process of self-legitimation. King and Thornhill elucidate, “The legitimate political system is a political system which has woven a convincing web of legitimacy out of its own, utterly contingent, operations.” Hence, legitimacy in the political system is basically “a form in which the political system can consistently and persuasively talk about itself to itself, and then provide itself with an essentially coherent account of what it does and why it does it” (King and Thornhill 2003: 74, 73). Concisely, the political system legitimizes itself by creating the meaning within its own system. King and Thornhill admit that the exposed Luhmann’s technocratic conception of legitimacy has been frequently assaulted. Habermas – perhaps the most eloquent opponent of Luhmann – criticized him for eliminating the consensual, cultural, and moral dimensions to democratic legitimacy. For his part, Luhmann refuted the Habermasian model of democratic participation, asserting that it depicts politics as acquiring legitimacy from accountability of democratic government and from binding decisions of public consent. Luhmann believed, on the contrary, that any attempt to tie legitimacy to citizens’ participation would necessarily lead to the bureaucratic overburdening of a democratic polity.

King and Thornhill demonstrate that Luhmann has succeeded to develop “a theory of democratic legitimacy” (King and Thornhill 2003: 90) and thereby to approach a systems theoretical understanding of how the political system produces legitimation and functions under the modern conditions of democracy and functional differentiation. Luhmann demonstrates how, in the course of historical evolution, the political system became differentiated into three subsystems: politics, administration, and the public. First, during the formation of modern political system, politics emerged as a functional system of decision-making – the state. Confronted with increasing complexity of the bureaucratic state, the political system equipped itself with some new techniques of complexity management and differentiated into politics and administration. At that stage, the internal complexity of the political system enormously increased and the subsystem of the public emerged. This politically relevant public was “both a part of

the environment of the political system, communicating consensus or friction back to the administration and to politics, and an internal component of the political system itself” (King and Thornhill 2003: 87-88). The tripartite differentiated structure of the political system confirms that in modern differentiated society the power generated by the political system cannot be identified with any particular person, or apparatus, or conglomerate of institutions. Neither can the power be monopolized by the apparatus of the state. King and Thornhill maintain that Luhmann regards the state as a rudiment of the original differentiation of politics into an autonomous sphere, which occurred in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. Instead of “the anachronistic inflation or overestimation of the state,” Luhmann endorses the idea that the modern political system is in fact “a non-hierarchical system, which consists of an enormous sequence of recursively closed communications of power” (King and Thornhill 2003: 77).

Together, the subsystems of politics, administration, and the public constitute what King and Thornhill call “a recursive system of democratic political communication” (King and Thornhill 2003: 87). Communication between these functionally differentiated subsystems imbues the democratic political system with legitimacy. Specifically, the scholars reveal that the production of political legitimacy is performed exclusively by politics, whereas the usage of legitimacy is the task of administration. If politics creates legitimacy *ex nihilo* by proposing political plans to the public, or by filtering themes that are popular with the public, administration operates effectively only when it is freed from the obligation to generate its own resources of legitimacy. This symbolic resource of legitimacy is preserved by the administrative system, which communicates political plans to the public in the form of enacted laws. Luhmann identifies administration with the legislative component of politics, which signifies the point in the political system where the actual political arena immediately contacts the public and where this relation is externalized in the form of legislation. The subsystem of administration performs a mediating function between politics and the public, as it connects the moment where collectively binding decisions are being enacted in the form of laws, and the moment where the public engages into debate to achieve consensus about which collectively binding decisions should be stimulated, offered, or withheld (King and Thornhill 2003: 88-89). On this view, the analysts have a good cause to conclude that Luhmann vigorously defended the significant role of the public in democratic politics by arguing that the political system cannot generate and

preserve legitimacy without public consensus in the form of public opinion. It is public consensus that performs the function of self-reference in the political system, through which the system renders its autopoietic existence stable and viable (King and Thornhill 2003: 90).

### 3.3.5 Civil Society as a Modern Differentiated *Gesellschaft*

In this section, Luhmann's innovative understanding of civil society will be discussed with a view to accomplishing three tasks. First, the tripartite model of relations between the spheres of politics, the economy, and civil society will be established as being congruent with the model of functionally differentiated society. Second, the distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* will be introduced. Finally, Luhmann's principle of political pluralism will be discussed in the light of his theory of functional differentiation.

One of the consequences of Luhmann's theory of differentiation is what Cohen and Arato rightly called the decomposition of the classical liberal conception of civil society, which presumes the identification of civil society either with the political community (Locke), or with economic society (Hegel and Marx). Insisting on functional differentiation between the spheres of politics, the economy, and civil society, Luhmann regards such identifications as obsolete and inapplicable to modern democratic polities. According to Cohen and Arato, the clue to Luhmann's surprising preoccupation with the problem of civil society lies in the theorist's conviction that "sociologists such as Durkheim, Parsons (his major forerunner), and Habermas (his most important rival) are still under the sway of this major concept of 'old European' practical philosophy." On this view, Luhmann's strategy consists in identifying these social-scientific descriptions of the concept of civil society with "the traditional *societas civilis*" and, consequently, in revealing "the resulting inadequacies for the study of modern conditions" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 300).

Luhmann conceives of social evolution as a "virtually irreversible" movement that increases the complexity of society (Luhmann 1982: 224-25). In the course of this evolutionary movement, certain subsystems of modern society tend to acquire functional primacy. However, "the concept of functional primacy is not concerned with comparing the intrinsic importance of specific functions. Instead, it refers to the position of a subsystem in the total context of social evolution – namely, the position of that subsystem which by virtue of its own complexity and dynamics guides

social development and delineates for other subsystems their domains of possibilities” (Luhmann 1982: 225). Consequently, Luhmann argues that at the current stage of social evolution functional primacy belongs to the subsystem of science, which implies the subordination of both politics and the economy to the scrutiny of scientific control. In this sense, science “can already anticipate attaining social primacy,” as it “would have to become a social system that brings forth an adequate theory of society” (Luhmann 1982: 225).

Applying Luhmann’s evolutionary perspective to historical conceptions of civil society, we can notice that the political system, due to its relatively advanced complexity, acquired functional primacy in pre-modern and early-modern conceptions of civil society. This functional primacy explains why Locke identified civil society with the political community. Later, in the nineteenth century, the swift development of the market economy led to the Marxist amalgamation of civil society with economic society under one concept of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*. If Marx departed in his conception of civil society from a dichotomous model of state/society relations, opposing *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* to the state, Luhmann considers the identification of civil society with economic society unacceptable. This is because “*bürgerliche Gesellschaft* refers to a *topos* that is not identical with but parallel to ‘political society’ ” (Cohen and Arato 1992: 304). Accordingly, Luhmann argues that the identification of a social subsystem of the economy with the whole of society is a methodical error of taking the part for the whole. To mend the situation, he insists on understanding “the economic system as a subsystem of society” (Luhmann 1982: 225) and, accordingly, on restoring the model of functionally differentiated society as the all-encompassing system, which comprises the subsystems of politics, the economy, and civil society.

Moreover, with his theory of functional differentiation, Luhmann eliminates the Marxist juxtaposition of society and state. Cohen and Arato comment that in the Marxist dichotomous model the state is identical with the political system, whereas *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* remains a loose concept, signifying the whole undifferentiated environment of the political system. Luhmann’s model of functionally differentiated society offers, alternatively, a clear vision of how the subsystems of politics, the economy, and civil society constitute the dynamic fabric of communications within the all-embracing system of society (Cohen and Arato 1992: 310-11).

Luhmann’s conception of civil society presumes a clear distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. In my view, Luhmann refutes the conception of civil society in terms of *Gemeinschaft* because this conception

identifies civil society with a traditional society. Instead, believing in pluralization and differentiation of societal structures, the theorist tends to conceive of civil society in terms of *Gesellschaft* as a spin-off of the process of functional differentiation.

Luhmann's overt preference of *Gesellschaft* over *Gemeinschaft* is explicable if we attend to his study of the relationship between individual and society. The theorist criticizes the old-fashioned understanding of socialization in terms *Gemeinschaft* as participation of human beings (psycho-organic systems) in society (social system) because this understanding provides a simplifying model of how individuals interact with society and with each other. In Luhmann's view, the depiction of socialization in terms of *Gemeinschaft* does not do full justice to the complexity of systems environment and of systems differentiation on the whole. Hence, Luhmann argues that we, individuals who interact with each other in modern differentiated societies, "bid farewell to all *Gemeinschaft* mythologies – more precisely, we relegate them to the level of the self-description of social systems" (Luhmann 1995: 220).

Refuting *Gemeinschaft* mythologies, Luhmann compares the relationship between individuals (i.e. organic/psychic systems) and society (in the form of its differentiated social systems) to the relationship between autopoietic self-referential systems. Such kind of "interpenetration permits a relation between autonomous autopoiesis and structural coupling" (Luhmann 1995: 221). If differentiation applies to psychic/biological systems at the level of self-referential reproductions in human beings, societal differentiation involves self-referential reproductions of social systems. Luhmann's exposition of interpenetration of organic/psychic and social systems "presupposes the capacity for connecting different kinds of autopoiesis" inherent in organic life, consciousness, and communication (Luhmann 1995: 219). The theorist considers the interactions between individuals in the context of functionally differentiated society, "Formulated less abstractly, participation in a social system requires human beings to make their own contributions, and it leads to human beings' distinguishing themselves from one another and behaving exclusively for one another; because they must produce their own contributions themselves, they must motivate themselves. When they cooperate one must clarify, despite all natural similarity, who has made which contribution" (Luhmann 1995: 220-21). Emphasizing individual motivation and responsibility while speaking about the "individualization of persons," Luhmann reinvigorates the importance of subjective meaning in individuals' actions. Specifically, he argues that

“meaning enables psychic and social system formations to interpenetrate, while protecting their autopoiesis; meaning simultaneously enables consciousness to understand itself and continue to affect itself in communication, and enables communication to be referred back to the consciousness of the participants. Therefore, the concept of meaning supersedes the concept of the *animal sociale*” (Luhmann 1995: 219). Given Luhmann’s interest in meaning as the underlying principle of intersystemic communication, his conception of civil society bears more resemblance to the Weberian sensitivity than to the Parsonian functionalistic rigidity; hence, it refutes the accusations of its technocratic character.

Even stronger, Luhmann-based conception of civil society includes an explicit human dimension because it also touches upon the concept of trust, which is the fundamental precondition of all human interactions. A convincing account of the relevance of trust to Luhmann-based conception of civil society has been suggested by Martin Schweer in his contribution ‘The Importance of Trust for Civil Society.’ Considering “the participation of citizens as a salient feature of the working civil society,” Schweer maintains that trust in the system is the precondition for civic engagement. Put differently, “people willing to engage civilly and thus to create a basis for a participatory democracy have to be able to trust in the institutions” (Schweer 2001: 61, 68). Schweer claims that “readiness of society members to get involved inside and outside its varied institutions is indispensable for a functioning civil society. But this readiness for involvement requires a basic trust in the social system as such, and in the subsystems included, such as government, political parties, unions, but also churches, associations and organizations” (Schweer 2001: 60). Trust in the institutions of democratic polity stimulates individuals to articulate their demands and expectations and thereby to attract public interest to their private interests. Thus, it is legitimate to assume that systemic “trust does not reduce the complexity of social demands” (Schweer 2001: 67).

Evidently, Luhmann’s understanding of trust is very specific: Trust designates trust in the system. Only within Luhmann’s systems theory, as Schweer comments, trust can be correctly interpreted as “a vital mechanism to reduce social complexity,” as an instrument that provides a significant aid to manage countless options. Trust, understood as the mechanism whereby civil society manages environmental complexity, is analytically comparable to the mechanism of reflexion employed by the system of law and the mechanism of self-legitimation employed by the system of democratic politics. Furthermore, Schweer clarifies that “the complexity reducing

mechanism of trust is a prerequisite for people's power to act in a civil society" because "the lack of trust in systems, and its connected insufficient reduction of complexity, can only be compensated with a mechanism of increasing alienation, isolation and ego-centricity instead of a working sense of community" (Schweer 2001: 63). Thus, Luhmann-based conception of civil society entails an inextricable connection between active citizenship and cooperative behavior, "Without trust the willingness to take responsibility for the common tasks cannot develop" (Schweer 2001: 68).

Examining Luhmann's understanding of political pluralism, King and Thornhill demonstrate how and why Luhmann repudiates both radical-liberal and neo-conservative understandings of political pluralism. The scholars maintain, "By dismissing interpretations of the political system as an organ which is tied to the specific interests of the constituent body, or which is called upon to re-present either the particular (interests) or the general will of the people, Luhmann places himself resolutely not only against the founding assumptions of liberalism, but also of contemporary political activism, pluralism, and indeed of all current left-of-center debate" (King and Thornhill 2003: 95). Accordingly, Luhmann labels social movements with the radical-liberal political agenda, including ecologism, feminism, protest groups, etc. as "parasitic modes of communication." This is because social movements aim to confront society with its internal problems, instead of supporting the systems theoretical insight that all communication occurs inside the system of society and that their protest signifies only one particular process amongst others, whereby the system of society communicates about itself. Put differently, the subsystem of civil society understood in a minimal sense, as a network of various social movements, pretends to assume the task of the all-embracing system of society and communicate outside of its own subsystem in order to exert influence on the neighboring subsystem of politics. Luhmann criticized the ungrounded claim of social movements that they can provide an external perspective on society. That is why the theorist repudiates civil society, conceived in terms of a network of social movements, as "the founding bastion of modern left-liberal conceptions of anti-systemic or anti-organizational agency, as a largely meaningless term" (King and Thornhill 2003: 95). Although Luhmann criticizes one-issue social movements for their attempt to draw political capital from a very selective account of the entirety of social reality, he "sets out a highly nuanced theory of issue-politics" (King and Thornhill 2003: 96).

In addition to his advocacy of political pluralism, Luhmann equally refutes a neo-conservative critique of pluralism as a threat to social cohesion and integrity of political order. Thornhill and Kind clarify that Luhmann distinguishes himself from both neo-conservatism and radical liberalism because both positions erroneously depart from a reductively schematic, either hierarchical or dualistic, theory of society. In result, “both cling to a binary theory of the relation between state and society which falsifies the essentially plural difference and interdependence of the many social systems which constitute modern complex societies” (King and Thornhill 2003: 97). Luhmann’s exposition of modern society as “a society without an apex and a center” (Luhmann 1990: 31) presumes accordingly a different validation of political pluralism. Pluralism ensues from functionally equal subsystems, which sustain their systemic autonomy by differentiating themselves from other subsystems instead of battling for functional primacy over each other. That is the reason why Luhmann criticizes both neo-conservatism and radical liberalism for their shared presumption that certain subsystems can claim primacy over others, like the conservative belief in the regulative authority of the political apparatus, or the left-liberal belief in the ability of (civil) society to encroach on the political system.

For his part, Luhmann intends to reinvoke an innovative understanding of political pluralism by attending to the concept of functional differentiation. In doing so, as Kind and Thornhill comment, Luhmann places his conception of political pluralism outside fundamental conservative hostility to social pluralism, as well as radical-liberal dichotomous juxtaposition of society and the political system. Instead, Luhmann insists that “the conditions of pluralism can thus only be guaranteed if society is not viewed as being centered in specific regions of interaction, specific issues or specific people, if it is decoupled from all mono-focal constructions of reality” (King and Thornhill 2003: 98). To meet these conditions, an all-embracing systems theoretical view of functionally differentiated society is required. Hence, “Luhmann suggests that the reality of differentiation, of coexisting centers of authority for truth, validity and legitimacy is a fundamental prerequisite for a society characterized by a high degree of social pluralism” (King and Thornhill 2003: 225). As we can recall, the underlying principle of differentiation pertains to replicating of the system’s difference from environment by means of system-specific binary code. Difference is therefore the precondition for systems’ autonomy, rationality, and legitimacy and thus the precondition for political pluralism. The result of these processes of

differentiation “is that all modern social systems admit (or necessitate) an extremely high degree of external and internal systemic *plurality*” (King and Thornhill 2003: 97). At the same time, Luhmann warns that the pluralistic multi-contextual structure of functionally differentiated society is jeopardized when society begins to center itself around one particular system, i.e. starts to de-differentiate itself. King and Thornhill confirm that Luhmann identifies the process of de-differentiation, whether in politics, science or law, with “the greatest threat to modern society” (King and Thornhill 2003: 225). Founding his theory of modern society on the concept of differentiation, Luhmann asserts that “the true and necessary condition of modern society is its essential polycentricity.” Correspondingly, pluralism is the precondition for a liberal democratic polity. On his view, King and Thornhill rightly conclude that Luhmann “appears precisely as a spokesperson *for* pluralism, albeit for a much more far-reaching and less immediately transparent concept of pluralism than that promulgated by social movements” (King and Thornhill 2003: 97).

### ***Conclusion***

In the above analysis, I attempted to provide a sociological embedding of civil society theory by assessing the idea and the reality of civil society from the perspective of the theory of societal differentiation. I have sketched a series of sociological depictions of society, which are consonant with the political-philosophical and moral-social premises of civil society. Having studied the concept of societal differentiation within the two competing paradigms, theory of social action and systems theory, I can conclude that the main categories of civil society, such as plurality, voluntary association, civic engagement, public sphere, democratic decision-making, legality, and equality, make the strongest case for the importance of functional differentiation. The discussed sociological theorizations marshaled a wealth of empirical evidence to enhance reflection on the difficulties that the normative idea of civil society can bring about in reality. Using insights from these sociological theories, I shall summarize the main results from the analysis.

The merit of Weber’s theory of modern society consists in that it has exposed the process of increasing rationalization as the crucial precondition for the emergence of civil society in the modern West. Weber described this process at the level of differentiating value spheres of politics, religion, aesthetics, science, morality, the economy, etc. However, the Weberian

understanding of modernization as increasing rationalization contains much ambiguity and is unable to provide a straightforward account of the institutional and structural makeup of civil society as established in Western societies. Weber himself recognized the essential ambiguousness of his concept of rationality when he applied it to the historical re-description of Western modernity. Certain scholars dramatized the consequences of the Weberian diagnosis of increasing rationalization as the prevalent trend in Western modernity and concentrated on the ensuing contradictions. Weber's diagnosis raised a series of pertinent questions about possible limitations of the concept of rationality, such as freedom of choice, contingency, and rationality of choice. In contradistinction to these dramatic interpretations of Weber's theory, Münch spawned an entirely different trajectory of interpretation by conflating Weber's theory of rationalization with the theoretical framework of Parsons's theory of structural differentiation. Thereby, Münch developed his theory of interpenetration.

For his part, Parsons understood civil society as a subsystem of structurally differentiated society, namely the subsystem of societal community. He identified this category with the integration subsystem of society, which is constituted by normative-legal and associational elements. However, Parsons's theory faces insurmountable difficulties when it tries to reconcile the normative idea of civil society with the empirical description of it. It obscures the inherent tensions and obviates the need for empirical emendations to the model of civil society. The problem with the analysis of the idea and the reality of civil society from the perspective of social action theory starts when the theorists try to depict the normative idea of civil society as already realized in bureaucratic power-ridden democracies. Weber anticipated these problems, which is evident from his ambiguous attitude to the irreversible expansion of formal rationality in the structures of the bureaucracy, law, and the economy. Parsons, on the other hand, overlooked the imminent threats of the expanding economy, of increasingly procedural nature of modern law, and of enhancing passivity of democratic citizens. Alexander and Münch ventured to remedy the mistakes of their theoretical predecessors by entrenching the empirical element of a theorization of civil society in their theory of interpenetration. They tried to demonstrate the continuous empirical interactions between the separate spheres of civil society, the economy, and politics. Obviously, the theory of social action has trouble to accommodate an explosive combination of descriptive and normative elements, both of which are still indispensable for an

encompassing theory of civil society. The challenge of dealing with normativity in sociological analysis of (civil) society was left for Luhmann.

Luhmann elaborated the most sophisticated theory of functional differentiation until now; thereby, he creatively advanced the sociological account of civil society toward the next analytical level. Luhmann radically diverged from Parsons's theory of social action, as he became gradually aware that the structural complexity of modern society is comprehensible only through a value-free analysis at the level of social systems. The theorist transferred the emphasis on the concept of differentiation and opted for the semantics of autonomy and separation, in contradistinction to Parsons's foundationalist and universalistic orientation. Even stronger, he returned to the conceptual roots of modern differentiation: Developing his theory of differentiation, Luhmann characteristically drew on the Weberian diagnosis of modernity. If Weber conceived modern society as being determined by the dynamics of differentiation among various value spheres, Luhmann approached a resembling understanding of "the evolution or modernization of society as a process of increasing system differentiation and pluralization" (Luhmann 1982: 232-33). In Luhmann's estimation, modern society, by means of engaging in the process of functional differentiation, increases its internal complexity and thereby manages environmental complexity.

Hence, if Parsons provides "the most advanced reconstruction of the concept of civil society within academic social science" by depicting civil society as the integration subsystem of society composed of normative-legal and associational components, Luhmann, for his part, "does his best to eliminate any such a sphere in whatever guise from the systems theory of society." Luhmann emphatically refutes "the notion that one of the differentiated spheres should be understood as any kind of replacement for civil society, or the social, or normative integration" (Arato and Cohen 1992: 311, 301). In this sense, Luhmann argues that Parsons's reduction of civil society to societal community fundamentally contradicts the logic of functional structuralism. Insofar as Luhmann claims civil society to be principally irreducible to any of social spheres, he does not consider it as an appropriate analytical unit for his systems-theoretical analysis.

Indeed, sociological evidence for civil society is not to be easily discovered in Luhmann's theory. Nevertheless, I believe that the reconstruction of Luhmann-based conception of civil society is possible when we undertake such a reconstruction pertaining to the broad, all-encompassing definition of civil society, which reaches beyond any particular social subsystem of society and resides rather at the level of

intersystemic communication between differentiated spheres. Assuming this, I took much inspiration in the way Cohen and Arato astutely articulated the essence of Luhmann's approach, "Society, in his analysis, stands only for the whole" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 301). On this view, Luhmann revises the concept of civil society "in terms other than that of a subsystem of society in the manner of Parsons's societal community" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 341). Luhmann's conception of civil society also diverges from Taylor's minimal definition of civil society as a network of public organizations, social movements, and voluntary associations that claim their political efficacy. Luhmann considers Parsons's identification of civil society with the subsystem of *Gemeinschaft*, i.e. the societal community, archaic. Overcoming Parsons, Luhmann conceives of modern society in terms of modern differentiated *Gesellschaft*, which releases civil society from confinement to one particular sphere and allows envisaging it as a highly differentiated society constituted by a complex matrix of intersystemic communications. His theory advances thus a new revisited conception of civil society that is concordant with the presumption of functionally differentiated, that is de-centralized, complex, and pluralized, society.

Luhmann's model of functionally differentiated society presumes simultaneous dependence and independence of various social systems, so that "instead of fusion, Luhmann provides us with a persuasive model of the growth of both differentiation and interdependence, of both systemic self-closure and openness to other systems" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 309). Functionally differentiated social subsystems are able of rational communication and independent judgment. In result, due to the advanced matrix of intersystemic communications, society becomes able to detect problems in one of its various subsystems and find the most efficient solutions, without recurring to the political system. Arato and Cohen rightfully observe, "It is in the context of such a reconstruction that Luhmann's notion of autopoiesis first becomes serviceable for a postinterventionist model of the relations of the political system to the other spheres of society" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 341). By his advocacy of "the heterogeneous societal sources of norm creation" (Cohen and Arato 1992: 340), the theorist succeeds to provide a compelling defense of political pluralism understanding it as the essential precondition for functional differentiation and the key to functioning democratic polities.

As I have stated earlier, Luhmann intended to eliminate the normative dimension from his theory of society. However, attempting at a value-free conception of society, Luhmann produced an account of society's evolution

that still retains a certain degree of normativity. Demonstrating a distinct proclivity towards the (unintended) normative view on functionally differentiated society, the theorist advocates a specific type of society that has been established in the modern West, namely “a society without a top and without a center” (Luhmann 1990: 16). Evaluating functional differentiation positively, Luhmann ascribes a normative value to this process. On this view, I suggest that Luhmann’s analysis of society is not entirely value-free. Although he chooses social systems, and not human individuals, as analytical units of his analysis of modern society, he, nonetheless, builds his analysis on the primordial principle of human interaction, namely trust. Hence, Luhmann arrives at a deeply subjective conception of civil society as produced by meaningful communication between the organic/psychic and social systems.

Possibly, the concept of societal differentiation is not as suitable for the description of non-Western civil societies, as it is for the redescription of Western civil societies. It might be a relative concept, and other categories might be much more promising. Cohen and Arato presume, “The teleological interpretation of history may well involve impermissible projection of modern Western categories to premodern and non-Western societies, so that the universal applicability of a category such as differentiation is therefore open to doubt. The relevance of this category to modern development itself is, nevertheless, highly plausible” (Cohen and Arato 1992: 120). The main merit of the sociological embedding of civil society theory consists in revealing the relative independence of the sphere of civil society from the spheres of politics and the economy, and in underpinning the tripartite model of relations between these three spheres. Having established the differentiated modus of their relationship, let us undertake a new challenge and consider how religion reacts to the prevalent trend of societal differentiation.

# Civil Society and Religion: Insights from the West and from the East

## *Introduction*

So far, I have purposefully confined the analysis to the secular reading of civil society theory. Nonetheless, I could not avoid a persistent feeling that the idea and the reality of civil society entail certain aspects that fall beyond the categories of sociological and political analyses. On this view, I have decided to introduce a religious perspective in civil society theory with a view to revealing how civil society and religion relate to each other in Western and Eastern societies of the Christian origin. The announced goal necessitates examining the historical background of the relationship between civil society and religion. Given an overwhelming amount of available studies on the concerned problem in Western societies, I shall concentrate in section 4.1 only on certain, in my view, most important aspects of the Western view on the role of religion in the public domain. Subsequently, in section 4.2, I shall examine the history of the relationship between Eastern Christianity and secular society in Russia. Finally, in section 4.3, a possible religious reading of civil society theory will be suggested on the basis of the inspiring thoughts of the eminent Russian philosophers Vladimir Solov'ëv and Semën Frank.

The involvement of a religious perspective dictates a specific approach. The specificity of the approach is determined, to my mind, by the

assumption that religion supersedes the rationalized, immanence-reliant method of secular science. In contradistinction to secular science, a scientific study of religion entails the possibility of a transcendental referent and hence goes beyond the boundaries of a reason-based method. The phenomenon of religion is different from tangible, visible, perceptible, and testable phenomena of the empirical world, as it comprises the element that can be called supernatural, transcendent, irrational, mystical, or spiritual. It is due to this element that religion expresses human ontological connectedness with transcendence. On this view, the scientific study of religion will inevitably involve examining an empirically unprovable reality.

There are two main approaches to study religion scientifically: the social-scientific approach and the theological approach. The social-scientific approach, identified by certain scholars as “the functionalistic approach,” is employed in the field of sociology of religion and aims at examining of religion in its functional relation to society (Wils 2004: 11). Theology, on the contrary, employs an essentialistic approach, as it aims to investigate the internal logics of religion and thereby address the essence of religious belief. The core difference between the two stipulated approaches pertains to the way they position themselves. Sociology assumes a standpoint external to religion, trying to conceive transcendence by immanent means, whereas theology assumes an internal standpoint, viewing society through the prism of internal religious logic and thus trying to conceive the immanent with a reference to the transcendent. For that reason, these two approaches are essentially incompatible; however, they are both necessary to provide a more encompassing and unbiased study of religion.

Hence, when we address the posed question (What is the relationship between civil society and religion?), we are immediately confronted with a following dilemma. From a sociological perspective, the question can be restated as follows: What is the place and role of religion in the system of modern civil society? In this case, the answer pertains to the influence that religion exerts on the public sphere. The influence can be reckoned positive when religion fosters the cultural-ideological and ethical integrity of society. On the other hand, religion also contains an implicit negative potential, for it has been the force notoriously known for provoking aggressive conflicts in the history of the humankind, such as ethnical cleansing, religious wars, or religious fundamentalism. In addition, religious organizations can be neutrally assessed by sociologists of religion as voluntary associations of civil society. Alternatively, if we address the question of the relationship

between religion and civil society from a theological point of view, the question can be restated as follows: How can the religious ideal relate to the idea and the reality of civil society? Which religious arguments endorse or refute civil society theory? These questions concern the intrinsic logic of a religious doctrine.

In the analysis to follow, I shall employ both sociological and theological approaches to examine the relationship between civil society and religion. This attempt to intertwine these approaches in one coherent analysis accounts for the strength, as well as for the inevitable weakness of my analysis.

#### **4.1 The Western View on the Role of Religion in the Public Domain**

The problem of how religion and civil society relate to each other in modern societies of the Christian origin pertains to the profound question of how Christianity conceives of secular society in general. This question acquired special relevance during the Renaissance when the process of secularization set up in Western Christian societies. Western Christianity was challenged then to find a way of meaningful adjusting to the instigated trend of secularization. On the conceptual level, an argument flared up between two antagonistic standpoints: the standpoint of Christianity and the standpoint of modern secularism. This argument appeared more complicated than a straightforward opposition. It deserves therefore a more detailed investigation, which will be the next focus (§ 4.1.1). Consequently, I shall address the problem of the relationship between religion and civil society from the sociological perspective. Then, we will attempt at defining the role that religion plays in a functionally differentiated society (§ 4.1.2). Involving a political-philosophical perspective, I shall stipulate the conditions under which religion can assume a legitimate form in a liberal constitutional democracy. In this connection, the pluralistic character of civil society will be studied (§ 4.1.3). Finally, we will be challenged to consider a possible situation when modern secularism is interpreted as a coherent ideology (§ 4.1.4). Addressing these questions, I shall rely on those scholars whose studies I have used to establish a theoretical framework in the previous chapters of the book: John Keane, Charles Taylor, and Max Weber. In addition, the argument will be enriched by new insights provided

by the contemporary leading experts on the problems of modern religion and secularization, José Casanova and Robert Audi.

#### 4.1.1 Christianity and Secularism: The Relationship of Reciprocal Influence

My intention to examine the dynamic relationship between Christianity and modern secularism was invoked by Keane's incisive perception, which he articulated in his article 'Secularism?', that secularity as "a key organizing principle of an open, non-violent civil society is indeed anchored in deep time and in surprising ways that are still poorly understood." I agree with Keane that we need to revitalize an understanding of the genealogical connectedness between secularity, Christianity, and modern civil society. For this purpose, "a convincing genealogy of the birth and maturation of the modern ideal of civil society" is required, for it would clarify "various 'pathways' that led towards the politically established division between 'the secular' and 'the spiritual' " (Keane 2000: 10). Bearing this in mind, I presume that a qualified genealogical analysis will elucidate important factors that determined the relationship between religion and secular civil society in the modern West.

The key to the suggested analysis lies, I believe, in Taylor's definition of civil society as the pivotal feature of Western secular modernity. The scholar underscores functional independence of civil society from the state, which entails the capacity of civil society "to generate or sustain a certain condition, without the agency of the state." However, it is not the ability of civil society "to operate as a whole outside the ambit of the state" that renders Western modern civil societies unique, but their "purely secular" nature (Taylor 1997: 259). The question arises why secularity is so important for Western theorists of civil society. Possibly, they intend to clarify the genealogical connectedness of modern secularism and Western Christianity. Elaborating on this presumption, I shall try to expose the idea of civil society as an attempt at a secular normative vision of social order.

The idea of secular civil society became a central category in the epoch of European modernization, when it served as the main symbol of overcoming the medieval religious worldview. As Dominique Colas reveals in his study *Civil Society and Fanaticism: Conjoined Histories*, the concept of a secular tolerant and pluralistic civil society originated from the need to put an end to religious fanaticism. The idea of civil society emerged during the Reformation as "the antidote of religious fanaticism." It was invoked against

the background of rising religious pluralism to prevent the destructive influence of religious fanaticism and articulate the argument for toleration (Keane 2000: 11). Colas scrupulously depicts how the term ‘civil society,’ inherited from ancient and medieval philosophy and political theology, took on a new meaning “in the tragic dawn of the German sixteenth century” (Colas 1997: 8). At that time, Martin Luther refuted fanatics’ endorsement of the sacralized legitimacy of political power by proposing the law-regulated, civilized model of civil society. Philip Melanchthon, the German Protestant Reformer and a friend of Luther, explicitly juxtaposed the concept of a non-violent, legal, and civil society (*societas civilis*) with the mentality of raving fanatics (*homo fanaticus*) who were impatient to establish a new transfigured world without any delay (Keane 2000: 10-11; Colas 1997: 8). Thus, with his plea for a secular tolerant society, Luther sanctioned the idea of secular civil society “as a positive value to promote both tolerance and ‘bourgeois’ values, the free market as well as freedom of thought” (Colas 1997: 6).

In the subsequent history of Western political theory, Colas argues, “the conceptual pair fanaticism/civil society would reappear [...] in the writings of all thinkers seeking to conceptualize the polity” (Colas 1997: 6-7). Insofar as the category of civil society was subjected to critical revision by a wide spectrum of political-philosophical theories, two polarized positions emerged depending on whether they took their foundation from the values associated with fanaticism or, alternatively, with a secular and pluralistic civil society. Colas makes a distinction between totalitarian political forms, founded on value of intolerance and the principle of the single-party state, and democratic politics, founded on the value of tolerance as incarnated in the law-governed state.

Hence, the idea of secular civil society originated in European modernity as the embodiment of the ideals of tolerance, non-violence, and pluralism. It reflected a possibility of a socio-political order based on anti-totalitarian and anti-sectarian principles. At the same time, serving as an antidote to religious fanaticism, the idea of secular civil society is not antagonistic to Christian religion. In fact, as certain Western scholars demonstrate, the concept of the secular is deeply engraved in the Christian theological thought, where it was conceived as the secular world (*saeculum*). Taylor, for instance, insists that “‘secular’ itself is a Christian term, that is, a word that finds its original meaning in a Christian context” (Taylor 1999: 31). In the Christian tradition, the awareness that there is something different from the divine reality

revealed in Jesus Christ arose quite quickly, namely it was the central message of Christ Himself when he said, "I am not of this world" (John 8: 24). On this view, Christianity and modern secularism share the intuition that the realm of the divine needs to be distinguished from the realm of the secular. According to Taylor, "the existence of these oppositions reflected something fundamental about Christendom, a requirement of distance, of non-coincidence between the Church and the world." Insofar as Christianity accepted it as "axiomatic that there had to be a separation of spheres," "the need for distance, for a less than full embedding in the secular" was consequently understood as essential to the vocation of the Church (Taylor 1999: 32). Subsequently, the idea of the division between the secular and the divine was continuously elaborated by eminent Church fathers of both Western and Eastern Christianity, among others Augustine, John Chrysostom, and Basil the Great.

The ancient Christian distinction between the divine and the secular significantly influenced the formation of the modern public sphere as an independent "extrapolitical" realm. Taylor reveals that the modern public sphere inherited from the Christian ecclesiastical tradition its self-perception as being external to the political structure, as "forming a society outside of the state." West-European citizens were able to declare the independence of the public sphere because they "were used to living in a dual society, organized by two mutually irreducible principles": the principle of secular political community and the principle of extrapolitical religious community (Taylor 1997: 266-67). Moreover, the public sphere inherited from the Christian Church its self-perception as an "extant metatopical space." Like the Church, the public sphere was able to transcend topical spaces and embrace instead "a plurality of such spaces" (Taylor 1997: 263).

Although the modern public sphere inherited from the Christian Church the ideas of independence and metatopicality, it introduced an entirely new perception of time. The term 'secular' evolved within the Christian tradition to signify a dimension of Christian life that proceeds in profane time, i.e. "the time of ordinary historical succession which the human race lives through between the Fall and the Parousia" (Taylor 1999: 32). Within the Christian tradition, this profane time of the secular world is opposed to "the logic of divine time – God's time, time as eternity," which implies "the gathering of time into a unity based on a founding act that dictates the meaning of subsequent events" (Keane 2000: 9). Whereas the world of the divine exists in the dimension of eternity, which Casanova imaginatively

characterized as “the sacred-spiritual time of salvation, represented by the Church’s calendar,” the secular world is bound to the conditions of temporality and exists thus in the “secular age (*saeculum*)” (Casanova 1994: 14).

The secular conception of civil society provided, according to Taylor, an alternative answer to the question of how human society inhabits time. Namely, it refuted the premodern “multidimensional” perception of time and established a one-dimensional progressive time-perception. In this sense, “modern secularization can be seen from one angle as the rejection of divine time, and the positioning of time as purely profane.” The modern “notion of simultaneity” emerged, which means that “events utterly unrelated in cause or meaning are held together simply by their occurrence at the same point in this single profane time line” (Taylor 1997: 270-71).

In its turn, the conception of time as profane “militates the idea of society as constituted by metasocial principles, such as the Will of God” (Keane 2000: 9). Modern understanding of time as secular contradicts the medieval Christian idea of metaphysical order and allows a secular self-conception of society as a web of associations “constituted by nothing outside the common action we carry out in it: coming to a common mind, where possible, through the exchange of ideas” (Taylor 1997: 267). With that, the modern public sphere arises as an upshot of immanent common action, which has been previously unthinkable within the metaphysical order predetermined either by God, or by natural law, or by a historical destiny (Taylor 1997: 271). Instead, the secularity of the modern public sphere “nurtures the political principle, vital for public life in a democracy, that the interaction of speaking and acting citizens within a worldly public sphere anchored in a civil society is primary, overriding all other competing foundational principles” (Keane 2000: 9).

The secular perception of time and the secular self-conception of society have produced, as Taylor has articulated it, “a revolution in our social imaginary.” The revolution has come about gradually, being facilitated by three main factors in the modern history of Western civilization, “the rise of a public sphere, in which people conceive themselves as participating directly in a nationwide (sometimes even international) discussion; the development of market economies, in which all economic agents are seen as entering into contractual relations with each other on an equal footing; and, of course, the rise of the modern citizenship state.” Embodying the moral ideals of equality and individualism, the three indicated factors contributed

to the “immediacy of access,” which became a typical feature of modern society. In contradistinction to pre-modern hierarchical societies, modern societies are essentially horizontal. In modern societies, individuals perceive themselves as “belonging to ever wider and more impersonal entities such as the state, the movement, the community of humankind.” In this sense, modern individuals share the immediacy of access. Consequently, the revolution of social imaginary endorsed a vision of society as located in a purely secular time, for it “no longer sees the greater translocal entities as grounded in something other, something higher, than common action in secular time” (Taylor 1999: 39-41). Instead, the horizontal structure, the radical secularity, and the immediacy of access for all citizens “forms the background to the contemporary sources of legitimate government in the will of the people” and allows contemporary Western scholars to conceive of civil society as a “given political form by an act of the people” (Taylor 1999: 43). At the same time, as it has become clear from the above, Western scholars recognize that it was Christianity that provided an initial impulse to the formation of the ideas of tolerance, independence, and pluralism, which are now associated with civil society and liberal democratic polity.

#### 4.1.2 Religion in a Functionally Differentiated Society

Having established that modern secularism and Christianity are involved in a relation of reciprocal influence, we are confronted with the ensuing questions: Which role does religion play in the secular public sphere of modern society, and what impact does secularization have on the internal dynamics and self-identification of religion? These questions induce us to analyze the process of secularization in a broader framework of the theory of modernization and functional differentiation. Such an attempt has been already undertaken by the contemporary sociologist of religion José Casanova. In his study *Public Religions in the Modern World*, the scholar insightfully demonstrated that Weber’s thesis of secularization can be justly regarded “both as the premise and as the end result of processes of differentiation” (Casanova 1994: 18). On this account, I consider it necessary to explain what constitutes the essence of the process of secularization.

Notwithstanding the multifaceted interpretations provided by different scholars, the theory of secularization is grounded in one central idea, namely the idea that the transcendent tends to be systematically reduced to the

secular. Characteristically, this idea has foundations in the originally Christian distinction between the religious and secular spheres. However, if in medieval Christian societies, the institution of the Church declared itself to be the earthly representation of the eternal Kingdom of God and thus “the all-encompassing reality within which the secular realm found its proper place,” with the rise of modernity, the secular spheres of society acclaimed their autonomy from the sphere of religion and elevated themselves to a position functionally independent from religion. As a result of “the actual historical process whereby the dualist system within ‘this world’ and the sacramental structures of mediation between this world and the other world progressively break down,” the secular sphere emerges, becoming then “the all-encompassing reality, to which the religious sphere will have to adapt” (Casanova 1994: 15).

The question of how religion responds to the structural trend of modern secularization has been addressed by many eminent Western scholars. I suppose, the quintessential conclusion we can draw from this extended debate is as follows: Secularization allows religion to become increasingly independent from the secularizing society, concentrate on the internal dynamics, and intensify its essentialistic self-identification. To substantiate my presumption, I rely on the accounts provided by Weber, Taylor, and Casanova.

In his extensive study on sociology of religion, Weber brilliantly analyzed the complex process of internal transformation that religion undergoes when adapting to the conditions of secularization. His theory surpasses the boundaries of methodological sociology, for it incisively exhibits not only the external societal processes accompanying the process of secularization, but also the internal transformations that religion undergoes under the conditions of secularization. With an immaculate precision, Weber revealed that secularization emerged in the modern West as the result of religious-ethical rationalization, which is typical of religion in general and of Western Christianity in particular. Religion’s withdrawal from the secular sphere into its own separate sphere had been determined long ago before Western society started to secularize. In the chapter ‘Sociology of Religion’ of his *Economy and Society*, Weber stipulated the significant transformation of the nature of religion, which occurred when religion abandoned its original magical form and started to assume a form of prophetic religion. Historically, this transformation occurred already in the religion of Judaism and later became the prevailing trend in the Judeo-Christian civilization.

In contrast to magic, prophetic religion is free from primordial magical irrationality. Religion becomes prophetic when it overcomes the permanent existential uncertainty and liberates the world from the magical spell by getting as close as possible to the comprehension of the world as a meaningful totality. According to Weber, certain leading representatives of prophetic religion successfully accomplished this task by establishing “a unified view of the world derived from a consciously integrated meaningful attitude toward life.” In this sense, Weber clarifies, “to the prophet, both the life of man and the world, both social and cosmic events, have a certain systematic and coherent meaning, to which man’s conduct must be patterned in an integrally meaningful manner” (Weber 1978: 450). Consequently, as soon as prophetic religion had conceived of the world as a meaningful totality, it started organizing practical behavior of people toward an ordered social life. Thereby, religion contributed to eliminating of taboos and stereotyping of social relations (Weber 1978: 406).

However, Weber recognizes that religion’s stabilization and stereotypization of social relations produced an unpredictable outcome. By rationally systematizing practical behavior, religion promoted a more rigorous spiritual self-discipline, thereby making the reality of social life more controllable and explicable. In result, society became able to maintain an established rationalized ethical code of behavior and acquire more self-management and self-sustenance. Weber depicts this process in a more sophisticated way in the chapter ‘Zwischenbetrachtung,’ which is part of his *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*:

Denn die Rationalisierung und bewusste Sublimierung der Beziehungen des Menschen zu den verschiedenen Sphären äußeren und inneren, religiösen und weltlichen, Güterbesitzes drängte dann dazu: innere Eigengesetzlichkeiten der einzelnen Sphären in ihnen Konsequenzen bewusst werden und dadurch in jene Spannungen zueinander geraten zu lassen, welche der urwüchsigen Unbefangenheit der Beziehung zur Außenwelt verborgen blieben (Weber 1988: 541-42).

Once organized, society became capable of sustaining and explaining itself without a direct appeal to the rational system of religious concepts. Accordingly, it became gradually independent from the cohesive and explanatory power of religion as well. It is the moment when society became aware of its independence from religion and its self-reflexive capacity that we can signify, relying on Weber, as the origin of the secularization process. Whereas religion attempts at a “conception of the

world as a meaningful totality, which is based on the religious postulate” (Weber 1978: 451), modern social order is permeated by considerations of efficiency, bureaucracy, and proceduration; hence, it is indifferent to considerations of substantive commitment and internal value. With the rise of the Western type of modern society, religion, due to its “metaphysical-ethical rationalism,” can no longer sustain its central position in the social order and transforms from a once all-encompassing social system into a mere subsystem of the all-compassing system of complex, highly differentiated, self-regulating, and self-sustaining modern society.

Under the circumstances of secularization, religion seeks to renew its self-identity by appealing to its inherent capacity of mediating between transcendence and immanence. In doing so, religion adjusts to modern secularization, as Weber explains, by means of moving from a previous legalistic-conventional form toward a more reflexive and ethicized form. In this sense, Weber characterizes modern religion as an ethic of inner conviction – *Gesinnungsethik*. He explains, “An inner religious faith does not recognize any sacred law, but only a ‘sacred inner religious state’ that may sanction different maxima of conduct in different situations, and which is thus elastic and susceptible of accommodation” (Weber 1978: 578).

Notwithstanding his positive belief in religion’s capacity of transformation, Weber remains somber when recounting the ways in which religion adapts to the process of functional differentiation. He is particularly anxious about the unrelenting conflict between the ethicized loftiness of the religious doctrine and the functional profanity of the world. To more religion approaches *Gesinnungsethik*, the greater its conflict with the secular world becomes. The more sterile a codex of religious convictions is, the more irreconcilable religion’s schism with the world is. This is due to the fact that the world appears increasingly illogical from the perspective of religious metaphysical-ethical rationality. Weber elucidates that “with the increasing systematization and rationalization of social relationships and of their substantive contents,” the primary task of religion, i.e. explaining the consequences of theodicy, becomes substituted by “the struggles of particular autonomous spheres of life against the requirements of religion.” With that, the enduring tension between religion and the secular world is rather perceptible in ethical terms, “To the extent that a religious ethic organizes the world from a religious perspective into a systematic, rational cosmos, its ethical tensions with the social institutions of the world are likely to become sharper and more principled.” This is, Weber maintains, “the

more true the more the secular spheres (*Ordnungen*) are systematized autonomously" (Weber 1978: 578-79). Hence, we cannot but draw a dubious conclusion from Weber's account. On the one hand, he suggests an inspiring insight that the process of secularization instigates a re-identification of modern religion in the direction of enhanced reflexivity and ethicization. Assuming reflexive and individualistic forms, modern religion becomes able to adjust to the structural complexity of modern differentiated society. On the other hand, Weber remains precautionous and critical of the established trend of secularization, as it aggravates the schism between sublime ethical rationality of religion and functionalistic rationality of modern efficiency-oriented society.

The discussion on the dialectics between religion, especially in its modern form of *Gesinnungsethik*, and secularism has been reinvoked in the works of Taylor and Casanova. The scholars refute simplistic understandings of secularization as a one-direction process. For instance, Casanova distinguishes three meanings of modern secularization. In the first and most widely-accepted sense, secularization can be conceived as differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms. In the second sense, secularization can be conceived as decline of religious beliefs and practices. Finally, in the third sense, secularization can be conceived as marginalization of religion to a privatized sphere, i.e. as privatization of religion (Casanova 1994: 211). Taylor concedes that although these three processes are indeed observable in the modern West, none of them, either the decline of personal religious belief, or the institutional changes associated with the retreat of religion from the public space, constitutes the main driving force of secularization. The scholar correctly refutes the popular conceptions of secularization because they tend to depict the process of secularization as singularly leading "to a diversity of relative autonomous subsystems (the economy, politics, science, etc.) that took many facets of social life out of the purview of the church institutions." On such a simplified view, "the waning of belief is simply presented as a value-indifferent consequence of institutional complexity," whereby religion, loosing its overarching framework, becomes "simply another parallel subsystem" (Taylor 2003: 78). According to Taylor, this is not an exhaustive and plausible conception of secularization process.

To mend the one-sidedness of the criticized theory, Taylor introduces a moral framework, within which one could properly perceive "the spiritual and moral force of secularization." The scholar is convinced that

“secularization is not so much as process that has developed on neutral epistemic or institutional changes, but rather on moral and spiritual grounds.” On Taylor’s account, the process of secularization sets in when people start to realize that there are *alternative* moral sources, such as reason or moral sentiments, beyond God, to make sense of people’s moral predicament. The scholar associates this realization with the impact of the Reformation, in the course of which “the locus of religion became identified with the *individual experience*, and not with corporate life.” At the same time, “the stress on the inner commitment together with a rejection of external conformity made it possible that religious traditions became fragile and contested” (Taylor 2003: 79). Accordingly, within a modernizing and secularizing society, religion approaches what Taylor denotes as “ethics of authenticity,” which conceptually resembles Weberian *Gesinnungsethik*.

Taylor’s ethics of authenticity introduces a modern kind of individualism, which enables each individual to redefine his individual originality independently from any model imposed from the outside – by society, religious authority, or tradition. The very possibility of retaining one’s individual religious identity in the form of ethics of authenticity is preconditioned by the distinctively modern structural shift from “hierarchical, mediated-access societies to horizontal, direct-access societies.” If the hierarchical society was structured on the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, the modern type of society “came about by a process where the vertical and hierarchical orientation slowly transformed into a horizontal order without an explicit place for the sacred.” In secular modernity, Taylor explains, “society became structured around a more horizontal social imaginary in which God’s presence is not in the sacred, but in the form of a providential design that affects everyone in the same way. The divine is not longer located in the priest of the king, but instead resides in the design that structures the whole society” (Taylor 2003: 79-80). God’s actual presence in the world has been substituted by the idea of moral order established by God. In consequence, the sacred hierarchy is destroyed, and society becomes structurally reconfigured as a society “without a top and without a center,” to use Luhmann’s unbeaten exposé (Luhmann 1990: 16).

If Taylor suggests that religion transforms, under the conditions of modern secularization, toward the “ethics of authenticity,” Casanova believes that modern religion can attain a legitimate form in the secular public sphere if it embraces the principles of liberalism and individualism.

Casanova explicates that insofar as religion assumed in modern society “a less central and spatially diminished sphere within the new secular system,” it became able, for the first time, to fully specialize in its own religious function by either dropping or losing “many other ‘nonreligious’ functions it had accumulated and could no longer meet efficiently” (Casanova 1994: 21). However, the twist of modern religion consists in that it became capable, while remaining “structured around its own autonomous internal axis,” to discover new ways of realizing its potential as a public religion. On this view, Casanova insists that the theory of secularization should be “complex enough to account for the historical ‘contingency’ that there may be legitimate forms of ‘public’ religion in the modern world, which have a political role to play which is not necessarily that of ‘positive’ societal integration; that there may be forms of ‘public’ religion which do not necessarily endanger modern functional differentiation; and that there may be forms of ‘public’ religion which allow for the privatization of religion and for the pluralism of subjective religious beliefs” (Casanova 1994: 39).

Hence, even when differentiated from the main secular institutions and norms, confined to the private sphere and suffering general decline, modern religion still can assume a legitimate public form. Casanova defines the process whereby religion acquires its legitimate public form as “the process of deprivatization of religion.” The prerequisite for such deprivatization of religion is that religion accepts the principles of individualism and liberalism. Only when perceived as an individual choice motivated by considerations of “metaphysical-ethical” rationalism, religion can assume a legitimate place in pluralistic modern society. On this view, the following question is whether religion can assume a public form without inflicting upon the principle of individual freedom – the principle that is pivotal to liberal democratic polity.

#### 4.1.3 Religion in the Context of Secular Liberal Democracy

The problem of positioning religion in a system of modern liberal democracy gets at the root of what Robert Audi called in his study *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason* “one of the greatest challenges to both the theory and the practice of democracy.” This is because the mentioned problem pertains to the question “how to balance the competing forces that tend to arise from the pursuit of its two central ideals” of liberal democracy, namely the ideal of freedom and the ideal of equality (Audi 2000: 5). In other words, we are challenged to define the conditions under which it is

possible to sustain the ideal of equality without undermining the ideal of individual freedom and without infringing the principle of basic political equality. With regard to religious policy, I restate the question as how to give freedom to every form of expression of individual religious belief without creating a (politically provoked) situation of inequality among public forms of expressing one's religious belief.

Addressing this question, I want to re-emphasize Taylor's defense of the principle of secularism as the political principle of neutrality in the framework of a liberal democratic state. He asserts, "Secularism in some form is a necessity for the democratic life of religiously diverse societies," for it enables the voice of the minority to really penetrate the public debate and fully participate in self-rule. On such consideration, Taylor warns against the temptation "to build the common identity around the things that strongly unite people, and these are frequently ethnic or religious identities" (Taylor 1999: 46). The danger arises when "the very functional requirement of a democratic 'people' that seems to make secularism indispensable can be turned around and used to reject it." In the end, he concludes, "the logic of non-secular or exclusionary regimes in the democratic age is frightening," which makes secularism for a civilized coexistence of diverse groups "not optional in the modern age" (Taylor 1999: 48).

Nevertheless, if we agree with Taylor that secularism is not optional in the context of secular liberal democracy, we still need to explain how a liberal democratic state can behold its secular nature and simultaneously recognize freedom of religion, which is for liberal democracy "a central value to be preserved" (Audi 2000: 31). Trying to resolve this problem, Audi proposes a number of conditions under which religion can assume a legitimate public place in the liberal democratic order. These conditions include the institutional separation between Church and state, and the principle of ecclesiastical political neutrality. Let us consider these conditions in more detail.

On Audi's account, the institutional separation between Church and state prescribes the way in which government institutions should relate to religious organizations, namely on the grounds of three basic principles (Audi 2000: 31). First, the *libertarian principle*, or the principle of *tolerance* means that the state must permit the practice of any religion, unless a religion poses threats to citizens' life or public health. Second, the *egalitarian principle* (or the principle of *impartiality*), requires that the state may not give preference to one religion over another. Third, the principle of *neutrality*

precludes governmental favoritism by prohibiting the state to give positive or negative preference to institutions or persons because of their religious or secular background (Audi 2000: 32-33). Audi's argument becomes feasible if we attend to the religious policy in post-Soviet Russia. The egalitarian principle warns, "If the state prefers one or more religions, its people might well find it hard to practice another or would at least feel pressure to adopt or give preferential treatment to the (or a) religion favored by the state. The degree of pressure would tend to be proportional to the strength of governmental preference" (Audi 2000: 35). If the egalitarian principle requires the state's neutrality *among* religions, the neutrality principle calls for state neutrality *toward* religion. Put differently, the neutrality principle precludes governmental discrimination between religious and non-religious citizens by means of allowing religious arguments to exert influence on legislation and policy concerning religion (Audi 2000: 37-40). If government favors one particular religion, mostly in the form of an established Church, the tendentious concentration of power in this specific religious group would threaten religious freedom of other believers and non-believers. Hence, it would preclude the voice of minorities to be heard at the level of legislation, as well as at the level of public debate.

This is particularly true in the case of post-Soviet Russia where the Russian Orthodox Church (henceforth: the ROC) is the religion of the overwhelming majority of the population. The question how the Russian state, which is constitutionally polyconfessional, defines its relationship with the dominant religious group represented by the ROC will be addressed further (in section 6.1).

So far, we have considered the normative prescriptions for regulating religious polity in a liberal democratic state. Now, we need to consider the problem from the opposite angle and depict how the Church should coordinate its relations with the secular state. Audi tentatively suggests the *principle of ecclesiastical political neutrality* as a partial solution to the problem of how best to understand the role of churches in a democratic policy. This principle requires churches to abstain from supporting candidates for public office or pressing laws that would restrict religious or other basic liberties. Audi insists, "For many of the same reasons why the state should not interfere in religion, churches should not interfere in government." Accordingly, if churches abstain from political action, the very protection of religious liberty and of governmental neutrality could be better served (Audi 2000: 41-42). Moreover, churches have a *prima facie* obligation to be

politically neutral as this very principle “may also protect the integrity of religious institutions themselves.” In supporting a free and democratic society, religious institutions should exert their influence by functioning as a counterpoise to political authority and should provide a major alternative to secular institutions in the competition for citizens’ loyalty. The scholar concludes that in order to exercise their positive role churches should be independent from both the state and secular institutions “in matters of value,” and further be “vigilant toward the abuse of power and supportive of individuality among citizens” (Audi 2000: 49-50). Indeed, Audi claims that the principle of ecclesiastical political neutrality guarantees the Church’s independence with regard to values and norms.

In the normative model of liberal democracy, as depicted by Audi, the differentiation between the spheres of politics and religion is necessitated by the constitutionally protected citizens’ rights. In a strong constitutional framework, both religion and politics, instead of pursuing the interests of a particular church or of a political clan, should stay focused on the two fundamental commitments of democracy defined by Audi as “the freedom of citizens” and “their basic political equality.” Such a developed constitutional framework is the outcome of a vibrant civil society, whereby potentially conflictual political, religious, and secular considerations are openly discussed and resolved.

#### 4.1.4 The Phenomenon of Religious Fundamentalism

In the above, we have argued that secularism is needed by the liberal democratic system as the regulative principle for a multicultural and polyconfessional state. Now, we are challenged to consider a situation in which secularism is interpreted as a coherent ideology. In this case, as many scholars claim, secularism is liable to provoke a radicalized reaction on the part of religion, expressed in the form of religious fundamentalism. The phenomenon of religious fundamentalism has become a pertinent problem for contemporary secular societies and therefore needs a more detailed examination. In what follows, I want to explore the origin and the ideological core of religious fundamentalism. In that way, I shall try to explain which role and place religious fundamentalist movements acquire in contemporary secular societies, and how these organizations manage to retain the acquired role and place.

Pertaining to the origin of religious fundamentalism, I share the opinion of those scholars who understand the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism as a typical spin-off of the general secularization process that occurs in modern societies. For instance, the British scholar and former Catholic nun Karen Armstrong compellingly argues in her comprehensive study *The Battle for God* that religious fundamentalism is essentially a reaction to the secular scientific rationalism of modernity. The scholar traces the genesis of the phenomenon of fundamentalism in the context of modern culture, demonstrating how fundamentalism emerged in the modern West as a global response to the scientific and secular culture. Religious fundamentalists erroneously identify modernization with inexorable secularization, in the sense that modernization inevitably leads toward total banishment of religion from the secularized world. Armstrong avers, "The fundamentalist movements that have evolved in our day have a symbiotic relationship with modernity. They may reject the scientific rationalism of the West, but they cannot escape it" (Armstrong 2000: xi-xii). Although fundamentalists may seem anti-modern because they adopt a novel stringency in their observance of traditional religious rites, they do not intend, nonetheless, to revise the modernization process. Instead, they try to make sense of their religious views in the changing context of modernization. In contradistinction to the privatization of religion in the individualized form (like Weber's ethicization, Taylor's ethics of authenticity, Casanova's thesis of religion's functional specialization and Audi's insistence on political neutrality), the sectarian reaction of religion to the process of secularization is expressed in the form of the *political* privatization of religion.

On this view, Armstrong astutely perceives "the fundamentalist rebellion against the hegemony of the secular" as "an attempt to relocate modernity within the ambit of the sacred." Thereby, fundamentalists aspire to bring "God back into the political realm from which he had been excluded" when a secular constitution was adopted (Armstrong 2000: 369). That is the reason why fundamentalists consistently reject the modern differentiation between the secular and religious realms, between state and Church, and try to re-create the lost wholeness based on a theonomic worldview.

As we have learnt from the analysis of state-church relations in a secular democratic polity, the principle of secularism presumes the separation of Church and state, so that, as Keane explains, "citizens be emancipated from state and ecclesiastical *diktat*" and thus be "free to believe or to worship

according to their conscience and ethical judgments.” In essence, the secular principle of religious freedom creates the necessary preconditions for an open and tolerant civil society. On the other hand, the same principle of religious freedom requires more than a tolerant attitude: It requires what Keane denotes as “religious indifference.” It is the secularist requirement of religious indifference that contradicts the nature of religious faith as proclaiming the truth. Accordingly, religious associations can take advantage of the secularist attitude of indifference and neutrality in the context of a free democratic society. Keane clarifies, “The implied agnosticism and potential atheism of secularism is a godsend to religious believers” because it justifies their battle against the perceived decline of religion in modern society (Keane 2000: 12). In secular society, fundamentalist movements constitute the “campaign to re-sacralize society” (Armstrong 2000: 370). The crux of the changing balance between sacralization and secularization is insightfully summarized by Keane in the formula, “when God dies, it can be said, atheism dies and so God is reborn” (Keane 2000: 12).

According to the fundamentalist vision, the political-ethical ideal of tolerance and neutrality is regarded as an anti-religious attitude and thus the one to be fought. Such a belligerent attitude conceals the tensions inherent in fundamentalism. First, fundamentalist “theologies and ideologies are rooted in fear” because, as Armstrong explains, “the repression has bitten deeply into the souls of those who have experienced secularization as aggressive, and has wrapped their religious vision, making it violent and intolerant in turn” (Armstrong 2000: 368). Second, fundamentalist movements, representing what Keane calls “the contemporary rebirth of God through protest,” assume a visible public form in secular societies. The intrinsic tension acquires then a broad public outburst. The religious zeal reorganizes the whole life of religious believers, making them confess their private belief before others in public spectacles, forums, ceremonies, etc. The noticeable outburst of religious fundamentalism in post-Soviet Russia can be seen as evidence of how religious believers can misuse constitutionally protected freedom of (religious) associations. Certainly, this case is not endemic only in Russia. As Keane confirms, “Such public affirmations of religious ethics [...] are nowadays commonplace in open societies” (Keane 2000: 12). Possibly, public demonstrations of private religious and moral tensions are inevitable reactions to secularizing civil societies.

The view that religious fundamentalism should be considered in connection with modern culture is shared also by the Russian contemporary sociologist of religion and philosopher Konstantin Kostjuk. In his study 'Orthodox Fundamentalism: A Social Portrait and the Sources',<sup>35</sup> Kostjuk asserts that fundamentalism is not constructive but in one respect – namely in its insurmountable conflict with soulless modernity wherein it functions as an appeal for spiritual awakening and regeneration (Kostjuk 2000a). It is against the background of modernity perceived by religious fundamentalists as a process of enhancing secularization, accompanied by the loss of traditional values and norms, a decreasing interest for any sort of spirituality and general moral relaxation, that the fundamentalist positive counter-reaction to modernity generates so much appeal to doubting and searching individuals.

Through battling the feared atheism of secular modernity, religious fundamentalism embodies an attempt at compensating existential uncertainty in the context of modern differentiated and pluralized society, i.e. *Gesellschaft*. Keane contends in this respect that secularizing societies are indeed liable "to replace religiosity with existential uncertainty" and thus to provoke "the return of the sacred." Thereby, he relates the return of the sacred in everyday life of modern individuals to the structural complexity of modern differentiated society, "Modern civil societies, ideal-typically conceived, comprise multiple webs of 'fluid' social institutions whose dynamics and complexity prevent citizens from fully comprehending, let alone grasping the social totality within which they are born, grow to maturity and die" (Keane 2000: 12). Indeed, in modern differentiated *Gesellschaft*, which Luhmann characterized as "a society without a top and without a center" (Luhmann 1990: 16), we, modern individuals, are bound to search for meaning in the multiplicity of various rationalities. We are bound to search for a haven of certainty and steadfastness in the ever-changing environment, as we are bound to search for answers in the kaleidoscope of metaphysical puzzles. No wonder, some individuals cannot stand the pressure of metaphysical uncertainty and resort to the unfading explanatory and healing power of religion, which is especially 'well-presented' in the fundamentalist credo. On this view, I cannot but share Armstrong's conception of fundamentalism as "the battle for God" meant

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<sup>35</sup> Константин Костюк, «Православный фундаментализм: Социальный портрет и истоки» // *Полис – Политические исследования* (№ 5, 2000). Internet publication, last visited on 17 September 2010.

“to fill up the void at the heart of a society based on scientific rationalism” (Armstrong 2000: 370).

In addition to the feeling of metaphysical uncertainty provoked by modern pluralization, secularization, and differentiation of society, we can also recall that a liberal democratic order, however liberal and serviceable it can be to its citizens, does not protect them from a complex of social-economic and personal problems, which sharpen emotions of frustration, stress, and uncertainty. According to Keane, the persistent awareness of uncertainty makes people “prone to stress and confusion and hence prone to involvement in shock-absorbing institutions, of which churches, sects, and crusades remain leading examples, especially in times of personal crisis” (Keane 2000: 12-13).

Religious communities retain certain elements of *Gemeinschaft* in the context of modern *Gesellschaft*, which allows those communities to function, upon Keane’s characterization, as shock-absorbing mechanisms in a secular society. Keane concedes that religious organizations cannot only serve as “living reminders of the importance of solidarity among the shaken,” but also, through appealing to the repertoire of traditional values, they can help “to keep open individuals’ emotional channels to reservoirs of morality.” What makes religious communities even comparable to the *Gemeinschaft* structures is their capacity to offset boredom and isolation in the differentiated modern *Gesellschaft*. Religion provides answers to the continuous metaphysical quest of modern individuals. It allows people to surpass the secular dimension of time and participate in the drama of eternity. As Keane has formulated it, religious intuition “heightens the sense of mysterious importance of life’s rites of passage by baptizing such events as birth, marriage and death in the waters of theological time, thereby reminding mortal human beings, existentially speaking, that life is an inevitable defeat.” Religious belief allows human beings to conceive of the empirical reality as just one realization of a primordial order of existence and thus to experience “the feeling of awe and absolute dependence upon this larger order which is thought to be anterior to human reflection, speech and interaction” (Keane 2000: 13).

Religious fundamentalism can be said to exploit the experience of existential uncertainty, and it does so by proposing a clear-cut religious credo to battle the feared atheism of the secular world. In this sense, it radically refutes any sublimated and individualized forms of religious sentiment. Fundamentalism radicalizes the religious doctrine by employing

the mechanisms of doctrinal reductionism and intolerance. It rejects modern secularism and advocates instead “a theonomic worldview,” which envisages the world as having foundations in the supreme law of God. Therefore, “the metaphysics of theonomy” produce a syncretical and even mystical experience of the totality of being and of the almightiness of God’s providence. According to the fundamentalist theonomic formula, the whole creation is in the sovereign power of God who is the only absolute source of all wisdom, good, and morality. Kostjuk regards the theonomic worldview as “strictly monistic.” He comments, “The more straightforward this monism is, the more radical Manichean dualism is,” which allows fundamentalists to visualize the mundane world as a mere mirror reflection of the eternal kingdom regulated by the divine law, yet, an essentially bad and corrupted reflection. For instance, Kostjuk argues, Orthodox fundamentalism promotes in present-day Russia such postulates as theocentrism, piety, loyalty to the church tradition and scriptures, virtue morality, chastity, and, above all, a comprehensible and sufficient explanation of the world by the antagonistic categories of good and evil, truth and lie (Kostjuk 2000a).

It is also typical that the dualistic view presupposes a static and mythologized conception of the world order. Fundamentalists conceive of both the mundane world and the kingdom of absolute good as completed and hence explicable in mythologized terms. Kostjuk compellingly demonstrates that it is easy indeed “to reveal in fundamentalism its irrationalist and anti-intellectualist mind-set, which *a priori* precludes any potential reflection on foundational principles” (Kostjuk 2000a).

In essence, through upholding the theonomic worldview, fundamentalism safeguards its religious credo from any attempts at rational reflection. However, as we can recall from Weber’s theory of increasing rationalization, the dynamics of modernity is determined by rationalization and critical reflection. On this view, fundamentalist anti-reflexive tendency contradicts the very core of modernity. Fundamentalism represents the collection of remaining archaic elements of modernity and thereby displaces itself from the main trend of differentiation. This constitutes the role of fundamentalism: It gives a concrete location and expression to archaic elements that still remain in the reflexive and dynamic texture of modern society. That is why Kostjuk typifies religious fundamentalism as “a dysfunction of modern culture” (Kostjuk 2000a).

Despite, or exactly due to its anti-reflexive nature, fundamentalism retains a great psychological-emotional appeal under the conditions of existential uncertainty. This presumption also corroborates Keane's thesis of the return of the sacred. As it has become clear from the above discussion, religious fundamentalism remains appealing to modern individuals because modernity produced permanent existential anxiety. Kostjuk explains, relying on D. Funke, why the epochs of affective and cognitive uncertainty typically trigger the archaic forms of security instead of encouraging individuals' capacity for independent maturing. The fundamentalist trouble-free formula of the theonomic cosmos is suitable to compensate the loss of trust in the future. In result, a fundamentalist community becomes the magnetic center for psychologically unstable individuals, who see there a possibility of their own adaptation and find a great number of those who share their views (Kostjuk 2000a). Concisely, fundamentalism emerges as a shelter from all anxiety caused by, in the sociological parlance of Anthony Giddens, the "disembedding of social systems" (Giddens 1990: 115).

The psycho-emotional appeal of religious fundamentalism is also enhanced by the typically modern pluralization of moral views. The rigorous traditional morality of fundamentalism is the reaction to the loosening moral censorship in secularizing and pluralistic societies. Kostjuk explicates this contrast in terms of a collision between two antagonistic ethos: the ethos of an archaic society, which constitutes the core of fundamentalist moral teaching, and the ethos of a modern society, which builds upon the ideas of secularism and individualism. If archaic morality is mainly preoccupied with sexual-family problematics and aims at regulating the sexual life of an individual, the ethos of modern secular society ensues from the priority of individual and individual freedom. Kostjuk eloquently depicts the antagonism between these two ethos as follows:

If family morality is closed and prohibitive, oriented towards preclusion of social innovations and suppression of creativity, individual morality is, on the contrary, open and promoting creative innovations. If family morality is sacral-irrational, forbidding the individual to reflect on moral foundations, individual morality is secular-rational, i.e. modified by the individual and society according to the emerging problems and challenges. If family morality uses, when explaining the social order, such notions as taboo, myth, and ritual, individual morality substitutes those with the notions of self-restriction, communication, and right. In other words, individual morality does not suppress freedom as family morality does, but realizes it in an ethical way (Kostjuk 2000a).

Drawing these parallels, Kostjuk argues that the modern phenomenon of fundamentalism has foundations not in the system of cultural and religious values, but rather in the archaic-biological nature of a human being. The archetypes of fundamentalist morality are inherently close to the archetypes of family morality, and that is the reason why religious fundamentalism gets on extremely well with those secular political-social ideologies that support archaic family morality, such as communism and nationalism. The evidence for this alliance can be found in certain tendencies of social-religious life in contemporary Russia.

By way of conclusion, we can assert that the greatest misinterpretation of religious fundamentalists consists in that they interpret modern secularism exclusively in terms of atheism and consequently “feel that they are battling against forces that threaten their most sacred values” (Armstrong 2000: xvi). Having originating as a force able to provide a considerable counterweight to secular modernity, fundamentalism chooses to use dialects of myth, taboo, and cult as entirely opposite to the logos-oriented scientific rationalism of Western modernity. The main difference between the liberal-individualist ethos of civil society and the religious-fundamentalist ethos of archaic community consists in the divergent conceptions of individual freedom. If civil society accepts individual freedom to be realized in ethically responsible ways, archaic community fears and forbids individual freedom, imposing instead rigid family morality.

#### **4.2 Eastern Christianity and Secular Society in the History of Russia**

Having considered the dynamic relationship between modern secularism and Christianity in connection to the idea of civil society, I shall now concretize the general theoretical expertise by focusing on the history of secularization in Russia. I shall elucidate important milestones in the history of state-church relations with the intention of revealing the distinctively Eastern Christian attitude to the problem of secularization. Specifically, I shall examine how the secular state and the secular public sphere emerged in the history of Russia and which developments in political, ecclesiastical, and public life accompanied this complex process. Three historical landmarks will be considered: the impact of the Byzantine legacy on the political system of medieval Russia (§ 4.2.1), the establishment of a secular autocracy

during Peter's rule (§ 4.2.2), and the liberalization of Russian society accompanied by the rise of the public sphere (§ 4.2.3).

To start with, I want to stipulate two major factors that largely determined, in my view, the specificity of the secularization process in Russia. In the first place, state-church relations are usually conceptualized within the Eastern Christian tradition in terms of Byzantine *symphonia*. The model of Byzantine *symphonia* shaped the organization of political-ecclesiastical life in the medieval Russia and thereby significantly affected the way in which the ROC conceived of itself in relation to the secular world. The second decisive factor refers to the dominant trend of modernization, which started with the reign of Peter the Great in the early eighteenth century and reached its summit in late imperial Russia, i.e. in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Being part of the overall modernization of the socio-political order, the process of secularization had an enormous impact on the self-perception of the ROC. As a result of the modernizing reforms, Russian Orthodoxy was confronted with the problem of secularization and challenged to act in response.

The stipulated factors testify to the underlying tendency traceable through the history of secularization in Russia. As a rule, secularization in Russia was initiated by the state. The modernizing reforms, which were aimed at adjusting Russia to the West-European standards, were systematically undertaken in a top-down way, being sanctioned by the ruling elite. Hence, it would not be an exaggeration to assert that the government's reforms frequently assumed an enforced character, whereby the broad strata of Russian society (peasants, clergy, professionals, merchants, etc.) functioned as passive recipients of the reforms. Thus, the process of secularization in Russia pertains in a much lesser degree, as it was the case in Western Europe, to the problematic relationship between an independent secularizing society and the Church. In Russia, alternatively, the secularization process gets to the core of the troubled relationship between the state and the Church, or, more specifically, between the secular ruler and the head of the Church. Doubtlessly, the inextricable link between those two powerful institutions was aggravated by the fact that Russian state had been for centuries, since Russia's Christianization in 988 until the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, a confessional state, where the ROC, as embodying the faith of the majority, had enjoyed the privileged position.

#### 4.2.1 The Theocratic Legacy of Byzantine *Symphonia*

The model of *symphonia*<sup>36</sup> was imported to Kievan Rus' in the late tenth century after the grand duke of Kiev Vladimir was baptized in 988 according to the Byzantine Christian tradition.<sup>37</sup> Implementing the model of *symphonia*, the Christianized Russian state adopted the Eastern Christian view on how the Church should relate to the secular world. This view determined the subsequent history of state-church relations in Russia. It also affected the way in which Russian Orthodoxy accommodated the idea of secular society.

Although the concept of *symphonia* was for the first time clearly formulated in the sixth century in the *Codex* of Emperor Justinian,<sup>38</sup> the deep ideological foundation of the concept can be traced back to the period of Christianization of the Roman Empire in the early fourth century A.D. The Christianization is generally associated with the miraculous conversion and baptism of Emperor Constantine (272-337), which led consequently to the Edict of Milan of 313. The meaning of the Edict of Milan consisted in that it radically redefined the principle of religious freedom in the Roman Empire. In this respect, the eminent Orthodox theologian, a Russian émigré in the USA, Alexander Schmemmann (1921-83) provokingly asks in his study *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, "What did this religious freedom mean? If Constantine, proclaiming it, had been inspired by the Christian idea that one's religious convictions should be independent of the state, then why was it enforced for so short a time and then replaced by the unlimited and obligatory monopoly of Christianity, which destroyed all religious freedom?"<sup>39</sup> (Schmemmann 1963: 67). In Schmemmann's opinion, the

<sup>36</sup> The Russian analogue is симфония (*simfoniia*). Given the Byzantine roots of the concept, I choose for the transliteration from the Greek συμφωνία.

<sup>37</sup> We should bear in mind that the metropolitan of ROC was, for the period of four and a half centuries (from 988 until 1448), invariably Greek, being appointed by the Greek Church. Accordingly, the model of *symphonia* served Greeks as a useful instrument to control the newly-formed Russian state (Kievan Rus'), which had been previously a real military threat to the Byzantine Empire. The memory of Slavs' military violence was still vital after the assaults of princes Oleg and Igor, in the early and mid tenth century.

<sup>38</sup> Specifically, in the sixth book *Leges Novellae* of the *Codex*. Later, in the ninth century, it became the pivotal concept for the *Epanagoge*, the Byzantine imperial law book.

<sup>39</sup> Half a century after the Edict of Milan, which proclaimed freedom of religion and thus abolished persecution of Christianity on the territory of the Roman Empire, Emperor Theodosius the Great issued the edict of 380, which declared Christianity the required faith and made it finally state religion. After 380, the Church was no longer a community of believers, but a community of those obliged to believe. In the established Christian theocratic state, citizens were brought to Christ not only by grace but also by law.

significance of Constantine's conversion consisted in that it actually reinforced "the very nature of the ancient state, whose basic feature is a theocratic conception of itself" (Schmemmann 1963: 110).<sup>40</sup> On that account, it can be argued that Constantine's conception of Christianity resided in the theocratic conception of the state. The emperor regarded religion primarily as "a state matter, because the state itself was a divine establishment, a divine form of human society" and, accordingly, the state as the 'bearer' religion because it "directly reflected and expressed the divine will for the world in human society" (Schmemmann 1963: 69). In essence, Constantine's conversion signified a new union between the state and Christianity, whereby the emperor brought his kingdom under the protection of Christ's Church and expected in return the sanction that he had previously received from pagan gods.

Constantine's religious policy contributed to the situation, whereby "two logics, two faiths, the theocratic and the Christian, were interwoven in this ambiguous union which was to define the fate the Church in newborn Byzantium" (Schmemmann 1963: 70). Schmemmann perceives the fact that theocratic absolutism of the Roman Empire became an inseparable part of the Christian worldview as the greatest tragedy of Eastern Christendom, "The fact that the most Christian of all ideas in our world, that of the absolute value of human personality, has been raised and defended historically in opposition to the church community and has become a powerful symbol of the struggle against the Church" (Schmemmann 1963: 69). Concisely, Constantine's religious policy laid the foundations for a subsequent structuring of the Byzantine Christian Empire according to the model of *symphonia*.

The idea of *symphonia* became an official doctrine during the reign of Emperor Justinian (482-565), who is legitimately regarded as the first systematic ideologist of the Christian Empire. An excellent expert on Byzantine theology, a Russian émigré in the USA, John Meyendorff (1926-92) reconstructs Justinian's conception of *symphonia* in his theological writings. The model of *symphonia* prescribed that the secular ruler did not exercise unlimited authority, but shared responsibility with the head of the Church, in a symphonic alliance. The administration of the Byzantine

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<sup>40</sup> The dominant role of the emperor in religious policy of the Roman Empire became painfully obvious in the schism of the Donatists in Africa, when Constantine issued an act without it being approved by the ecclesiastic hierarchs. Schmemmann comments, "This was the first blow to the independence of the Church, and the distinction between it and the state became obscured" (Schmemmann 1963: 68).

Empire was divided between the bishop of secular affairs (the Emperor) and the bishop of Church affairs (the Patriarch). Together, the two administrative organs constituted the greatest unity of the Empire's existence. In fact, Justinian never distinguished the Roman state from the Christian Church and therefore sincerely believed that he was simultaneously the Roman Emperor and the Christian Emperor. In fact, this unity seemed to Justinian self-evident and indivisible. The Church and the state became inextricably dependent on each other: The state became dependent on the sacralizing power of the Church, whereas the Church expected protection by the state.

The historical legacy of the model of *symphonia* consisted in obliterating the frontiers between the secular and the sacred, and in exposing state-church relations as the summit of the unity between the Empire and the Christian religion (Meyendorff 1974: 214-15). In this respect, Kostjuk correctly characterizes *symphonia* in his study "The Social Doctrine as the Challenge of the Tradition and the Present Life of the ROC"<sup>41</sup> as "a compromise between the Eastern tradition of sacralization of political power and the authentically Christian tradition of an independent Church" (Kostjuk 2003). On this view, the scholar compellingly argues that *symphonia* embodied a typically Eastern solution, a great synthesis, which eventually deprived both politics and religion of autonomy.

Theologians discern in the model of *symphonia* even a greater threat. It was exactly the unity between the Empire and the Church that turned to be for Eastern Christianity "the fatal element." This is because, as Schmemmann rightly observes, the model of *symphonia* reserved "simply *no place for the Church*" (Schmemmann 1963: 145-46). However, the situation when the ecclesiastical and the political communities are identical contradicts the essential Christian idea of the otherworldliness of the Church. Schmemmann perceives this rejection of the true independent nature of the Christian Church as "the deepest of all the misunderstandings between the Church and the empire." Although "the Roman state could accept the ecclesiastical doctrine of God and Christ comparatively easily as its official religious doctrine," it could not fully recognize that the Church was a community distinct from itself. Eventually, "the religious absolutism of the Roman state

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<sup>41</sup> Константин Костюк «Социальная доктрина как вызов традиции и современности РПЦ», доклад на конференции «Начало новой эры? – Социальная доктрина Русской Православной Церкви августа 2000 г.» (Mülheim, 19-20 febr. 2003). Internet publication, last visited on 28 July 2010.

and the emperor's belief that he was the representative of God on earth" prevented the Byzantine state from acknowledging the Church's ontological independence from the world (Schmemmann 1963: 148).

Instead, Justinian's political views reinvigorated the theocratic conception of the pagan state, where religion performed a mere state function. Consequently, "the idea of the Church as a body or community had dropped out of sights and was replaced by or exchanged for that of the state." The most important Christian idea of the Church's genuine independence and otherworldliness was unambiguously renounced by Justinian's *symphonia*. Since the adoption of the model of *symphonia*, as Schmemmann astutely notices, "there is no longer a problem of Church and state, but only one of the relationship between two authorities, the secular and the spiritual, within the state itself" (Schmemmann 1963: 151-52). Subsequently, the more the Church coincided with the Empire, the more state-church relations were redefined in terms of relations between the secular authority and the ecclesiastical hierarchy (Schmemmann 1963: 149).

Therefore, we can argue that Justinian misinterpreted the very truth about the world, which was proclaimed by Christianity. Schmemmann corroborates, "the Church revealed to the world that there are only two absolute, eternal and sacred values: God and man, and that everything else, including the state, is first limited by its very nature – by belonging wholly only to this world [...]. Hence a true postulate for a Christian world was not a merging of the Church with the state but, on the contrary, a distinction between them." For Christianity, the state can be considered Christian only "to the extent that it does not claim to be everything for man – to define his whole life – but enables him to be a member as well of another community, another reality, which is alien to the state although not hostile to it" (Schmemmann 1963: 151-52). Accordingly, the idea of the symphonic unity between Church and state as the unity between soul and body substituted the original Evangelic idea of the Church as the only true *body* of Christ. If the early Christian Church perceived itself as one body, a living organism, a new people, essentially incompatible with any other people or any other earthly community, the Church in Byzantium perceived itself no longer as the body, but rather the soul breathing life into the body of the Byzantine state.

Nonetheless, the obliteration of the frontiers between the spiritual community of the Church and the political community of the state did not totally distort the foundations of Byzantine ecclesiology. On the contrary,

the obliteration of the borders strengthened the Church's self-conception in essentialistic terms and invigorated theological reflection on how Christians should live under the conditions of the symphonic secular-divine synthesis. Schmemmann comments, "The coincidence between these two communities meant, however, that from the time of Christianization of the Empire the boundary between the Church and the world had gradually shifted from an external one, dividing Christian from pagan, to an inner one, within the Christian mind itself" (Schmemmann 1963: 147). In Christian mind, however, there has always been a strict differentiation between two ontologically different communities: the Church as a spiritual community and as a natural community. In the history of the Orthodox Church, the awareness of this differentiation provided the foundation for the intrinsic dualism inherent in Orthodox ecclesiology and moral theology. The model of *symphonia*, instead of bringing the realm of the divine closer to the realm of the secular, produced an opposite result. It intensified the Orthodox perception of the ontological distinction between the Church and the world and contributed to the internal dualism whereby Orthodox Christianity relates to the secular world.<sup>42</sup>

The unification of the political and ecclesiastical domains in the Byzantine state administration also resulted in the underdevelopment of the Byzantine ecclesiastical, or canon, law, which has been the object of many Western Christian critics. Notwithstanding the fact that the Byzantine Church did not provide itself with an elaborated and consistent canon law, it succeeded in defining itself as essentially a divine institution whose internal existence might never adequately be comprehended in juridical terms. According to the Orthodox patristic conception, "the Church was, first of all, a sacramental communion with God in Christ and the Spirit, whose membership – the entire body of Christ – is not limited to the earthly *oikoumene* where law governs society" (Meyendorff 1974: 79). Since there is no question of legislation in the heaven, legislation on earth had also a limited function. Insofar as Byzantine ecclesiastical lawyers realized that secular concepts of the juridical law were unable to exhaust the ultimate reality of the Church of God, they understood law as transitory and hence "subordinate to the more fundamental and divine nature of the Church, expressed in a sacramental and doctrinal communion, uniting heaven and earth" (Meyendorff 1974: 80). This trend testifies again to the Church's

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<sup>42</sup> The intrinsic dualism typical of Orthodox theology is also discussed with reference to Russian Orthodoxy in chapter six, in section 6.3.

deep inclination toward the essentialistic self-conception. On that account, the Orthodox Church can be legitimately claimed to be more concerned with its theological self-conception and internal dynamics than with a dialog with the secular world.

The essentialistic character of the Byzantine theological tradition determined the specificity of Byzantine monasticism. Meyendorff clarifies that Byzantine monasticism had always opposed the theocratic pretensions of the Byzantine state and therefore prevented, to a certain degree, the identification of the Church with the empire, “which constantly tended to sacralize itself and to assimilate the divine plan of salvation to its temporal interests.” In the fourth century, a significant number of Christians disapproved of Christianity becoming an official state religion and left booming Constantinople for ascetic life in the desert. In this sense, Meyendorff justly characterizes the monks as “the real witnesses of the Church’s internal independence.” Spread all over the Byzantine Empire and numbering thousands only in Constantinople itself, the monks acquired an enormous social and intellectual worth. In fact, ardent theological arguments frequently achieved the most elaborated form exactly within the monastery boundaries. These arguments resulted in the seven Ecumenical Councils of the Orthodox Church, the first held in 325 and the last in 787. The doctrinal rigorousness of the monks determined the general character of Byzantine theology as a monastic one. Meyendorff justly observes, “That Byzantine Christianity lacked what today would be called a ‘theology of the secular’ is largely the result of the predominant position of monasticism” (Meyendorff 1974: 6). On this view, the tradition of monasticism can be considered as an important factor in the increasing essentialistic self-conception inherent in the Eastern Orthodox Church in general.

The model of Byzantine *symphonia* became a standard program in Slavic countries. With the Christianization in 988, Kievan Rus’ adopted the Byzantine religious doctrine and policy.<sup>43</sup> Due to the fact that the ecumenical Patriarch was not only an ecclesiastical, but also a *state* official, his secular function was expressed in the right to crown the emperor (a privilege dating back to the tenth century), and through the custom of his assuming the regency in case of need (Meyendorff 1974: 86). This principle of the Patriarch’s appointment as a state official was consequently

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<sup>43</sup> The canon law in the ROC was regulated by the so-called *Kormchaja Kniga*, which was the Slavic translation of the *Nomocanons* written by John III Scholasticus, Patriarch of Constantinople (565-577), during the reign of Emperor Justinian.

transported to Kievan Rus'. With that, as Schmemmann poignantly observes, the Byzantine heritage "simultaneously poisoned the Slavic world with its theocratic mechanism, and fertilized it forever with the riches of its striving for Godmanhood" (Schmemmann 1963: 269). Indeed, the path of Russia's political and religious history reveals much of both theocratic pretensions of the Russian sovereigns and of the ardent struggle for attaining the ideal of Godmanhood (*Bogochelovechestvo*), instigated by the dualistic attitude to the world.<sup>44</sup>

I endorse the view, shared by many experts in the field of Russian history, that the Mongol Yoke (1240-1480) signified a turning point in the history of the Russian state. This invasion divided Russian history into the pre-Mongol Kievan period, when the kingdom of Rus' basically consisted of a number of independent feudal principalities, and the post-Mongol period of the centralized Muscovite Tsardom, when the political and ecclesiastical centers coincided again as it was the case in the Byzantine Empire. During the Kievan period, state-church relations were characterized by an active engagement of the Church in the life of society and by its relatively high independence from the political influence of the princes. This was possible because almost all metropolitans at that time were invariably appointed by the Patriarch of Constantinople and had Greek nationality. The Mongol invasion changed the politico-social and ecclesiastical structure of Kievan Rus' dramatically. It instigated what Kostjuk calls the typically Eastern political centralization and the subsequent subjugation of all societal institutions, including the Church, to the central authority of the state (Kostjuk 2003).

The period of the Muscovite Tsardom (XV-XVII cc.) is, in my opinion, an extremely dynamic and interesting period not only because of the newly established state-church relations, but also because of a vibrant theological debate. The centralization and empowerment of the Muscovite Tsardom began since Moscow became in 1325 the seat for both the Russian Prince and the Metropolitan. In 1448, the ROC gained its autonomy and national character when the first Russian hierarch Iona was ordained as

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<sup>44</sup> The Orthodox concept of Godmanhood, which implies that the human being possesses two natures, the divine and the human, has turned crucial for the development of Russian Orthodox theological thought. I shall address the concept further in my study: § 4.3.3 provides a religious-philosophical understanding of the concept pertaining to Frank's theory of society; § 6.3.3 and § 6.3.4 discuss the implication of the concept for the Russian Orthodox teaching on human rights and human dignity. Finally, § 6.4.2 is concerned with the revitalization of the concept in the religious dissidents' and liberal Orthodox discourse on conscience and individual freedom.

Metropolitan. A century later, in 1589, the establishment of the institute of patriarchate completed the instigated nationalization of the ROC. Besides, the empowerment of the Muscovite Tsardom was promulgated by the developments in the international arena. Constantinople unsuccessfully tried to get military support from Rome for the price of theological concessions, which resulted in the Union of Florence in 1439. Eventually, the capital of the Byzantine Empire was captured in 1453 by the Ottoman Empire, and the Catholic Patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox Churches found himself in captivity. These events gave the necessary impulse to the development of the idea of Moscow as the third Rome. The architectural ensemble of the Moscow Kremlin, build at the end of the fifteenth century, can be considered as an embodiment of this idea in stone.

With the establishment of the national Church and with an unprecedented centralization of political power in the hands of the sovereign, the medieval Russian Tsardom seemed fully prepared to adopt the model of Byzantine *symphonia*. However, the trans-historical realization of this experiment revealed the deep antagonism of this model. The political ruler continuously tried to claim its priority over the head of the Church. Thus, in 1666, the conflict between ambitious Patriarch Nikon and equally ambitious Tsar Aleksej Mikhajlovich exhibited the internal drama inherent in the model of *symphonia*. Consequently, the patriarch was deprived of his title and sent to banishment. The fact that the Byzantine model proved unsuitable for Muscovite Rus' reveals, as Kostjuk rightly notices, that Russian governors started to emancipate from the sacralizing power of the Church and view this sacralizing power in purely programmatic terms (Kostjuk 2003). On this account, we can date the beginning of the process of secularization in Russia by the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>45</sup>

#### 4.2.2 The Holy Synod and the Idea of a Secular Autocratic State

The church reform of Peter the Great<sup>46</sup> (1721) instigated the process of secularization and thereby inaugurated the epoch of modernizing reforms in Russia. As a result of Peter's reform, the institute of patriarchate was abolished and was replaced by the Holy Synod, which became the highest

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<sup>45</sup> Kostjuk argues further that Russian tsars became aware of their secular power and sovereignty earlier than the rulers in Western Europe did. For this reason, he claims Russia to be "the historical leader of secularization" among other Christian countries (Kostjuk 2003).

<sup>46</sup> Peter the Great was born in 1672 and died in 1725. He was the tsar of Russia from 1682 to 1725.

ecclesiastical council of the ROC. Such a drastic reorganization of the ecclesiastical administration signaled in the history of the ROC the beginning of the two-century Synodal period, lasting from 1700 until 1917.

Peter's church reform has had a deep impact on the relationship between the ROC and the secular state, being extensively discussed by many eminent ecclesiastical historians. Thus, the eminent Russian émigré theologian and historian Georgij Florovskij (1893-1979) insists in his renowned book *Ways of Russian Theology* that we should not underestimate Peter's church reform, as it was not "an incidental episode" in the system of his modernizing reforms. Peter was not the first Westerner in Muscovite Russia at the end of the seventeenth century; instead, he was a successor of "the entire generation reared and educated in thoughts about the West." In this sense, his "church reform constituted the principal and the most consequential reform in the general economy of the epoch: a powerful and acute experiment in state-imposed secularization" (Florovskij 1979: 114).

In fact, Peter's reform signaled not the beginning of Russia's westernization, but rather the beginning of systematic controlled secularization. Anton Kartashëv<sup>47</sup> (1875-1960), whom I consider one of the shrewdest analysts of Russian ecclesiastical history, concedes in *The Essays on the History of the Russian Church*<sup>48</sup> that Peter ingeniously revealed the spirit and the worldview of a new modern Europe and symbolized for Russia the end of its medieval history. The most significant upshot of Peter's instigated secularization consisted in that it substituted the previous model of Byzantine theocracy by the political model based on the ideas of Western humanism and laicism (Kartashëv 2000: 453). At the same time, as Florovskij correctly comments, Peter's secularization caused "the great and genuine Russian schism" between Church and state. Precisely, "a certain polarization took place in Russia's spiritual life. In the tension between the twin anchor points – secular life and ecclesiastical life – the Russian spirit stretched and strained to the utmost. Peter's reform signified a displacement or even a rupture in Russia's spiritual depths" (Florovskij 1979: 115).

Kartashëv relates Peter's decision to substitute the institute of patriarchate by "the non-orthodox and anti-canonical from of the *college*," i.e. the Synod, to his traumatic experience as a child (Kartashëv 2000: 456).

<sup>47</sup> As an expert in the field of church history and theology, Kartashëv was appointed as the last chief procurator of the Holy Synod; after the Bolshevik revolution, he was the professor at the Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris.

<sup>48</sup> Антон Карташёв, *Очерки по истории русской церкви*, том II (2000 [1959]).

First, little Peter witnessed the aforementioned conflict between his father, Tsar Aleksej Mikhajlovich, and Patriarch Nikon. Second, at the age of ten, Peter survived the *Strel'tsy* revolt (1682), when ravaging *strel'tsy* (the shooters), a military subgroup loyal to the old-believers tradition, brutally stormed into the Kremlin in an attempt to usurp the Russian throne. Since then, Peter assumed a deep abhorrence toward everything associated with the old tradition that persevered in Moscow boyar houses and in the dispersed groups of old-believers. Trying to escape the traditional spirit of medieval Moscow, Peter founded in 1703 the new capital – St-Petersburg.

Peter started the reform after the death of Patriarch Adrian in 1700. He delayed the appointment of a new candidate for two decades until the establishment of the Synod in 1721.<sup>49</sup> Thereby, Peter obviously aimed “to disinfect the head of the local Church” (Kartashëv 2000: 456) and avoid a new potential conflict with the head of the ROC. In the meantime, Peter delegated the authority over the Church not to the canonical Church Council, but to the board of state officials appointed by the emperor himself. This board was called the Synod; it was headed by an unfamiliar and young Metropolitan Stefan Javorskij, whom Peter anti-canonically titled as the ‘exarch’.<sup>50</sup>

The direction of the reform was clear for Peter. However, he was powerless to implement it in juridical and canonical terms because he could not find canonical foundations for his design either in the Eastern Orthodox or the Roman-Catholic Churches. For that reason, he turned to the experience of Western Europe<sup>51</sup> with the intention to learn how the monarchical principle of Western Christian episcopate was broken by the Reformation. Insofar as the Protestant model supported primacy of the secular ruler over the head of the Church, it matched Peter’s idea.

<sup>49</sup> According to the canon law of the Orthodox Church, the leadership of the Church after the death of its patriarch is transferred to the ecclesiastic council, until the new patriarch is elected.

<sup>50</sup> According to the Orthodox canon law, the exarch can be appointed only by the patriarch and not by a secular ruler.

<sup>51</sup> Kartashëv presents interesting historical facts concerning Peter’s acquaintance with Western culture. Peter learnt much in the so-called *Nemetskaja sloboda* (the German neighborhood) located in South-East Moscow. At that time, all foreigners in Russia were called Germans. One of Peter’s mentors was a Swiss Frans Lefort. Now, this region in Moscow is called ‘Lefortovo.’ In the *Nemetskaja sloboda*, Peter came to know about the collegial form of church administration, which implied relatively high self-government of Protestant parishes. During his journey to England, Peter consulted King George as well as the bishop of Canterbury and the bishop of York on matters of church policy. Curiously enough, the Dutch King William of Orange advised Peter to copy the model practiced in Holland of that time and to become himself the head of the Church in order to attain the total sovereign power.

Therefore, Peter decided to reform the ROC according to the Protestant model (Kartashëv 2000: 459).

To realize this project, Peter relied on Archbishop Feofan Prokopovich, who can be said to have become the brain behind the reform. Kartashëv characterizes Feofan as a genuine reformer, a bright representative of Western erudition and culture. Even in his temperament, Feofan was the successor of “the cheerful humanistic idealism, which flourished in the fourteenth century, was carried through the Reformation and was reborn in the Catholic circles during the epoch of the Enlightenment (XVII-XVIII cc.)” (Kartashëv 2000: 478). Being a man of Western scholarship, Feofan collected a rich library, three quarters of which consisted of Protestant authors; for Peter, he was thus “the live academy on all issues concerning state-church relations.” Relying on the Protestant ideas, “Feofan formulated his solution to the church-state tension according to the principle of Protestant territorialism” (Kartashëv 2000: 487). He announced this solution in the *Spiritual Regulation (Dukhovnyj reglament)*, which was subsequently enacted by the emperor’s power in 1721.

By this enactment, Peter sanctioned the establishment of the Holy Synod (originally called ‘the spiritual college’) as the highest administrative and juridical institution of the ROC. Stefan Javorskij was appointed the president of the spiritual college. However, after Stefan’s death in 1722, a new president never followed. Instead, the post was filled by a secular representative – the so-called chief procurator, who was directly chosen by the emperor.<sup>52</sup> This structural change suited Peter’s plan. The Synod functioned as a secular institution, a kind of the ministry of spiritual affairs, whereas its primary functions remained ecclesiastical, including observing the dogmatic purity of Russian Orthodox theology, the purity of Orthodox rites, regulating internal church affairs, providing spiritual education and social care, establishing church feasts, canonizing new saints, and subjecting both secular and spiritual literature to church censorship.

The meaning of the *Spiritual Regulation* consists in that it sanctioned regulation of ecclesiastical affairs by a secular authority. The contemporary Russian historian Vladimir Fëdorov (born 1926) concedes in his recent

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<sup>52</sup> In the nineteenth century, the authority of the chief procurator increased significantly. During the reactive reign of Nicolas I, the chief procurator was entitled to the prerogatives of the minister, and since 1839, his office began functioning independently of the Synod. Chief procurator Pobedonostsev, holding the post for almost a quarter of the century (1880-1905), was notorious for his unlimited involvement into all state affairs; he enjoyed more influence than any other minister of that time (Fëdorov 2003: 15).

study *The Russian Orthodox Church and the State. The Synodal Period. 1700-1917*<sup>53</sup> that if prior to the Synodal period the ambivalence in state-church relations lurched in the struggle between the ecclesiastical and political authorities for their institutional dominance, during the Synodal period, “the ROC became in fact totally subjugated to the secular authority, and the church administration became part of the governmental apparatus on ecclesiastical matters” (Fëdorov 2003: 8). For the first time in Russian ecclesiastical history, state-church relations were defined in strictly juridical terms, as the Russian historian Igor’ Smolich (1898-1970) argues in his seminal book *Russian Monasticism. Genesis. Development. Essence (988-1917)*.<sup>54</sup> The *Spiritual Regulation* defined the state as a legal patron of the Church and legalized thereby the state’s involvement into ecclesiastical affairs. As a result of Peter’s reform, the Church lost its independent legal status, which it has enjoyed in Muscovite Rus’, and became a government institution that was expected to perform social service to the state (Smolich 1997: chapter XIII).

Hence, Peter’s reform drastically changed the balance between the secular and ecclesiastical authorities. For Russia, it signified the transition from the medieval model of theocratic *symphonia* toward the early modern model of secular monarchy. If *symphonia* presumed the equality between the two authorities, secular monarchy asserted primacy of the secular authority over the ecclesiastical authority. Peter’s reform substituted the theocratic dualism of Orthodox *symphonia* by the sovereign monism of a secular state. In result, “the old theocratic ideal was simply forgotten,” as the new system reserved no space for the symphonic dualism. Peter’s secular state became totalitarian, and the Church could only but assume a subordinate position in its totalitarian structure (Kartashëv 200: 460-62). In the secular Russian Empire, the previous dualist formula of the two powers became invalid.

Assisted by Feofan Prokopovich, Peter grounded his absolute monarchical power in natural law theory (*jus naturale*). If the theocratic state is legitimized by the sacralizing power of the Church, the secular state obtains its legitimacy through its utilitarian mission. Kartashëv explicates that if the theocratic state ultimately aims at leading the Christian nation toward the eternal kingdom of Christ, the secular state defines its ultimate goal in utilitarian terms such as promoting the universal welfare (Kartashëv

<sup>53</sup> Владимир Фёдоров, *Русская Православная Церковь и Государство. Синодальный период. 1700-1917* (2003).

<sup>54</sup> Игорь Смолич, *Русское Монашество. Возникновение. Развитие. Сущность (988-1917)* (1997). Internet publication, last visited on 28 July 2010.

2000: 454). By taking over from the Church its genuine soteriological mission, the secular state assumed the authority to lead people toward achieving the common good (*bonum commune*). It promised to achieve the common good not in the afterlife, but already in the earthly life.<sup>55</sup> In consequence, Florovskij explains, “the state affirmed its own self-satisfaction and confirmed its own sovereign self-sufficiency.” It demanded not only “obedience of the Church as well as its subordination; but also sought some way to absorb and include the Church within itself; to introduce and incorporate the Church within the structure and composition of the state system and routine.” Having deprived the Church of its canonical rights and unique soteriological meaning, the state did not permit the Church any longer “to retain any independent or autonomous sphere of activity,” affirming itself “as the sole, unconditional, and all-encompassing source of every power and piece of legislation as well as of every deed or creative act” (Florovskij 1979: 115).

However, Florovskij warns that the described model of secular sovereign monarchy tends to become dangerously paternalistic, when the monarch’s urge for universal welfare “all too quickly becomes transformed into surveillance.” The scholar presumes that exactly such a paternalistic ‘police state’ was introduced and established in Russia by Tsar Peter. Insofar as the police state “takes on the undivided care for the people’s religious and spiritual welfare,” it tends to usurp the Church’s proper functions and eventually turns against the Church. Florovskij clarifies, “Historically, such a police *Weltanschauung* derived from the spirit of the Reformation, when the mystical sense of the Church dimmed and evaporated; when the Church became to be seen as no more than an empirical institution for organizing popular religious life [...]. Such a new system of state-church relations was introduced and solemnly proclaimed in Russia under Peter in the *Spiritual Regulation*.” Accordingly, the historian makes a provoking conclusion, asserting that “the *Regulation*’s meaning is very simple and all too plain: It is the program for a Russian Reformation” (Florovskij 1979: 115-16).

Insofar as Peter’s police state was grounded in the Protestant model of territorialism, it excluded any possibility of the competition between public institutions. This prohibition also applied to religious organizations, with no exception for the ROC, because on the territory of the sovereign state, the

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<sup>55</sup> Notwithstanding his utilitarian view on religion, Peter did not lose a profound and dynamic understanding of Biblical God. Kartashëv avers that Peter’s positive mind did not simply lead him toward deathly deism (Kartashëv 2000: 454-55).

monarch was considered to be above all religions and all Churches, and even if one particular Church dominated on the concerned territory, its priority was acknowledged in terms of physical prevalence of the Church as the faith of the majority, or as the major national-historical organization (Kartashëv 2000: 460). Concisely, a full plenitude of rights and power in ecclesiastical affairs was ascribed to the territorial ruler. However, this principle of territorial sovereignty was at odds with the Orthodox model of *symphonia*, where the boundaries of the state coincided with those of the national Church. Evaluating the changed balance between the ecclesiastical and political authorities in Peter's Russia, Florovskij contends, "Peter's Reformation resulted in a Protestant pseudomorphosis in the life of the Church. The dangerous habit acquired for calling things, or rather concealing things, by names known to be inappropriate" (Florovskij 1979: 121). The root of this pseudomorphosis consisted, as we can conclude from diverse historical accounts, in Peter's utilitarian view on religion.

In essence, Kartashëv claims, the church reform was "the product of the absolute monarch" (Kartashëv 2000: 491), whereby the Church fell victim to the monarch's utilitarian worldview. Peter's utilitarian approach to religion became particularly obvious in his policy aimed at systematic reduction of monasteries, monks, and nuns. Fëdorov presents some interesting facts from Peter's legislation, added to the *Spiritual Regulation*. Peter forbade admitting to monastic vows the following groups: men younger than thirty, women younger than fifty, those in military or civil service, debtors, and parents of underage children. Thus, as long as someone had social obligations or could be useful in any kind of secular vocation, he or she was not allowed to leave it for a spiritual one. Moreover, taking of monastic vows was allowed only when a monastery announced an available vacancy (Fëdorov 2003: 55). As a result of the depicted policy, monasteries became primarily the locations hosting military hospitals, mental hospitals, and prisons. The subsequent repressive policies of Peter's successors, such as the secularization of monastic lands by the state during the reign of Ekaterina II (1762-95) provided sufficient ground to call the eighteenth century the century of the wide-scale secularization.

Peter's secular legitimation of sovereign power, as well as his instigated secularization policy had drastic consequences for the public and spiritual role of the ROC during the Synodal period. The greatest challenge for the Church consisted in that it had become factually subordinated to the secular political authority. In my view, in comparison with the medieval period of

the symphonic state-church relations, the Synodal period was characterized by an increasing intensification of the otherworldly self-definition of the ROC. Neither in the theocratic model nor in the secular model of the state, was the Orthodox Church able to attain the full-pledged social dimension as the body of Christ. If in a theocratic *symphonia*, the Church was recognized as the soul of the state, in the framework of secular monarchy it became a mere state institution. Assessing the effect of Peter's reform on the public significance of the ROC, historians remain generally on a critical side. Florovskij claims, for instance, that "any sense of the 'Church' collapsed in the face of state centralization and succumbed to it" (Florovskij 1979: 116). Smolich agrees that the ROC did not have sufficient inner resources to be able to resist coercive secularization by the absolutist state and thus chose to adapt to the new situation (Smolich 1997: chapter XIV). Despite the troubled relations with the state, historians are still convinced that "the Church's mind and conscience never became accustomed to, accepted, or acknowledged this actual 'caesaropapism,' although individual churchmen and leaders frequently with inspiration submitted to it" (Florovskij 1979: 121).

To preserve its mystical fullness, the Church focused on its otherworldly self-identity. The evidence of the Church's internal orientation can be found in the revitalization of the monastic tradition, especially in the form of the institute of *starchestvo* (eldership). In contradistinction to the aforementioned decrease of monastic life in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, the emergence of *starchestvo* in the second half of the eighteenth century and its expansion throughout the nineteenth century embodied the inspiration to restore the ancient Orthodox monastic tradition of spiritual guidance. The tradition of *starchestvo* required volunteer submission of a young monk, or even of a layperson, to the spiritual guidance of an experienced *starets*, i.e. *pater spiritualis*, the elder. Smolich remarks in this respect that the institute of *starchestvo* combined asceticism with Eastern Christian mysticism, as it attempted at intertwining mystical contemplation with ascetic practice (Smolich 1997: Chapter XV). In this sense, it is also interesting that Orthodox monasticism, despite its otherworldly orientation, did not lose a vital bond with society.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> This observation brings us to the long history of interaction between monasteries and public life in Russia. Since Russia's Christianization, monasteries became important centers of culture and education and, due to their social obligations, did not gain the possibility of withdrawing from the worldly life. As Smolich confirms, the internal ambiguity of monastic life was determined exactly by the double task of monasteries (Smolich 1997: Chapter XV). On the one

By way of conclusion, during the Synodal period, the ROC deepened its self-identification as a spiritual community. This tendency is typical of a religious institution under the circumstances of modern secularization. On the one hand, Russian Orthodox Christianity assumed, in the eighteenth century, some distinctive features of a spiritualized and individualized form of religion. On the other hand, it also experienced a decline of its public significance. Florovskij remains pessimistic when evaluating the upshots of secularization in Russia. Specifically, the scholar describes the clergy of Peter's epoch as becoming a "frightened class" and sinking into lower social strata. While the upper ranks of the clergy remained silent, "the best of the clergy withdrew into themselves, retreating into the 'inner hermitage' of their hearts, for no one was permitted to withdraw into real hermitages during the eighteenth century [...]. Subsequently, Russian ecclesiastical consciousness languished into the double imprisonment of administrative decree and inner fear" (Florovskij 1979: 121-22).

In light of the above, I suggest assessing the secularization process in the history of Russian Orthodoxy as a period of religious maturation. On the surface, we could discern typical syndromes of the secularization process, which Casanova and Taylor defined as general decline of religious life and gradual exclusion of religion from the public domain. At the deepest levels, religious transformation and spiritual maturation allowed the ROC to develop theological perceptiveness of the secularizing world and communicate this perceptiveness through an open intelligent critique. The time for such a critique matured after one and a half century of the Synodal period. The open critique of the Synodal system started in the early

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hand, possessing richest libraries and consisting of educated monks, monasteries were the main centers of education and cultural enlightenment in Kievan Rus'. Later, since the dawn of monastic life in North-Eastern Russia, which is associated with the name of St. Sergij of Radonezh, monasteries became closely intertwined in political and economic life of the state: They served as missionary and economic centers on the vast colonized territories of Russia. However, despite this inextricable link with the secular world, Russian monasticism still regarded asceticism as the primary task of monastic life. The ascetic practice experienced several periods of revitalization. The late eighteenth century can be rightly considered as one of those periods. Then, the aspiration to revitalize the ascetic and mystical tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church manifested itself in the movement of *starobestvo*. Studying this movement, Smolich typifies *starobestvo* as a natural phenomenon, which originated and developed spontaneously, in a bottom-up manner, without any stimulus on the part of ecclesiastic hierarchy. Due to this spontaneity, *starobestvo* resembled the spiritual regeneration that had occurred five centuries earlier, being inspired by St. Sergij of Radonezh.

nineteenth century,<sup>57</sup> in result of the liberal reforms of Alexander II. Then, as Kartashëv asserts, secular theologians and philosophers, ecclesiastical historians and university lawyers “explicitly emphasized the anti-canonical nature of the ecclesiastical administration during the whole imperial period” (Kartashëv 2000: 530).

#### 4.2.3 The Revival of Public and Ecclesiastical Life in Late Imperial Russia

The Great Reforms of 1861-64, instigated by Tsar Alexander II, were aimed at modernizing the main structures and institutions of Russian society. The reforms symbolized the reinvigoration of public and ecclesiastical life and prepared the period of intensive intellectual search that preceded the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. Rapidly modernizing Russian society resembled, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the process of functional differentiation, which broadly occurred in Western-European societies. As Pauline Schrooyen argues in her doctoral thesis *Vladimir Solov'ëv in the Rising Public Sphere*, “These reforms enabled Russian society to differentiate and emancipate itself from the autocratic state, which resulted in the emergence of considerably autonomous domains, or, to use Luhmann’s terminology, ‘subsystems of society’ ” (Schrooyen 2006: 27). Although relatively autonomous social systems started to form, late imperial Russian society represented rather “a combination of a stratified society and a functionally differentiated society.” It was “horizontally structured with self-referential societal subsystems such as law, medicine, the press and education, while at the same time it was vertically divided into unequal social estates which were interconnected by a national perspective permeating the entire society” (Schrooyen 2006: 28).

Aimed at the structural emancipation of Russian society, the Great Reforms of Alexander II concerned a broad scope of urgent social problems that needed institutional reorganization. Most importantly, the manifesto of 19 February 1861 abolished the reprehensible institute of serfdom. Furthermore, Alexander’s government sponsored industrial liberalization and actively supported liberal policies in the fields of high education, army, law, press, and local self-government.

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<sup>57</sup> For instance, the Synodal system was criticized in the early nineteenth century by the historian Nikolaj Karamzin. However, during the reactionary period of Tsar Nicolas I reign (1825-1855), the critique was silenced.

Alexander's reforms also changed ecclesiastical life by entitling the ROC with more autonomy. New decrees on religious tolerance were implemented; at the same time, parochial life and ecclesiastical education were given a highly needed stimulus. However, the real impact of the reforms mainly concerned the miserable social and legal status of the clergy. We can better understand the liberalization of the clergy in connection to the general process of functional differentiation. Alexander's decrees permitted children of the clergy, who previously had been bound to pursue the ecclesiastical career, to choose their professions freely in the field of civil or military service. Commenting on these decrees, Fëdorov rightly asserts, nonetheless, that the discrimination of the clergy was significantly undermined, but not eliminated in practice (Fëdorov 2003: 215).

Although the liberal policies of Alexander's reign did not produce sufficient practical result, they preconditioned subsequent transformations in public and ecclesiastical life in pre-revolutionary Russia. The instigated process of functional differentiation entailed loosening of state control over the Church, and this, in turn, enabled the Church to coordinate its efforts and organize the first Local Church Council after two hundred years of ecclesiastical silence. The Local Church Council of 1917-18 can be considered thus as the sign that the Church finally conceived of its functional autonomy from the secular autocratic state and became ready to implement the privileges of its autonomous position.

The general liberalization of Russian society in result of the Great Reforms created the necessary preconditions for the emergence of civil society. The reinvigoration of public life resulted in the first sprouts of civil society in pre-revolutionary Russia. Dramatically, these sprouts were trampled upon by the Soviet totalitarian state. Nevertheless, the dawn of public life in late imperial Russia was successfully documented by its contemporaries, amongst others by the philosopher Vladimir Solov'ëv, as well as by the next generation of Russian émigré intelligentsia: Georgij Florovskij, Anton Kartashëv, Sergej Bulgakov, and Semën Frank.

Civil society presumes, above all, the existence of independent public opinion and free press. These were exactly the developments that occurred in late imperial Russia. Florovskij characterizes the epoch of the Great Reforms by the universal need for *glasnost'* (publicity) and characterizes the emergence and rapid development of Russian religious, or 'spiritual,' journalism as one of the typical symptoms of this epoch. The revival of religious journalism testifies to increasing public interest and the desire to

discuss interrelated social and religious issues. In the capital as well as in province, new journals continuously emerged owing to private initiatives. Florovskij remarks that the majority of these new journals survived until the Bolshevik catastrophe (Florovskij 1991: 335). Furthermore, ecclesiastical scholarship started to obtain public influence and therefore the bond between the Church and society became remarkably vivacious. Religious thinkers were convinced that the Church needed to be enlightened by the awakening spirit of independence, whereas public life should be inspired by the Christian belief in moral transformation. Thus, due to the liberalization of the public sphere during the Great Reforms, both ecclesiastical thinkers and the secular public became aware that two cardinal principles needed to be restored: the principle of the Church's autonomy and the Orthodox principle of conciliarity (*sobornost'*). Otherwise, Florovskij argues, the Church will not be able to profit from the granted freedom, for "the constrained truth is helpless" (Florovskij 1991: 333).<sup>58</sup>

Despite the invigorated dialog between religious and secular intellectuals, the real state of ecclesiastical life in late imperial Russia left much to be desired. Although the Great Reforms of Alexander II doubtlessly gave a new impulse to the ecclesiastical revival, they did not radically change the structures and traditions in which state-church relations had proceeded previously. The most urgent question of the legitimacy of the Holy Synod was not put at stake. Furthermore, the achievements of the Great Reforms were contradicted by the reactive political course taken by the son of Alexander II, Tsar Alexander III. During this period of conservation, the Holy Synod was headed by chief procurator Konstantin Pobedonostsev whose name, upon Florovskij's perceptive observation, "became the symbol of the epoch" (Florovskij 1991: 410). Steadfastly holding the opinion that the Church should be inextricably connected with the state, Pobedonostsev executed the function of the chief procurator for a quarter of the century (1880-1905) so enthusiastically that he eventually reduced the institutional role of the Synod to the minimum and conferred all ecclesiastical affairs on himself (Fëdorov 2003: 221).

In literature, the period of Pobedonostsev acquired an ambiguous evaluation. On the one hand, the circulation of ecclesiastical press increased

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<sup>58</sup> I use two different publications of Florovskij's book *Ways of Russian Theology*. The English version, which I refer to as Florovskij 1979, contains only the first five first chapters of the original Russian version [1937]. The Russian version, which I refer to as Florovskij 1991, contains nine chapters. The quoted text from the Russian version is my translation.

immensely at the end of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, Pobedonostsev's stringent censorship and conservative view on public morality caused certain stagnation in public and ecclesiastical life. Florovskij provides a perceptive characteristic of the famous chief procurator, "Pobedonostsev believed in the solidness of patriarchal way of life and in organic wisdom of folk nature; he did not trust individual initiative. He had confidence in common people in virtue of folk simplicity and primitiveness, and was reluctant to corrupt this naïve wholeness of the feeling by the poisonous injection of rational Western civilization" (Florovskij 1991: 410). Opposing any kind of individual creativity and critical reflection, Pobedonostsev preferred to publish his booklets anonymously, lingering in the semidarkness and dissolving in the faceless mass. When speaking about faith, Pobedonostsev implied rather faith of people (*vera naroda*) than faith of the Church, which remained in his eyes primarily a universal public institution (*vsenarodnoje uchrezhdenije*). Accordingly, the chief procurator tended to avoid any theological disputes on dogmatic issues, for "he appreciated the primordial and the basic above the true" (Florovskij 1991: 411). This explains the ambiguity of Pobedonostsev's religious policy. Founding numerous parochial schools, building temples in remote Russian provinces, publishing spiritual and moral literature and prayer books, promulgating ecclesiastical charity and financial support of the clergy – these are undeniable credits of Pobedonostsev's management. However, Pobedonostsev considered public and cultural influence of the clergy to be undesirable, and that is why his name would be forever associated with a primitive kind of Orthodox religiosity, a simplified and folkloristic form of ecclesiastical life.

The overall stagnation of ecclesiastical and public life under Pobedonostsev's vigilant surveillance was followed in the early twentieth century by the remarkable epoch of spiritual revival, which resulted in the emergence religious-philosophical societies and the renewed ecclesiastical discussion on the necessity of church reforms. In contradistinction to the public invigoration during the Great Reforms of Alexander II, which contained "too much perilous light-mindedness, too much mystical irresponsibility and mere play" (Florovskij 1991: 452), the public discussion at the turn of the century assumed a much more serious and relevant character. Florovskij points at the intensity of religious experience in the intellectual search, which is typical of the Silver Age of Russian literature and philosophy. Given the new comprehension of human being as

essentially a metaphysical being, religion became rather “the theme of life” than “the theme of thought” (Florovskij 1991: 452). Indeed, the religious search in pre-revolutionary Russia engaged the whole generation of Russian intelligentsia.

Both secular and ecclesiastical press dedicatedly promulgated then the idea that the basic reason for the crisis of ecclesiastical life lurched in the Church’s subordination to the state. Accordingly, many intellectuals proposed various solutions of how to liberate the Church from the meticulous control of the state (Fëdorov 2003: 248). In December 1904, Antonij Vadkovskij, Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, sent Tsar Nicolas II a note in which he investigated whether the tsar should grant the Church more freedom in administering its internal affairs, so that the Church could follow ecclesiastical canons and moral-religious demands of its members. Metropolitan Antonij wondered whether “the Church, liberated from direct state or political mission, could serve, in virtue of its regenerated moral authority, to support the Orthodox state” (Florovskij 1991: 476). Seeing the ultimate solution to the ecclesiastical crisis in the separation of Church and state, Fëdorov recognized, however, that no ecclesiastical hierarch would dare to propose this kind of solution. The adherents of the ecclesiastical renewal insisted on the state remaining confessional and not atheistic, so that the secular ruler would need and support the Church. Otherwise, an atheistic state would compromise the prestige of the Church itself. That is why, Fëdorov concludes, “while claiming more autonomy, the Orthodox Church wanted to preserve its political significance” (Fëdorov 2003: 249).

Besides Metropolitan Antonij, Prime Minister Sergej Vitte was also concerned with the status of the ROC. Vitte advised the church administration to return the old canonical principle of *sobornost’*, or conciliarity. With that, Vitte demanded the abolishment of Peter’s reform, i.e. of the Synod, and the restoration of the conciliar principle in ecclesiastical life (Florovskij 1991: 476-77; Fëdorov 2003: 250). The principle of conciliar decision should be applied, according to Vitte, at all levels of the church administration: Priests should be elected by the local community, in contrast to the widespread practice of transmitting the parish hereditably, high hierarchy should become autonomous from state control and take decisions in the framework of conciliar discussion.

The daring projects proposed by Metropolitan Antonij and Vitte were immediately rejected by chief procurator Pobedonostsev. The subsequent argument between Vitte and Pobedonostsev revealed the antagonistic

positions in public debate of that time. Pobedonostsev regarded the patriarchal system to be dangerous for the sovereign power of the tsar, whereas Vitte stipulated bureaucratism as the “most painful sore in the church administration” of the ROC (Fëdorov 2003: 251). Tsar Nicolas II assumed, upon Fëdorov’s characterization, “a half-hearted position” in the debate. After a couple of years, he announced the impossibility of organizing the Local Church Council and established the pre-council board for managing ecclesiastical affairs.

The established state-church relations in imperial Russia changed drastically in consequence of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. In the course of the February Revolution, the monarchy was overthrown, and the Russian Provisional Government became the ruling organ of a new republic. Almost immediately after the abdication of Tsar Nicolas II on 2 March 1917, chief procurator L’vov announced on behalf of the Provisionary Government that the emancipation of the ROC was one of the urgent issues and directed the calling of the Local Church Council.

The short period of the Provisional Government, between the February Revolution and the October Bolshevik revolution, turned to be extremely dynamic both for Russian society and the ROC. On 20 March 1917, the Provisional Government abolished former restrictions on religious and national grounds and enacted, on 14 June, the Decree on Freedom of Conscience. In the meanwhile, eminent Russian religious philosophers, ecclesiastical historians and critics actively discussed necessary transformations in political and ecclesiastical life. Thus, the historian Anton Kartashëv was appointed on 25 July 1917 as the chief procurator of the Holy Synod. Consequently, Kartashëv participated in the Local Church Council of 1917-18 and left his valuable memoirs. However, just a few days later, on 5 August, the Holy Synod was abolished and the public ministry of religious affairs was founded instead. This event signified the end of the Synodal period in the history of the ROC.

The abrupt change of the political situation had crucial consequences for the ROC. The contribution of the religious philosopher, later the priest and émigré theologian, Sergej Bulgakov bears testimony of these changes. On 2 June 1917, Bulgakov delivered the lecture ‘Church and Democracy’<sup>59</sup> at the national congress of the clergy and laity. The turbulent year of 1917 turned to be a year of great hopes and grievous disappointments for Russian

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<sup>59</sup> Сергей Булгаков, «Церковь и демократия» // *Труды по социологии и теологии* (1917). Internet publication, last visited on 28 July 2010.

Orthodox intelligentsia. Bulgakov's lecture reflects the dynamism of that period. While hailing the new democratic constitution of the Russian state, Bulgakov urges to preserve the purity of Russian ecclesiastical self-consciousness and abstain from the temptation to amalgamate the political secular ideal of democracy and the Orthodox ecclesiastical ideal of *sobornost'* (Bulgakov 1917). He renounces the historical mistake of both the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman-Catholic Church, which consisted in their close cooperation with the Caesar's empire. In the contemporary inclination of the ROC to embrace the democratic ideal of sovereignty of the people, Bulgakov discerns "the new and simultaneously old temptation: to surrender oneself to a new master, to bow before a new idol," whereas "the highest instance should never bow before the lower one" (Bulgakov 1917). Bulgakov considers the amiable attitude of the ROC toward democracy quite logical, given the conciliar principle of the Church. Exactly for that reason, he warns against the eagerness of the Orthodox Church to measure itself by democracy and idolize democracy. That is why, Bulgakov insists, "it is absolutely vital to differentiate between the nature of Orthodoxy from the nature of democracy: Convergence and divergence are equally possible between those, depending on the spiritual contents of democracy" (Bulgakov 1917).

Bulgakov apprehends that the substitution of the ecclesiastical principle of *sobornost'* by the democratic principle of sovereignty of the people might lead to the secularization of the Church. Although Bulgakov agrees that the voice of the majority is a good way to express public interests and needs, the practical rationality of democracy "by no means legitimizes its alleged sacred or mystical authority" because the latter is the exclusive privilege of the Church. Bulgakov objects identifying the Church with democracy on the ontological grounds, "The Church is the highest and unconditional principle of life, the kingdom not of this world, albeit aiming at elevating this world to itself. Democracy, on the other hand, is merely the natural humanity in its sinful state, sometimes elucidating itself and inspiring, but sometimes assuming a savage form" (Bulgakov 1917). Hence, democracy invariably needs the spiritual guidance of the Church. When analyzing Bulgakov's standpoint, we should take into consideration the historical context wherein Bulgakov articulated his views on democracy. The lecture was given at the background of a collapsing monarchy and severe struggle between numerous political parties, amongst which the Bolsheviks eventually managed to concentrate power in their hands.

It was in the depicted historical context that the Local Council of the ROC took place in 1917-18. In this regard, I rather agree with those historians who consider the Council as the manifestation of the Church's long-awaited autonomy. The Council was festively inaugurated in the Assumption Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin on 15 August 1917 and was held in three sessions, until the Soviet government interrupted it on 20 September 1918. The Council decided to restore the old institute of Patriarchate and elected Metropolitan Tikhon (Bulavin) as the new Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. The agenda of the Council comprised not only urgent ecclesiastical issues, such as state-church relations, reorganization of the church administration, the status of parishes and monasteries, autocephaly of the Ukrainian and the Georgian Churches, but also social-moral problems caused by the hardships of the World War I and the revolutionary upheavals of 1917. Fëdorov rightly discerns the meaning of the Council in that "it regenerated the conciliar principle in the ROC": By resuming the results of the Church's previous existence, the Council prepared the Church for a new epoch of trials and tribulations (Fëdorov 2003: 272). It was the renewal of ecclesiastical life that consequently would allow the ROC to survive the terror of Soviet atheism, which was unleashed by the decree of 23 January 1918 on the separation of Church and state.<sup>60</sup>

### 4.3 Civil Society in Orthodox Christian Philosophy

Having considered the organizing question of the chapter (how civil society and religion relate to each other in Western and Eastern societies of the Christian origin?) from the historical perspective, I now move on to the conceptual level of analysis. In what follows, I shall expose a religious reading of civil society theory based on the Orthodox Christian tradition. As it has been averted in the introduction to the chapter, the religious reading of civil society theory presumes the world-transcendent metaphysical order. Consequently, it conceives of civil society not only as constituted by temporal world-immanent structures, but also as a reflection and a partial realization of this metaphysical order. Relying on the theories of two prominent Russian religious philosophers, Vladimir Solov'ëv (1853-1900) and Semën Frank (1877-1950), I shall provide an Orthodox religious conception of civil society.

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<sup>60</sup> The significance of the Soviet period for the history of the ROC in the twentieth century will be analyzed further (§ 6.1.1).

My choice of these particular philosophers can be explained by the great intellectual and constructive potential of their contributions. Both philosophers do not seek to devalue the secular idea and practice of civil society, but rather try to discover religious-moral foundations for the existence of civil society. In addition to philosophical profoundness, the chosen theories are interesting, since Solov'ëv and Frank belong to the pre-revolutionary tradition of Russian religious philosophy. This enables us to revitalize the richness and versatility of Russian philosophy of the Silver Age, considering it as a fruit of the complex historical process depicted above as the Synodal period.

Analyzing Solov'ëv's book *The Justification of the Good: An Essay on Moral Philosophy* (1897)<sup>61</sup> and his essay 'Law and Morality' (written between 1877 and 1900),<sup>62</sup> I intend to clarify the sources of the religious-philosophical conception of civil society in pre-revolutionary Russia. In contradistinction to Solov'ëv's conception, Frank's book *The Spiritual Foundations of Society: An Introduction to Social Philosophy* (1930)<sup>63</sup> signifies the next stage in the history of Russian religious-philosophical thought. Frank's study not only builds upon Solov'ëv's moral philosophy, but also contains a critique of the established Soviet regime. Considering these two theories jointly, I want to emphasize the continuity of Russian religious-philosophical tradition.

The analysis of the selected philosophical theories is guided by the following question: How do Solov'ëv and Frank propose to balance a modern secular conception of society with a religious worldview? Put differently, I wonder whether it is possible to formulate, from within the Orthodox Christian tradition, a solid legal and moral framework where the liberal ethos of pluralistic and tolerant civil society would fit in.

#### 4.3.1 Christian Humanism of Vladimir Solov'ëv

Although the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 signified a tragic turn in the history of Russian intelligentsia, it did not eliminate the tradition of the

<sup>61</sup> First published in Russian as Владимир Соловьёв, *Оправдание добра. Нравственная философия* in St-Petersburg (1897). The first English translation appeared in New York (1918). I use the English version published in Grand Rapids (2005).

<sup>62</sup> First published in Russian as Владимир Соловьёв, «Право и нравственность» // *Собрание сочинений*, 1877-1900, том 8, in St-Petersburg (1901-3). This essay is available only in Russian. I use the Russian version published in Brussels (1966-68).

<sup>63</sup> First published in Russian as Семён Франк, *Духовные основы общества: Введение в социальную философию* in Paris (1930). I use the English version published in London (1987).

religious-philosophical renaissance. Many intellectuals, among others Frank, lived in exile from Soviet Russia; nonetheless, their mindset was still obviously inspired by the ideals of Russian religious philosophy. Solov'ëv's liberal thought was one of the important inspiration sources for those Russian émigré's. Remarkably, Solov'ëv turned to be a key figure in the Russian philosophical renaissance not so much during his short lifetime (he died at the age of forty seven), but rather posthumously. His works induced the whole generation of pre-revolutionary intellectuals to advocate the necessity of political liberalization by relying on liberal philosophical, as well as on Christian, more specifically Russian-Orthodox, concepts.

On this view, it is vital to consider Solov'ëv's liberal philosophy against the background of the general emancipatory frame of mind that prevailed in late imperial Russian society since the turn of the twentieth century. In his elucidating study *Civil Society and Academic Debate in Russia 1905-1914*, David Wartenweiler fairly relates the actual beginning of society's protest against the autocratic state to the Bloody Sunday of February 1905. The revolution of 1905 signified "the coming age of Russia society," since it was then that, for the first time, "Russians collectively defied with success the supreme authority of tsar and state." Although the implementation of the constitutional order and of political and civil liberties was highly flawed and resulted in "a dysfunctional hybrid regime, a semi-constitutionalism," the factual emergence of a national elective representative organ – the State Duma – created the ground for the emergence of civil society. Consequently, the extension of the principle of rule of law into many areas of public life relegated those areas to the independent social activity, and the institutions of civil society "could assert themselves to an extent never before seen in Russia" (Wartenweiler 1999: 1).

The intriguing question remains, nevertheless, whether the concept of civil society had been borrowed from abroad or evolved naturally on the Russian soil, being formulated by Russian liberal intelligentsia. Solov'ëv's contribution to the exuberant debate on law, individual freedom, and dignity proves that the very idea of civil society had already aroused the interest of Russian intellectuals. To support my hypothesis, I also refer to Wartenweiler's compelling argument that the liberalizing reforms were not an accidental upshot of the social resentment in pre-revolutionary Russia, since "the ideas and representations at the heart of a civil society were [...] very much present in contemporary liberal thought." In particular, the notion of the public, or *obshchestvennost'*, which is central to the concept of

civil society, figured “prominently in the scholarly and publicist writings of liberal academics, to whose demands for civil and political liberties they were congenial” (Wartenweiler 1999: 4). Although the exact term ‘civil society’ did not appear in that debate, the majority of publications include various attempts at specifying “possible organizational and legal frameworks and the necessary ethos based on the morally and socially responsible citizen” (Wartenweiler 1999: 82). With regard to the impact of Solov’ëv’s ideas on civil society debate, Wartenweiler justly concludes, “Solov’ëv with his idiosyncratic combination of liberal principles and Christian ideals – created a space of law, morality, and social organization, whereas new generation of Russian liberal academics found important impulses for reviewing the options available to the country” (Wartenweiler 1999: 95).

Indeed, Solov’ëv can be rightly considered a key figure in the rise of Russian social and political philosophy of a modern type. Insofar as Solov’ëv treated the human person primarily as a moral, free, and rational being, he was a pioneer in advocating human dignity and freedom. And he did so by relying on genuinely Christian principles. Despite drawing inspiration from the Christian tradition (most significantly, from Orthodox Christianity, although for a certain period he deeply sympathized with the Roman-Catholic tradition), Solov’ëv steadfastly averted the inherent presence of the knowledge of the good in each individual person regardless of his religious convictions. Thereby, the philosopher succeeded to defend a universal view on social ethics and individual morality.

The crucial novelty of Solov’ëv’s moral-philosophical thought consists in a sublime synthesis of the Christian idea of All-Unity (*Vseedinstvo*) and the liberal ideas of tolerance, plurality, and individual freedom into one coherent theory of society. With that, the theorist integrated typically modern principles of individualism and liberalism with the religious ideal of All-Unity, as he firmly believed these two seemingly contradictory standpoints to be mutually complementary. Solov’ëv grounded his belief on the eschatological vision of the world as radically transformed and freed from worldly tensions. In this sense, the contemporary liberal Orthodox theologian Veniamin Novik correctly characterizes Solov’ëv’s philosophy as “Christian humanism.” In his article ‘Vladimir Solov’ëv: A Social Dimension of Spirituality,’<sup>64</sup> Novik explicates what makes Solov’ëv so unique. Wherever Solov’ëv can identify an ethical dimension to a social

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<sup>64</sup> Вениамин Новик, «Владимир Соловьёв: социальное измерение духовности» // *Вестник ПХА* (№ 182, 2001). Internet publication, last visited on 28 July 2010.

phenomenon, he immediately considers it possible to comprehend this phenomenon from the Christian perspective. This is exactly what distinguishes Solov'ëv from the dualistic understanding of spirituality, which asserts the radical separation between the secular and the sacred. It is for the same reason that Solov'ëv's philosophy still remains relatively unpopular with Russian conservative theologians (Novik 2001: 5). Sympathizing with the liberal trend within contemporary Orthodox theology, Novik strives to invigorate Solov'ëv's Christian humanism, tirelessly arguing that Christian and humanist principles are in fact deeply interconnected and can be utilized for the religious advocacy of democracy, civil society, and freedom of conscience.<sup>65</sup>

Two important conceptions ensue from Solov'ëv's philosophy of Christian humanism: a new conception of society and a new conception of human being. Insofar as they shed a new light on civil society theory, I shall analyze these two conceptions in some more detail.

What makes Solov'ëv's conception of society innovative is its attempt at reconciling the inherent tension between individual and society, which Seligman compellingly described as the core dilemma of civil society. As we can remember from Seligman's analysis, the rise of modern individualism problematized the "relation between the private and the public, the individual and the social, public ethics and individual interests" (Seligman 2002: 13-14). For his part, Solov'ëv refuses to make a hierarchical distinction between the individual and society because he is convinced that "there is no essential opposition between the individual and society." The philosopher underpins his argument by the example of "the true moral order of the Kingdom of God" as "both perfectly universal and perfectly individual" (Solov'ëv 2005: 173). The human individual can accomplish his perfectly social and perfectly individual nature only through "an indefinite number of relations with the other and with others." Therefore, it would be misleading to abstract the individual from his social relations, as it would affirm the existence of the individual as "a self-sufficient and self-contained entity." Even more gravely, Solov'ëv believes "this self-deception of abstract subjectivism" to be "the source of many convoluted theories, irreconcilable contradictions, and insoluble questions" that presumptively permeate the domain of moral and political life (Solov'ëv 2005: 173-74). At the same time, Solov'ëv criticizes the adherents of the collectivist view on

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<sup>65</sup> Novik's views will be considered in more detail in § 6.4.3.

the relationship between the individual and society because they understand “the life of humanity to be simply an interplay of human masses, and regard the individual as an insignificant and transient element of society, who has no rights of his own, and may be left out of account for the sake of the so-called common good” (Solov’ëv 2005: 175). Solov’ëv has enormous difficulties to admit how this kind of society, “consisting of moral zeros, of rightless and non-individual creatures” can be called human and where such concepts as “dignity and the inner value of its existence” would possibly rise from (Solov’ëv 2005: 176).

Instead of contrasting these two mutually exclusive postulates – the individual and society – Solov’ëv proposes to reconsider them as “two correlative terms each of which logically and historically requires and presupposes the other” (Solov’ëv 2005: 176). Solov’ëv retains the thesis that the human being has a two-dimensional nature and hence cannot be depicted exclusively either in its individual or social dimension. Society, on Solov’ëv’s account, is no longer to be conceived as the external limit of the individual, but rather as the individual’s inner fulfillment. Insofar social life is essential to the definition of human personality as “a rationally-knowing and a morally-active force,” the knowledge of truth, as well as the moral determination of personality can be realized only in a social environment, in relation to other human beings and social institutions. Being “nothing but the objective realization of what is contained in the individual,” society creates thus the preconditions for the objective realization of the idea of the good (Solov’ëv 2005: 175).

Concisely, from the perspective of Christian humanism, Solov’ëv conceives of society in terms of what Wartenweiler astutely called “a delicate balancing act between individual freedom and the general good.” By asserting the knowledge of the good in each individual and the inalienable right of the individual to a dignified existence, Solov’ëv arrives at the conclusion that individual striving towards moral perfection is compatible with moral pluralism. Insofar as “Solov’ëv drew no categorical distinction between morality and law, life in society became an expression of what he called ‘organized morality’ ” (Wartenweiler 1999: 94). Society designates the space reserved for the realization of private morality, where public concerns appear compatible with individual interests. At the root of this highly idealistic conception of society as a progressive manifestation of morality lies Solov’ëv’s liberal interpretation of Christian anthropological doctrine.

Maintaining that the dimension of social life is involved in the very definition of the human being, Solov'ev suggests to legitimize human dignity and inalienable human rights on new grounds. His definition of human being as simultaneously "a rationally-knowing and a morally-active force" (Solov'ev 2005: 175) comprises two constitutive elements. Firstly, the definition involves a rational-cognitive element pertaining to "the capacity to understand all things with his intellect," and secondly, it involves the moral element implying the capacity of human being "to embrace all things with his heart, or to enter into a living communion with everything." Specifying the combination of these two constitutive elements as "double infinity," Solov'ev emphasizes the importance of two mutually complementary modes of human existence: the contemplative and the proactive one. The contemplative mode results from the competence of rationality and endorses the human being with "the power of representation," whereas the proactive mode ensues from "the power of striving and activity" and encourages the human person to engage in worldly affairs with a view to transforming the world (Solov'ev 2005: 176). Obviously, Solov'ev's ideal of a religious person actively participating in the world corresponds to Weber's portrayal of inner-worldly asceticism; however, Solov'ev's ideal contains more contemplative mysticism.

Importantly, Solov'ev claims that the denoted fundamental qualities of the human being – rationality and moral sentiment – can be realized only in the interaction with other human beings, i.e. that these qualities require a social environment. Similarly, Solov'ev connects the traditional Christian doctrine of man's creation in the image and likeness of God to the social dimension of the individual's life. On the one hand, the philosopher recognizes that the ontological status of human being as created in the image of God "necessarily belongs to every person. It is in this that the absolute significance, dignity, and worth of human personality consist, and this is the basis of its inalienable rights" (Solov'ev 2005: 176). On the other hand, he is convinced that the realization of the absolute significance, dignity, and worth of human personality is possible only through the individual's relation to his social environment because it is in the social environment that "the real content of the personal life is obtained." Ultimately, every human being needs to find expression of his true personal dignity in his relation to the social surroundings, so that "the infinite possibilities inherent in the very nature of man gradually become realized in the *individually-social* reality" (Solov'ev 2005: 178). In light of the above,

Solov'ëv eloquently concludes, "*Society is the completed or magnified individual and the individual is compressed or concentrated society*" (Solov'ëv 2005: 177).

What follows from Solov'ëv's integrative conception of society and individual is that the very existence of society obtains a distinctive teleological dimension. Since each individual is born into a certain social environment, involuntary participation is inevitably imposed upon him. However, this involuntary participation is meant to make each individual aware of the ontological solidarity, which is inherent in the nature of things, and consequently "to transform it from a merely metaphysical and physical solidarity into a morally-metaphysical and a morally-physical one." Solov'ëv's understanding of the meaning of the universe as a whole requires that the unavoidable "involuntary participation of each in everything should become voluntary and be more and more conscious and free, *i.e.* really *personal* – that each should more and more understand and fulfill the *common work* as if it were *his own*." The key to understanding Solov'ëv's social-ethical precept is exactly this transition, which he defines as the "spiritualization or moralization of the natural fact of solidarity" (Solov'ëv 2005: 177).

Solov'ëv's conception of society as the "individually-social reality," which is created for the purpose of "the rightful interaction between the individual and his environment," does not undermine the absolute value of the individual (Solov'ëv 2005: 178). The individual for Solov'ëv is "a moral being who, apart from his social utility, has absolute worth and an absolute right to live and freely develop his positive powers" (Solov'ëv 2005: 229). The absolute moral worth of human being means that "*no man under any conditions or for any reason may be regarded as only a means* for ends extraneous to himself" because the human dignity of each individual does not depend on his social utility. Quintessentially, considering the fundamental tension between individual and society, Solov'ëv endorses the priority of individual rights and freedom over society's demands. The philosopher grounds this claim in his adamant belief in human's moral and rational capacity, which is obvious from the following:

The right of the person as such is based upon his human dignity inherent in him and inalienable, upon the formal infinity of reason in every human being, upon the fact that each person is unique and individual, and must therefore be an end in himself and not merely a means or an instrument. This right of the person is from its very nature *unconditional*, while the rights of the community with regard to the person are *conditioned* by the recognition of his individual rights (Solov'ëv 2005: 229).

Indeed, the status of individual rights poses a serious challenge for Solov'ëv's attempt at constructing a legal and moral framework wherein individual and public interests are reconciled. The philosopher qualifies his understanding of individual rights in the essay 'Law and Morality' by proposing a compelling recipe of equilibrium, "*Right is a freedom restricted by equality*". This basic definition of right combines the individualistic principle of freedom and the social principle of equality, so that one can assert that right is nothing else than the *synthesis of freedom and equality*" (Solov'ëv 1966: 530). In Solov'ëv's account, right is aimed at balancing "the formal-moral interest of individual freedom" and "the material-moral interest of the common good" (Solov'ëv 1966: 530-32). The balance between private interests and public concerns is determined by the degree of "minimum morality," which is obligatory for everyone and is warranted by the state. Although law is an instrument whereby the state can guarantee the maintenance of minimum morality among its citizens, the state is not empowered, however, to put the ultimate limit on human freedom in virtue of the state's ontologically secondary status with regard to the human being. Asserting that individual's freedom is limited by freedom of other individuals, Solov'ëv suggests a universal conception of right. While recognizing right as universally inherent in each human individual on the ground of man's creation in the image of God, the philosopher warns against the absolutization of right through reducing the universal formula of right to its component elements such as freedom, equality, and the common good.

In fact, such an ideal formula of right can be applied only to an ideal society where individuals strive tirelessly for moral perfection. In this sense, Solov'ëv remains a convinced humanist who believes in the good of human nature. He admits the possibility of a thorough moral change of society in a non-violent way, i.e. as a result of individuals' free and rational choice. Although social institutions, such as the Church, the family, private property, civil law, etc., do play an important role in the moral transformation of the social environment, they do not constitute the moral foundation of society. It is human individuals that should strive inwardly to make social institutions "conformable to the one and only moral standard" – "the one unconditional moral ideal of the *free union of all in the perfect good*" (Solov'ëv 2005: 236, 238). Nonetheless, Solov'ëv is fully aware that this internal struggle is primarily a moral and free struggle of each individual, in which God cannot help men by extricating the evil will. It is the task of

humanity to overcome social conflicts by employing “the complex effect of the *collective evil will*” (Solov’ëv 2005: 238).

Solov’ëv’s idealist belief in individuals’ inherent urge for moral perfection and in society’s progress is also evident from his vision of societal differentiation. As we have seen in the previous chapter, social scientists generally conceive of modern society as differentiated into various social subsystems according to their primary functions. As early as in the nineteenth century, Solov’ëv already described structural complexity as the pivotal characteristic of modern society. However, if the key to societal differentiation consists, according to sociologists, in the function performed by different social subsystems, the key to Solov’ëv’s tacit hypothesis of societal differentiation pertains to moral ideals and moral functions ascribed to different social subsystems or, as he calls them, domains. Thus, the philosopher correlates his conception of society as the progressive realization of the idea of the good with three “fundamental and abiding moments of the individually-social life – the religious, the political, and the prophetic” (Solov’ëv 2005: 176), depicting the differentiation of society into three chief domains. Accordingly, Solov’ëv distinguishes between three dimensions of Christ’s service: as the Priest, as the King, and as the Prophet. Alluding to these biblical concepts, Solov’ëv suggests dividing society’s organization into three major domains: the domain of religion symbolized in the figure of the Priest, the domain of state-legal administration symbolized in the figure of the King, and the domain of the public symbolized in the figure of the Prophet. Obviously, the prophetic function is ascribed to sphere in which the public plays a pivotal role. Although Solov’ëv does not use the term ‘civil society’ or the ‘public sphere,’ his depiction of the prophetic sphere is underpinned by his belief in a morally progressive society. At the highest level of moral organization, society no longer needs to be guided by the Priest or the King, i.e. by a political-legislative apparatus; instead, it is guided by the public, i.e. by best minds of society itself. Only such a society, where the public is imbued with ultimate authority, is, on Solov’ëv’s account, the realization of the innate moral unity of all human beings and the embodiment of the universal communion of life. In that way, Solov’ëv clearly identifies a self-organizing, highly differentiated, and democratically ruled society with a morally superior society.

To conclude, I want to emphasize that Solov’ëv’s moral philosophy reached beyond political-philosophical discourse of the nineteenth century.

It continuously provided inspiration for those intellectuals who attempted at re-invoking fundamental values and principles entrenched in the concept of civil society. One of such attempts has been undertaken by Semën Frank.

#### 4.3.2 'The Orthodox Concept of *Sobornost*' and Its Realization in Civil Society

Frank's oeuvre belongs to the intellectual tradition of Russian émigrés. Although the philosopher lectured at Russian universities in the period between 1912 and 1921, he gained more recognition abroad than in his motherland. Frank's European education and working experience contributed to his European affiliation. In 1899, Frank left Moscow for Germany and returned to Russia when the country was wallowed in the revolutionary turmoil. After the Bolsheviks came to power, he moved to Paris in 1930 and later, in 1945, settled in London.

The analysis of Frank's theory of society is elucidating for the present study not only because this theory builds upon the key concepts of Russian religious-philosophy, but also because it is characterized by the consistency and profoundness typical of West-European philosophy. Such a unique combination is present in Frank's eminent study *Spiritual Foundations of Society: An Introduction of Social Philosophy*,<sup>66</sup> which I have chosen for examining.

Three concepts distinguish Frank's theory of society: first, the primordial unity of all human beings, second, the dual-unity of *sobornost*' and *obshchestvennost*', and third, the driving force of divine-human synergy, expressed in the concept of *Bogochelovechestvo* (Godmanhood). Analysis of these three concepts would allow us to approach a sociophilosophical understanding of civil society as a supratemporal reality and provide a religious reading of civil society theory.

Sharing Solov'ëv's belief that solidarity and spiritual unity are ontologically present in society, Frank concedes, "Social life is not some purely external form of human life," but rather an embodiment of "primordial unity" of all individual human beings. Resorting to the concept of primordial unity, the philosopher aims to elevate the antagonism between 'we' and 'I.' As we remember, the tension between public good and individual interests was compellingly exposed by Seligman as the most

<sup>66</sup> This work was originally written in Russian and published in Paris (1930). Since 1987, it became also available in an English translation, which I use.

poignant dilemma of any social order in general and of modern civil society in particular. For his part, Frank attempts to resolve this tension through revealing the intrinsic connectedness of all individuals. This allows him to infer that ‘we’ is just as primordial as ‘I’ and claim that the spiritual maturing and formation of a human being is possible through communion with others, that is, through the circulation of spiritual elements we have in common with other people. Frank articulates it most eloquently, “The fact that human life in all its domains [...] has the form of *social* life, communal being, or cooperation – is the necessary and immanent expression of *the most profound ontological total-unity*, which lies at the base of human being. Man lives in society not because ‘many’ individuals ‘join together,’ finding this mode of life most convenient for themselves, but because man in his essence is inconceivable except as a member of society.” On that account, Frank argues that society is not “a derivative unification of separate individuals,” but rather is “a genuine integral reality” (Frank 1987: 53-54).

Despite his adamant belief that the primordial unity lies at the heart of human society, Frank acknowledges, nevertheless, a considerable degree of plurality and individual autonomy that are obligatory for modern society. In order to reconcile the collective and individual principles, the theorist distinguishes between two ubiquitous strata of society: the inner stratum, which consists in the primordial unity of ‘we,’ and the outer stratum, which refers to the superficial, empirical manifestation of social being. When considered without its inner connectedness in terms of primordial ‘we,’ individual autonomy leads inevitably to the theory of social atomism, being conceived in terms of separateness, opposition and antagonism between individuals (Frank 1987: 54-55). That is the reason why Frank insists on the interconnectedness, the “dual-unity” between the inner and the outer strata of society. Frank describes the manner in which the inner and outer strata of society relate to each other, by employing the conceptual pair of *sobornost* – *obshchestvennost*. This is a classical maneuver of a Russian religious intellectual.<sup>67</sup>

Indeed, Frank is not original by invoking the beloved Orthodox Christian concept of conciliarity (*sobornost*). As Evert van der Zweerde justly argues in his article ‘«Sobornost» als Gesellschaftsideal bei Vladimir

<sup>67</sup> An approximate translation of the Russian *Sobornost* into English is ‘conciliarity’ or ‘catholicity.’ *Obshchestvennost* can be translated as ‘the public,’ ‘public opinion,’ or ‘public sphere.’ The conceptual pair *sobornost* – *obshchestvennost* resembles the conceptual pair of *Gemeinschaftlichkeit* – *Gesellschaftlichkeit*, which is used in the German scientific parlance.

Solov'ev und Pavel Florenskij,' the concept of *sobornost'* can be considered as "typical" for the whole Russian Christian-philosophical tradition, as it assumes recurrently a key position in the accounts of the majority of Russian Orthodoxy-based thinkers, although with a different nuance. For instance, if Solov'ev tends to associate the concept of *sobornost'* with the concept of All-unity, which becomes in his philosophical framework a fundamental metaphysical category, Florenskij accentuates rather a political dimension in the concept (van der Zweerde 2001: 225-46). Frank, for his part, suggests a new interpretation of the concept of *sobornost'* when coupling it with the concept of *obshchestvennost'*.

Frank's main concern is to provide evidence for the intrinsic connectedness, or the ontological dual-unity, between the two indicated strata of society. Although *sobornost'* signifies the primordial unity of all human beings and constitute the "organically inner" stratum of society, it is unthinkable without its external expression in the form of *obshchestvennost'*, "whether it be manifested in the free, random interaction of individuals or in the organization of wills in law and power." Likewise, *obshchestvennost'*, while representing the empirical stratum of social life, "is possible only on the basis of that living, inner, organic unity of society which we have called *sobornost'*." Concisely, Frank claims, the ideal of *sobornost'*, which permeates the spiritual foundations of society, cannot and should not be disconnected from the ideal of the public, or *obshchestvennost'*, which permeates the complex differentiated structures of modern society and thus reflects the complexity and plurality inherent in the public sphere. On that account, *sobornost'* and *obshchestvennost'* are "not different concrete forms of society but different *elements* of social being which are necessarily present together in every society" simultaneously. Hence, using Frank's sociophilosophical terminology, we can conceive of civil society as "the outward expression of the inner unity and formedness of society, i.e., its *sobornost'*" (Frank 1987: 57-58).

Referring to the constitution of social life, Frank views the dual-unity between *sobornost'* and *obshchestvennost'* as manifested in the "the dual-unity of planning and spontaneity" (Frank 1987: 165). Considering planning and spontaneity as "two necessary and correlative" principles of social life, Frank reveals the expression of these principles in two concrete forms of social life: the state and civil society. The state retains an element of compulsory organization insofar as it embodies the primordial ideal of solidarity; civil society, alternatively, retains an element of spontaneity, as it

reflects the organic progressive expression of social life. Frank deduces from the dual-unity of planning and spontaneity the normative principles of solidarity and freedom, which acquire thereby a new complementary value, even when they are no longer considered in the light of the all-absorbing principle of “free service.” He elucidates, “The planning of the social unity is nothing but an expression of social solidarity in the sphere of *conscious social will*, while the spontaneity of the social unity is the realization of this unity in the element of freedom” (Frank 1987: 166).

Insofar as the state manifests “the unity of planning and organizing social will,” its primary function consists in the realization of conscious social will through institutionalizing and legalizing this conscious social will into common laws and procedures. However, the normative regulatory function of the state is restricted with the presence of civil society, which is essentially “the empirical substrate of social culture” of spontaneity. On this view, Frank qualifies his understanding of the task of the state, conceding that the empirical substrate of civil society “can be created, organized and planned by the state as little as spiritual life itself can be organized and planned.” Hence, the task of the state consists in defending “the freedom of this inwardly growing life” and “promoting spiritual growth of society.” With this, Frank reveals his adherence to a moderate view on state-society relations. Repudiating both socialism and conservatism as two extreme attitudes to the balance between the state and civil society, Frank affirms a mutual connectedness and complementarity of the two forms of social life. The dual-unity between the state and civil society is most valuable for the theorist because “the state is as inconceivable without its natural foundation, civil society with its spontaneously woven fabric, as civil society is inconceivable except as shaped by the planning and organizational activity of the state” (Frank 1987: 171).

Underpinning his understanding of civil society by Orthodox theological principles, Frank defines civil society as “a social unity that is formed spontaneously from free cooperation, from the free agreement of the wills of the individual members of society” (Frank 1987: 172). Thus, he asserts “the uneliminability of civil society” with regard to the state (Frank 1987: 170). However, Frank refutes not the dichotomy between state and society, but rather the “atomistic” theory of society, which sees society as a simple aggregate of ontologically separate individuals. The philosopher overcomes this atomistic theory of society by arguing that “it is precisely the presence of the spontaneous ‘molecular’ bondedness between separate elements of

society which is evidence of their organic primordial inner *unity*,” expressed in the idea of *sobornost*. Accordingly, Frank maintains that the structure of civil society resembles rather a molecular and not an atomic structure, “Civil society is a kind of molecular social bondedness, inwardly connecting the individual elements into a free, plastically flexible whole.” In this molecular whole, individuals function not as separate atoms, but rather as “genuine members of an organic whole that primordially as it were, in their very ontological nature, are called to unity in the form of free interaction and mutual approach” (Frank 1987: 172). Accordingly, Frank identifies the ontological essence of civil society with its functional and teleological meaning as “a necessary form of social cooperation, a form of service, the realization of objective truth through the free interaction of the individual members of the social whole” (Frank 1987: 172-73).

Although the objective truth can be fully realized in social life through the concept of *sobornost*, the earthly incarnation of the individual “makes impossible in earthly life the pure realization of *sobornost* in its spiritual primordial ground, but demands its expression in the form of *obshestvennost*,” in the dual-unity of the external organization and external interaction of individuals.” Hence, Frank concludes that “*sobornost* is empirically realized as *obshestvennost*, as the interaction of separate, corporeally isolated individuals” (Frank 1987: 174-75).

This does not cancel, however, the subordination of the individual principle of freedom to the collective principle of service, which is obvious from the following observation by Frank, “The individualistic element of the social structure [...] is not the *goal* of social life, but precisely only a function (although a necessary function) of the supraindividual goal of society as a unity. The freedom of individual is not innate and primordial *right*, but his social *obligation*.” Here, Frank explicitly refuses to ascribe absolute value to individual freedom. Equally, he conceives of public life in the framework civil society (*obshestvennost*) as a conditional ‘earthly’ realization of the divine-human symbiosis expressed through *sobornost*. Individual freedom appears then “a form of being conditioned and justified by the principle of *service*.” This is because “not the interests and rights of the individual but the interests of service of the truth require the division of society into separate law-protected centers of social activity and the assurance of an appropriate sphere of freedom for each of these centers” (Frank 1987: 173). On this view, Frank’s ‘spiritual’ legitimization of societal

differentiation is different from the functionalistic legitimation provided by social scientists like Parsons and Luhmann.

#### 4.3.3 Civil Society Revisited from the Perspective of Godmanhood and Service

Having sketched Frank's theory of society, I now intend to address the question posed in the introduction to this chapter, namely how the religious ideal formulated by Orthodox Christian philosophers relates to civil society theory. Frank would agree, I think, that the Christian ideal can be indeed employed for a normative validation of civil society, but he would insist on the preservation of core theological presumptions in such an application. As a Christian philosopher, Frank envisages civil society in a supratemporal perspective, whereby the supratemporal and temporal dimensions relate to each other in a way corresponding to that in which the Church relates to the world. Thereby, he grounds his vision of civil society in Christian ethics.

Importantly, conceived within a Christian sociophilosophical framework, civil society becomes an empirical manifestation of "the supratemporal unity of *sobornost*" (Frank 1987: 65). Endorsing this argument, Frank emphatically asserts the centrality of the supratemporal element to social life. This allegation obviously challenges Taylor's thesis of the radical secularity of the public sphere, which has been discussed earlier (§ 4.1.1). If Taylor contends that all social relationships in the context of the secular public sphere need to be understood as temporal, Frank persistently tries to surpass the secularity of the public sphere and discern a supratemporal dimension in various aspects of social life. He warns that if we confine an understanding of society to a complex of social relationships that occur at the present moment, "we would miss what is most essential in society and would understand nothing else in its life" (Frank 1987: 66). He is convinced that the external, temporal aspect of social life conceals the "supratemporal unity" of its present behind its past and its future. This supratemporal unity of social life should be seen as "an expression of the supratemporality that characterizes the consciousness and psychic life of the individual man: Human life is possible in general only on the basis of memory and foresights," whereas the present is "only the ideal boundary" between what has already been experienced and what is yet to be experienced. Moreover, insofar as social memory and social foresight transcend the supratemporality of the individual, the social consciousness appears to be "nothing else but

the supratemporal unity of supraindividual memory and supraindividual goals” (Frank 1987: 66-67). Given the essential “conservatism” and the essential “futurism” of social life, society lives in every temporal segment of its “present” by “its invisible, inner, *supratemporal sobornost*,” so that “every visible communion is the empirical aspect of invisible *sobornost*’ as the supratemporal unity of human generations.” It is “the mysterious unity in which the past and future live in the present and which forms the enigmatic essence of the living organism” that constitutes the “invisible core from which society acquires its life-giving force” (Frank 1987: 67).

Envisaging civil society from the supratemporal perspective, Frank explains the temporal dimension of civil society in a way similar to the one in which the Church substantiates the existence of the secular world. For this purpose, he resorts to the concept of dual-unity between *sobornost*’ and *obshchestvennost*’, using it here in the context of Orthodox Christian ecclesiology. When arguing that *sobornost*’ is the foundation of all social life, Frank inevitably arrives at the conclusion that “religiousness and *sobornost*’ are fundamentally one and the same, that they are two aspects of the same all-determining principle of human life” (Frank 1987: 61). If *sobornost*’ corresponds to “the mystical religious feeling of rootedness in the mysterious depths of being which embrace the individuals,” the religious feeling is accordingly the feeling “of belonging to the absolute principle which lies at the base of the universal *sobornost*’ of being.” On Frank’s account, the primordial spiritual unity of people pertains to “a unity of faith, a unity of service of the truth and groundedness in superhuman holiness” (Frank 1987: 109). Identifying *sobornost*’ with the unity of faith, Frank points at the Church as the embodiment of the idea of *sobornost*’. Accordingly, he explicates the dual-unity between *sobornost*’ and *obshchestvennost*’ as the dual-unity between the Church and the world, visualizing this dual-unity as “the fundamental, immanent, and therefore eternal connection” between the organic inner core and the empirical external incarnation of social being (Frank 1987: 110).

As we remember, the concept of dual-unity implies differentiation. Therefore, *sobornost*’ should be distinguished from *obshchestvennost*’ as the Church should be distinguished from the world. Frank is convinced that despite all “diverse attempts of the social consciousness to change, distort, or destroy them,” the difference between these two entities should be preserved. Accordingly, he criticizes the two opposite tendencies that underlie those attempts. On the one hand, the philosopher rejects the

theocratic tendency “to transform the Church from the inward organic, invisibly nourishing and directing core of social life into external power over society.” On the other hand, he condemns “the opposite effort of the ‘world’ to reject the principle of the Church [...] and to replace it with its own empirical social forces and outer organizational measures than primordial organic unity, rooted in holiness, which lies at the base of the world” (Frank 1987: 111). Succinctly, Frank maintains that the Church, as the ultimate embodiment of *sobornost*, and a secular society, as grounded in the ideal of *obshchestvennost*, should not be amalgamated, but need to coexist next to each other without losing their ontological characteristics.

The third and, possibly, the most important meeting point between Christian philosophy and civil society theory pertains to the sphere of ethics. What is very characteristic of Orthodox Christian philosophy is that it envisages civil society through the prism of Christian ethics, specifically, through the key concepts of Orthodox moral theology such as holiness, Godmanhood, and service. According to the Orthodox moral theological teaching, the concept of holiness determines a great deal in the life of individual, as well as of society. It also proposes a solution to the core dilemma of civil society. When Frank identifies the tension between ‘I’ and ‘we’ as fundamental to modern social order, his standpoint bears a striking resemblance to that held by Seligman, who similarly juxtaposes individual interests and the common good as the driving antagonistic forces of civil society. Agreeing with Seligman, Frank concedes that “social life is full of permanent conflict between the principle of solidarity and the principle of individual freedom, between the power that protects the interests of the whole and anarchic tendencies, between centripetal and centrifugal forces.” Nonetheless, unlike Seligman, Frank believes that “this conflict cannot find higher resolution within the conflicting principles themselves” and therefore argues that “stable harmony and reconciliation can be found only through the groundedness of both principles in a higher principle: the service of God, absolute truth” (Frank 1987: 111). In that way, Frank clearly correlates the ultimate sources of social order with the Orthodox Christian principle of service and grounds his idea of social unity in the ideal of holiness. On that account, the reconciliation between public and individual concerns becomes attainable when all members of a society perceive their individual and collective contribution to the common good as service to the ultimate source of existence – God himself.

The idea of holiness apparently connects Orthodox moral theology and Orthodox anthropology, suggesting thereby a new Orthodoxy-inspired vision of society. Sharing the conception of human being as an *Imago Dei* with the Judeo-Christian world, Orthodox Christianity develops a unique concept of Godmanhood (*Bogochelovechestvo*), which becomes pivotal in the intellectual tradition of Russian religious philosophy. *Bogochelovechestvo* signifies the duality of the divine and the human natures in a human individual. The divine component induces the individual to pursue the path of moral perfection by fulfilling the greatest commandment of all times: to love one's neighbor. The purpose of human life consists in attaining *Bogochelovechestvo*, which implies increasing one's likeness of God through realizing the ideal of Godmanhood and transcending thereby one's empirical limitations.

Frank argues that the religious-moral commandment to treat another human being as one's neighbor should underlie all external and non-voluntary relations between individuals. He conceives of this key principle of Christian ethics as *the* regulatory principle of any social order, "The commandment of the maximum intensity and awareness of this inwardly intuitive relation to him, this relation which is based on the unity of *sobornost'* among people." Hence, the pivotal principle regulating relations among individuals is not an external moral norm, but is "absolutely obligatory for us precisely because it [...] is an expression of the uneliminable and necessary foundation of our entire life" (Frank 1987: 59-60).

In the writings of Orthodox Christian philosophers, this basic Christian commandment is interpreted in terms of servicehood. Frank confirms that attaining holiness through servicehood constitutes the ultimate aim of an (Orthodox) Christian, "The higher purpose of human life consists in human nature being completely possessed and permeated by grace-giving spiritual forces and therefore in the world being completely dissolved in the Church. But the complete realization of this purpose is tantamount to the final transfiguration and 'deification' of man and, as such, it transcends man's empirical being" (Frank 1987: 112).

At the same time, this eschatological vision of the world imbues Orthodox Christian tradition with certain dualism, which is especially perceptible in the general Orthodox underestimation of the world. Orthodox theologians tend to think in terms of elevating the world towards the divine ideal, instead of lowering the divine ideal and adjusting it to the worldly reality. Apparently, Frank also adheres to this general tendency, as he claims, "Although ultimately the world, transfigured, must become

completely incorporated in Divine-human being, the world, remaining the world, cannot incorporate into itself Divine-human being, in the limits and distorted forms inherent in the world as such. The whole world must become *the world in God*, but God cannot become completely incorporated in the world” (Frank 1987: 112).

Given this coherent vision of how individuals can be inspired by the ideals of *sobornost*’ and *Bogochelovechestvo* in order to act morally and cooperatively, I wonder which status individual human rights and freedom attain in Frank’s religious-philosophical discourse. Formulated more concisely, the question is whether Frank’s emphasis on servicehood contradicts such fundamental principles of civil society theory as individual rights and autonomy.

Insofar as Frank claims that the ideal of *Bogochelovechestvo* can be attained through free service to God, he tends, in my view, to subordinate the principle of individual freedom to the supreme principle of service. The philosopher argues, for instance, that genuine freedom is the one that “is normally realized as free participation in social life and social creativity as *free service*.” Conceived in this “primordial sociophilosophical sense,” the principle of freedom does not coincide with “the specific, particular content it acquires in the modern concept of ‘political freedom’.” According to Frank, political freedom is secondary with regard to primordial freedom understood as free service, “The degree to which the citizens of a society must and can be given such freedoms as those of speech and press, assembly and unionization, and free participation in elections, depends on the concrete spiritual conditions of a given society and cannot be determined *a priori* solely from the general principle of freedom as such.” Unsurprisingly, Frank recognizes the only kind of political freedom, namely freedom of religious belief, depicting it as “a kind of genuinely primordial right, which directly emanates from the principle of freedom as the source of spiritual life” (Frank 1987: 138).

The fact that Frank denies what human society has succeeded to achieve with the rise of modern liberalism – namely the universal conception and legitimation of human rights and freedoms – is all the more striking when considered in contrast to the philosopher’s strong belief in the world as saturated by the energies of the divine grace. This is evident from the following, “All concrete incarnations of social life have an intermediate medium which discloses in varying degrees the permeatedness of the worldly principle by the spirit of holiness. The pure life of grace shines

through and acts in the moral law and animates and inspires habits, mores, law, and political and social institutions” (Frank 1987: 113). A question arises why Frank refuses to discern what he calls “the implicit or explicit presence of the principle of holiness” in the institutions, which have been established to guarantee human rights and freedoms? This is the move that Solov’ev would have definitely made.

Presumably, a possible answer lurches in the following argument, “The individualistic idea that the individual has the right to a definite, strictly fixed, inviolable amount of freedom and to definite forms of its manifestation, an idea which is based on the false notion of the ‘innate’ rights of man, must be rejected as incompatible with the supreme principle of *service*, which alone can justify the idea of individual freedom.” With that, Frank affirms the priority of the principle of service over the principle of individual rights and hence diverges from his initial explication of the social-religious ideal of *sobornost* according to which ‘I’ is as much valuable as ‘we.’ In this particular part of Frank’s account, ‘we’ overtly acquire more weight than the individual ‘I’, “The very interests of general freedom, of free social construction, often require restrictions on individual human ‘rights,’ which are always relative and derivative, for they are only a secondary manifestation and means for the realization of the *principle of service* and the associated principles of solidarity and freedom” (Frank 1987: 139). Nevertheless, I still wonder how any form of social interaction can be regarded free if it does not presume *a priori* freedom of its individual creators? If any social formation is grounded in the principle of service, it makes this principle obligatory for all individual participants; therefore, their service cannot be considered free. While advocating the supreme principle of free service, Frank should have suggested, in my view, a more qualified balance between free service and individual freedom. Service can be rendered genuinely free only when it is offered out of individuals’ free will, and not when it is imposed by the spiritual foundation of society in which every individual is predetermined to participate.

### ***Conclusion***

In the two preceding chapters, I have attempted, firstly, at revitalizing an understanding of civil society as a normative model of modern social order and, secondly, at providing a sociological embedding for the normative concept of civil society. In the present chapter, a religious perspective has

been introduced in civil society theory, which allowed us to investigate how civil society and religion relate to each other in Western and Eastern societies of the Christian origin. We have started with systematizing various Western approaches to the problem of the relation between civil society and Christian religion in the secular public domain. Next, a historical-sociological analysis of state-church relations has been provided, with the intention of revealing the distinctively Orthodox Christian attitude to the idea of secular society and secular state. Finally, a religious reading of civil society theory has been suggested on the basis of the intellectual heritage of Russian religious-philosophical tradition.

Analyzing various Western theories concerning the role of religion in the public domain, I have tried to argue that Christianity and modern secularism, when conceived in connection to the idea of civil society, are involved not in a relationship of continuous opposition, but rather in one of dynamic mutual influence. The genealogical connectedness of modern secularism and Christianity has become clear from the exposition of secularity as the foundational principle of an open, non-violent, and tolerant civil society (Keane 2000: 10-11; Colas 1997: 6-8). The foundational principle of civil society – secularity – was for the first time explicitly propagated in European history by the German Protestants who used it as the antidote of religious fanaticism. The idea of secular civil society became a central category in the epoch of European modernity, when it embodied an attempt at a secular normative vision of the social order.

At the same time, the ideals of tolerance, non-violence, and pluralism that underlie the idea of secular civil society are also deeply engraved in the Christian theological tradition. This is true if we agree with Taylor that the very concept of secularity emerged and still acquires its full meaning in the Christian theological framework where it designates the realm strictly distinguished from the realm of the divine. The originally Christian distinction between the divine and the secular enriched European Christian culture with the idea of an independent public sphere, an “extrapolitical” realm, as Taylor has called it, which does not coincide with the political community (Taylor 1997: 266-67). Hence, the genuinely Christian principle of separation between the divine and secular realms facilitated the conception of society as an independent “extrapolitical” realm.

Despite being conceptually grounded in Christian theology, the principle of secularity turned to be challenging for the Christian Church, particularly when the process of structural differentiation began in modern societies.

Discussion differentiation, I have tried to develop an understanding of the process of secularization as a sub-process of the general trend of differentiation, in the course of which secular spheres of society started to claim their autonomy from the sphere of religion. With that, the previous dualist division of society into the realms of the sacred and the secular gradually disappeared. Due to modern secularization, religion underwent a crucial transformation: Once an all-encompassing system, religion became a subsystem of society, which started to perceive itself as the all-encompassing system. The consequences of the secularization process are depicted in Casanova's account of modern secularization. The scholar distinguishes three interrelated sub-processes: the process of institutional differentiation between the religious and secular spheres, the process of decline of religious practices and beliefs, and the process of privatization of religion (Casanova 1994: 211).

Given the depicted structural change, new questions arose: How does religion respond to the structural trend of modern secularization, or, put differently, what impact does secularization have on the internal dynamics and self-identification of religion? And, on the other hand, which role does religion play in the secular public sphere of modern society?

Concerning the first question, I have argued that secularization exerts a significant influence on the character and self-identification of religion, as it allows religion to become increasingly independent from the secularizing society, concentrate on its internal dynamics and intensify its essentialistic self-identification. For instance, Weber insightfully described the complex process of internal transformation of religion towards an individualized and ethicized form of *Gesinnungsethik* (an ethic of inner conviction). Sharing Weber's view by and large, Taylor enriched it by emphasizing the reflexive character that religion acquires under the conditions of modern secularization, approaching thereby what he calls "ethics of authenticity" (Taylor 2003: 79). Such an individualized understanding of religion is necessary in modern societies if one wants to provide sufficient space for "the pluralism of subjective religious beliefs" (Casanova 1994: 39). It is also indispensable given the non-hierarchical structure of modern differentiated societies.

With that, we have arrived at the question concerning the role of religion in the secular public sphere of modern society. Any attempt at positioning religion within the system of secular liberal democracy involves the question how to reconcile the principle of liberalism, which endorses individual

freedom, with the principle of egalitarianism, which proclaims equality among all individual citizens (Audi 2000: 5). Relying on the accounts of Audi, Keane, and Taylor, we have clarified that the principle of secularity is indispensable for the model that grants freedom to every form of expression of individual religious belief without creating inequality among public forms of expressing one's religious belief. Moreover, I can but agree with Taylor that secularism, as the manifestation of the political principle of neutrality, is "a necessity for the democratic life of religiously diverse societies," since the principle of religious neutrality enables the voice of the minority to be heard and respected. Otherwise, the tendency "to build the common identity around the things that strongly unite people, and these are frequently ethnic or religious identities" would lead eventually to an "exclusionary, anti-liberal and anti-egalitarian regime" (Taylor 1999: 46).

Although an open, tolerant, and pluralistic civil society does not contradict or limit the principle of religious freedom, it does prescribe certain conditions under which religion can assume a legitimate public place in liberal democracy. According to Audi, these conditions include the institutional separation between Church and state, and the ecclesiastical political neutrality. Both conditions aim at sustaining an impartial, tolerant, and neutral attitude of the state toward religion, as well as at preventing any possible amalgamation of religious and political interests.

While we have argued that secularism is needed by the liberal democratic system to serve as the regulative principle for a multicultural and polyconfessional state, we have also considered a situation in which secularism is interpreted as a coherent ideology. When interpreted as a coherent ideology, secularism is liable to provoke a radicalized reaction on the part of religion, expressed in the form of religious fundamentalism. Although religious fundamentalists claim to distance themselves from the culture of secular modernity, the very phenomenon of religious fundamentalism should be regarded in connection to the secularization process. Religious fundamentalists depart from an erroneous identification of modernization with inexorable secularization, as they are afraid that modernization would inevitably lead toward the total banishment of religion from the public domain. In contradistinction to the tolerance-inspired privatization of religion in the individualized form (like Weber's ethicization, Taylor's ethics of authenticity, Casanova's thesis of religion's functional specialization, and Audi's insistence on political neutrality), fundamentalist movements exhibit a sectarian reaction to the banishment of God from the

public domain and request the *political* privatization of religion. Insofar as fundamentalists consider religion not as an individual choice, but as a matter of state interest, they contradict the principle of religious freedom, which is freedom to believe or not to believe. On this view, fundamentalist religious movements remain, within civil society theory, a point of contention and require an equilibrated and objective investigation.

Having considered the dynamic relationship of modern secularism and Christianity in connection to the idea of civil society, I have consequently concretized the theoretical discussion by focusing on the history of secularization in Russia. I decided to redirect attention to the relationship between secular state, society, and the Church in the history of Russia because I intended to reveal the Eastern Christian attitude to the problem of secularization. The analysis of the general dynamics of the secularization process in Russia has demonstrated the continuous influence of the two important factors: the theocratic legacy of Byzantine *symphonia* and the radical modernization instigated by Peter the Great. The denoted factors point at the underlying tendency in the history of secularization in Russia. Namely, the modernizing reforms, which were aimed at adjusting Russia to the West-European standards, were systematically undertaken in a top-down way whereby political authority was the one to sanction the reforms, while society was destined to accept the instigated reforms and policies. As I have tried to argue, the process of secularization in Russia pertains in a much lesser degree, as it was the case in Western Europe, to the problematic relationship between an independent secularizing society and the Church. On the contrary, the secularization process in Russia gets to the core of the troubled relationship between the political and ecclesiastical authorities.

Such a conclusion makes applying the mainstream secularization theory to the case of Russia even more interesting, as it provides a new perspective on Casanova's thesis of privatization of religion. I suppose that the way in which religion became privatized explains the main difference between Russian and West-European societies. In the West, privatization of religion can be conceived "as a historical option," "preferred internally from within religion as result of modern processes of religious rationalization" (Casanova 1994: 215). This tendency toward privatization appears then as a natural option concordant with the individualistic and reflexive form of religion in the modern West. Thereby, the emergence of the secular public sphere has been a determinate factor in the process of privatization of

religion. Insofar as society became increasingly autonomous from the tutelage of both the state and the Church, new institutional forms were established with a view to protecting the distinction between the private and the public and thereby to securing the values of liberalism and individualism. Consequently, the emancipation of secular spheres from religious institutions and norms triggered religion to develop its own institutional autonomy and retreat into the sphere determined by its own intrinsic functional dynamics (Casanova 1994: 212).

Subsequently, the process of privatization of religion assumed a normative dimension. As we can remember from the previous discussion, individual rights to privacy and to freedom of conscience became the keystones of the normative idea of civil society. Referring to the normative role of religion in the public domain, Casanova insists on the juridical-constitutional separation between religion and politics but adds that this separation proves insufficient, however, to guarantee freedom of the state from religion, as well as freedom of conscience from both the state and organized religion. For this purpose, the liberal social system requires religion to be privatized in order to protect the right to privacy and freedom of conscience from religion. The crux of Casanova's argument consists in his claim that civil society allows religion to "enter the public sphere and assume a public form only if it accepts the inviolable right to privacy and the sanctity of the principle of freedom of conscience" (Casanova 1994: 57). On this account, privatization of modern religion obtains "normative foundations in the liberal model of the public sphere and in the rigidly juridical separation of the private and public spheres" (Casanova 1994: 58).

Privatization of religion occurred in Russia in a fairly different manner. If in the West, it occurred as the natural outcome of society's emancipation from the surveillance of the Church, in Russia, the process of privatization of religion, or, more specifically, of the ROC, occurred as the outcome of religious absolutism of the state. The Russian state persistently sought to gain control over the ecclesiastical structures: first, in Kievan Rus', through implementing the model of Byzantine *symphonia*, subsequently, during Peter's epoch of rapid modernization, through abolishing the institute of patriarchate and imposing the anti-canonical semi-secular organ called the Holy Synod. After the two-hundred-year Synodal period, the state's suppression of the Church became painfully obvious during the Soviet regime, when religious citizens were blatantly persecuted by state authorities.

As a result of the consistent privatization of religion by the state, the Church in Russia has developed a distinctive coping mechanism. In reaction to the enforced secularization, the Church intensified its self-definition in essentialistic terms, conceiving of itself as an ultimately otherworldly community, ontologically independent from worldly power of the state. Insofar as the institute of the ROC was consistently subordinated to the state, the Church became simultaneously liberated from the necessity to secularize itself by responding to emergent problems of the increasingly secularizing society. At the same time, this dependent position allowed the Church to contemplate on fundamental theological questions. I suggest that this is the reason why Orthodox theology systematically neglected a social dimension in theological issues but achieved such a high stance in the fields of asceticism, mysticism, spirituality, eschatology, ecclesiology, and religious philosophy. This also explains why nowadays the ROC still tends to produce dubious answers to the unresolved dilemma of how to perceive the secular character of the contemporary democratic state and civil society: Russian Orthodoxy lacks the long-term tradition of social ethics.

Despite the general dualist attitude of the Orthodox Church toward the secular world, the liberal thought and an intelligent public critique characterized the period of religious-philosophical renaissance in late imperial Russia. In particular, the dawn of religious-philosophy testified to the genuine interest that Orthodox intellectuals took in their direct social and political environment. The rise of the public sphere and independent civil society, instigated by the Great Reforms of Alexander II, inspired Solov'ëv and Frank to elaborate an Orthodox Christian conception of civil society.

Attempting to reconcile a modern secular conception of society with the core dogmas of Orthodox theology, these philosophers succeeded to formulate, from within the Orthodox Christian tradition, a solid legal and moral framework where the liberal ethos of pluralistic and tolerant civil society would fit in. The analysis of their theories has disclosed certain tensions and discrepancies, like, for instance, Frank's subordination of the liberal principle of individual freedom to the Orthodox principle of servicehood. However, neither Solov'ëv nor Frank meant to devalue secularity and autonomy of civil society, but rather sought to discover religious-moral foundations for civil society and thereby to contribute to the general open-mindedness that characterized the whole generation of Russian pre-revolutionary and, subsequently, émigré intelligentsia. In their

search for foundational principles, Solov'ëv and Frank invoked the pivotal concepts of Orthodox Christian philosophy: conciliarity, Godmanhood, and servicehood. The concept of *sobornost'* (conciliarity) means the ontological total-unity of all human individuals and is expressed in the empirical form of *obshchestvennost'* (the public, or, more specifically, civil society). The concept of Godmanhood (*Bogochelovechestvo*) legitimizes moral struggle for perfection as the highest purpose of human life, whereas the concept of servicehood denotes a kind of solidarity and balances the principle of individual freedom by the principle of equality.

The analysis of these theological concepts allowed me to address a pertinent problem of formulating certain foundational principles that the normative idea and social reality of civil society rest upon. Various arguments whereby theorists endorse the normativity of civil society can be roughly categorized into two main groups, namely secular and religious arguments. Most importantly, these seemingly opposite arguments can be employed to uphold one and the same ideal – the ideal of tolerant, pluralistic, and *civil* society, where the principle of individual freedom co-exists with the principle of solidarity and the common good.

# Civil Society in Post-Soviet Russia: Institutional Weakness in the Context of Public Morality

## *Introduction*

Russia's transition to democracy and civil society has confronted scholars with pertinent questions such as: On which theoretical and practical foundations do relatively successful Western democracies and civil societies actually rest? Are these foundations (re)producible in principle? And, if so, do these reproduced preconditions create sufficient ground for civil societies to rise and flourish in a post-communist context? These questions have been on the agenda of both academics and policy-makers during the last two decades. A systematic and comparative reassessment of their contributions constitutes the general objective of the present chapter. I consider such a reassessment necessary, as it allows evaluating the progress that the democratic project has achieved in post-Soviet Russia since the transition.

In comparison to the experience of other post-communist countries, the evolution of civil society in post-Soviet Russia is even more peculiar owing to two important factors. First, Russia's experience of the communist regime was significantly longer than that of other countries of East-Central Europe, such as Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Rumania, where the communist regime was imposed after World War II. The enduring legacy of more than seventy years of communism in Russia (1917-

91) renders the transformations that occurred in the spheres of politics, the economy, culture, and religion even more difficult, but at the same time, more radical and therefore interesting to study.<sup>68</sup> The second decisive factor refers, in my opinion, to the distinctive religious-cultural identity of Russia and has to do with the pivotal role of Orthodox Christianity in the country's history. On this view, I presume that the intended analysis of main achievements and failures of Russian democracy necessitates consideration of the delineated factors. That is why these two factors will be the focus of the present and of the next chapters. In the present chapter, I shall address the problem of the communist legacy at the level of institutional and moral transformations in post-Soviet Russia, whereas in the next chapter, I shall examine the civil role of Orthodox Christianity and elucidate the theological conceptions that determine the specifics of Russian political and social ethics.

If we cast a general glance on the contemporary geo-political map of the world, we would not be able to claim that Russia is lagging behind Western democracies. Over the last two decades, the country seems to have survived the liberal reforms and have reorganized its socio-political and economic life in accordance to the democratic constitution. However, despite Russia's break-through to democracy and a market economy, the initiated reforms have not yet exerted a profound and lasting influence on major political and social institutes, through which democratic polity, civil society, and free market operate. To explain this incongruence, I suggest that the more organized civil society is at the institutional level and the denser and more complex its network is, the more receptive society is to democratic transformations. Democratic transformations entail the establishment of new institutional forms, among which the rule of law, the market economy, the constitutional-legislative system, private property, and, last but not the least, a vibrant and independent public sphere. The latter is a normative prerequisite for the emergence of civil society because the public sphere is exactly the locus where communication between the democratic state and its citizens occurs. With regard to contemporary Russian democracy, we can make the following observation: Although the objective preconditions for the transition towards a democratic polity and a market economy have been

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<sup>68</sup> To illustrate this point, much corroborative research can be relied on. For instance, Otto Latsis emphasizes that the previous socialist Soviet mentality has been the ruling mentality in Russia for a longer period than in any other country of the world and has been continuously reconfirmed by not only mythological, but also real achievements, such as the victory in the Great Patriotic War (i.e., the Russian equivalent for World War II), or space exploration (Latsis 2003: 21).

created, the actual democratization and liberalization of the post-communist society did not follow with an expected speed. Logically, this problem attracted attention of many scholars.

Institutional weakness is frequently stipulated by scholars as one of the main causes of the delayed development of civil society in post-Soviet Russia. The growing awareness among scholars is evident from recent studies. Thus, German Diligenskij asserts that contemporary Russian civil society is still in “an embryonic stadium of development” because the institutional transformations occurred only at the level of microstructures. However, these are exactly macrostructures that urgently need being reformed by separate uncoordinated initiatives coming from civil society (Koval 2001: 104).<sup>69</sup> Similarly, in the article ‘What Kind of Civil Society Exists in Russia?’,<sup>70</sup> Dianne Schmidt identifies the problem of institutional weakness with the structural “atomization” of civil society. She concedes that Russian civil society exists rather in the form of separate islands than in the form of network constructions (Schmidt 2006: 9-10). The problem of institutional weakness inhibits also the lack of innovative potential, which is typical of post-communist societies in general. This standpoint is central to Tat’jana Zaslavskaja’s distinguished study *The Societal Transformation of Russian Society: An Action-Structural Conception*.<sup>71</sup> On Zaslavskaja’s account, the solution consists in a new cycle of vital democratic reforms (Zaslavskaja 2002: 503). The aim of these subsequent democratic reforms is to create an all-embracing institutional framework, which would allow civil society organizations to function at the macro-level of political, economic, and societal processes.

My particular interest in the institutional aspect of contemporary Russian civil society has been provoked by the emerging awareness among scholars that the very focus of their research needs to be shifted. This awareness has been correctly noticed by Schmidt (Schmidt 2006: 10). If previously, scholars focused on the positive influence of civil society on the process of democratization in post-Soviet countries, nowadays they discover the opposite causal relation. The question at stake pertains to the stimulating influence of democratic transformations on the development of civil

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<sup>69</sup> Б. Коваль (ред.), *Гражданское общество в России: проблемы самоопределения и развития*. Материалы научной конференции, Москва 7 дек. 2000 (2001).

<sup>70</sup> Диана Шмидт, «Какое гражданское общество существует в России?» // *Pro et Contra* (Январь – февраль 2006).

<sup>71</sup> Татьяна Заславская, *Социетальная трансформация российского общества: деятельно-структурная концепция* (2002).

society. If during the *perestrojka* period and the early 1990s, the term ‘civil society’ was employed as a panacea against all post-communist diseases, now it is used to evaluate the success of the institutional changes in democratic Russia. Scholars tend to regard new democratic institutions as feasible manifestations of civil society. The establishment of democratic institutions is, however, difficult given the unyielding moral attitudes typical of the majority of post-communist citizens.

Given the above, I define the aim of the present chapter as twofold: first, to reveal the complexity of problems that accompanied Russia’s transition to democracy and civil society, and second, to explain the causes of the indicated problems by discussing the institutional weakness of contemporary Russian civil society in the context of public morality of post-communist citizens. The central question of the chapter can be succinctly formulated as follows: How can we assess the process of institutional transformation that Russian society has undergone in the span of the last twenty years? The posed question entails a complex approach, as it pertains to four interconnected levels of analysis. Firstly, I shall spell out the relationship between civil society and political power in Russian democracy (5.1). Next, I shall analyze the emergence of civil society in the context of socio-economic reforms that accompanied Russia’s transition to democracy and a market economy, with a specific focus on the formation of the middle class (5.2). In addition to the analysis of political and economic problems, I shall provide a moral assessment of the institutional weakness of civil society and discuss the significance of trust for a liberal democratic system in general and for Russia’s democratic project in particular (5.3). Finally, I shall reveal the influence of institutional transformations on individual and public morality in Russian society today (5.4).

## 5.1 Civil Society and the Democratic State

The terms ‘imitation democracy’ and a ‘controlled,’ or ‘coordinated,’ civil society have become immensely popular with those contemporary Russian and Western political analysts who choose to remain critical and independent in their evaluations. The recurring use of these terms testifies to the disappointment of Russian citizens who hailed, some twenty years ago, the country’s revolutionary transition from socialist communism to liberal democracy. After two terms of Vladimir Putin’s presidency, scholars express their fear and critique concerning the restoration of authoritarian rule. Analyzing these critical accounts, I intend to answer the following

questions: Under which circumstances did imitation democracy and a controlled civil society emerge in Russia? (§ 5.1.1) Is the fear of authoritarianism justifiable, given the current political context? Which arguments do the critics employ to characterize the contemporary political context by such terms as ‘imitation democracy’ and a parody on independent and robust civil society? (§ 5.1.2) Finally, what are the causes of the restoration of authoritarian regime in post-Soviet Russia and what are the prospects of the democratic project in future Russia? (§ 5.1.3)

#### 5.1.1 Russia’s Transition to Democracy

The question of how imitation democracy and a controlled civil society emerged in Russia has to do with the way in which the country moved to democracy. According to the contemporary Russian legal and political scholar Andrej Medushevskij, Russia’s transition to democracy occurred under the conditions of “the constitutional crisis.” In the article “The Russian Model of Constitutional Transformations in a Comparative Perspective,”<sup>72</sup> the scholar argues that the adoption of the democratic constitution in 1993 was accompanied by the process of accelerated politico-legal modernization of the post-communist society. To support this claim, Medushevskij points at the crucial difference between two models of constitutional transformation from an authoritarian regime toward democracy. The first model depicts constitutional transformation under the conditions of deliberative democracy and presumes public consensus. Alternatively, the second model depicts constitutional transformation as a result of civil conflicts and of the subsequent domination of one political party. Medushevskij specifies this model as “delegated democracy,” asserting that it has been reproduced in Russia’s democratic project (Medushevskij 2003: 33-34).

Medushevskij’s analysis clarifies an important causal connection in the problematic rise of Russian civil society. Insofar as Russia’s transition to democracy occurred as a consequence of the constitutional crisis, the new democratic regime was formed under the conditions of a weak civil society, that is, without broad public involvement in major politico-constitutional decisions and thus without due public deliberation. However, the normative model of democracy is based on public consensus and thus is premised on

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<sup>72</sup> Андрей Медушевский, «Российская модель конституционных преобразований в сравнительной перспективе» // *Проблемы становления гражданского общества в России* (2003).

an effective and robust civil society, whereby the public is free to articulate its opinion openly and effectively. This essential condition was missing in Russia in the early 1990s. In his contribution 'Russia's Fourth Transition,' Steven Fish correctly observes that although Russia witnessed, during the Gorbachev era, "the rise of myriad organizations growing of social movements, most of which focused their energies on bringing down the communist regime and ushering in some form of democracy, it never produced a well-developed civil society of the type found in the West or in many developing countries" (Fish 1994: 31). After the period of remarkable spontaneous mobilization in the public sphere between 1989 and 1991, the nascent civil society turned to be short-lived. This is because "most of the groups that spearheaded the democratic movement during the communism's twilight have not fared well in the post-Soviet setting. Instead of evolving into more coherent and better-organized formations many have weakened and fragmented, or even disappeared altogether" (Fish 1994: 32).

Critique of Russia's transition to democracy also underlies Lilia Shevtsova's recent study *Russia – Lost in Translation. The Yeltsyn and Putin Legacies*. Shevtsova reveals that although Boris El'tsyn's appeal to democracy attained wide public support during the coup in August 1991, the nascent democratic consolidation was trampled upon shortly afterwards, when El'tsyn's military horde suppressed the Parliament during the assault of the White House in October 1993. As a result of the forced resolution of the opposition between the executive and representative powers, the "superpresidency [...] was enshrined in a new constitution adopted in December 1993" (Shevtsova 2007: 17). Dmitrij Furman concedes, for his part, that in Russia the democratic movement came to power by employing an undemocratic unlawful method of overpowering the alternative political minority. In Furman's estimation, the militant usurpation of political power by the democratic movement has determined the character of the emergent post-communist political system (Furman 2003: 25). Indeed, as Shevtsova's analysis reveals, El'tsyn's exercise of power started to assume, since 1993, a distinct authoritarian edifice but remained, nonetheless, within the legal framework of constitutional democracy. She succinctly summarizes the outcomes of El'tsyn's legacy, "Power remained personalized and monolithic. There had been no dispersing of authority among the branches of government. The Russian leader continued to hold the main levels of control. He was elected, but he was not accountable to the electorate," and, most sadly, "state interests retained their primacy over those of the individual and society" (Shevtsova 2007: 3). Moreover, the El'tsyn

administration did not have a clear strategic plan, as it struggled for self-preservation in the face of public disappointment with the government and regular outbursts of protest.

Thus, the announcement of the transition to democracy occurred in Russia, as Medushevskij justly claims, without a due preparation and therefore led to “the acute crisis of legitimacy and the schism of the ruling elite.” On the legal part, the constitutional crisis entailed the discrepancy between the constitution and the political reality, as it signaled the situation when the law lost its legitimacy. If in most countries of Southern and Eastern Europe, the process of democratic transformation followed the model of consensus between social movements and political parties, in Russia the same process resembled rather the model of the rupture of legal continuity. This meant that “the adoption of the Democratic Constitution of the Russian Federation in 1993 was the result not of the constitutional reform, but of the constitutional revolution, whereby the winning party has enforced its will upon the losing parties” (Medushevskij 2003: 34-35).

The fact that the democratic constitution has been adopted in Russia by the authoritarian methods is not new for Russian political history. Political authority frequently took the lead in taking decisions during periods of political instability. The tendency toward reforming society in a top-down manner is evident from the crucial moments in the political history of Russia, such as, for instance, the modernizing reforms of Peter the Great and Alexander II (considered earlier in § 4.2.2 and § 4.2.3). During the recent transition to democracy, political authority again took the lead and promised to sustain social order and stability, juxtaposing anarchy and chaos as appalling alternatives of the newly established democratic rule. Medushevskij astutely observes that the paradox of constitutional transformation consists in the explicit incongruence between the noble democratic goal of proclaiming the *Rechtsstaat* and the undemocratic means of attaining this goal (Medushevskij 2003: 43). Obviously, the political-constitutional regime in contemporary Russia retains this paradoxical combination. On the one hand, it declares and guarantees citizens’ rights, but on the other hand, it has been brought to life by the decision of political authority.

In view of the above, Shevtsova is right when asserting that notwithstanding the establishment of the democratic regime and the adoption of the Democratic Constitution in 1993, the foundational principle of sovereign power, or *derzhavnichestvo*, has remained unaltered. In the scholar’s opinion, the El’tsyn administration was based on “a hybrid system

that regulates relations between the regime and society on the basis of conflicting and irreconcilable principles: state authorities are elected, but candidates to elective office are appointed from above, and elections are manipulated; the rule of law is enshrined in the constitution, but surreptitious deals are the order of the day; although society has a federal structure, the center dictates policy to the regions; there is a free market, but officials constantly meddle in the economy” (Shevtsova 2007: 4). Such a hybrid system of government administration, as combining democratic and authoritarian strategies, did not only characterize the first term of El'tsyn's presidency, but also lingered through the second term, following the managed elections in 1996.

This short sketch of El'tsyn's legacy leaves little doubt whether the first democratic president has secured the country's successful transition to a free market economy and democracy. Nonetheless, the difference between the evaluations made by Western and Russian scholars is astonishing. Shevtsova correctly notices that Western assessments are prevailingly more positive than are those of the Russians (Shevtsova 2007: 29). Indeed, while Western analysts were external observers of Russia's transition to a market economy, Russian scholars were actually experiencing all the difficulties of the transition. In the course of the liberal reforms during the 1990s, a clear preponderance of Russian intellectuals, scholars and professionals struggled to survive when all major public sectors, sponsored previously the Soviet budget, became almost bankrupt. It would be no exaggeration to say that the memories of El'tsyn's period are still haunting most Russians, which is also confirmed by public surveys conducted by the Levada Center. According to the results of the surveys, in 2000, 56 percent of respondents evaluated El'tsyn's presidency as a negative experience and a disaster; by 2006, the percentage of the disappointed increased up to 70 percent. A positive assessment of El'tsyn's legacy was given in 2000 by 18 percent of respondents; by 2006, this number decreased to 13 percent (Shevtsova 2007: 28).

On the eve of 2000, El'tsyn handed his presidency to Vladimir Putin. Thereby, “the manner in which power was handled over to his successor only emphasized the authoritarian complexion of the system Boris El'tsyn had created,” as El'tsyn's hasty departure and the indisputable appointment of the new president “had little in common with a democratic transfer of power” (Shevtsova 2007: 27). Nevertheless, El'tsyn and Putin interpreted democracy quite differently. Shevtsova astutely compares their conceptions of democracy, “If El'tsyn's model can be classified as a moderately

*authoritarian oligarchic regime*, then Putin's rule resembles the *bureaucratic-authoritarian* regimes of Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s." Putin established "a system of government under which power is concentrated in the hands of a leader who relies on the bureaucracy, security forces, and big business" and which works under the condition that these major branches are loyal and cooperative toward the political leader (Shevtsova 2007: 40-41). Indeed, immediately after being officially elected as the president, Putin initiated "recentralization of power" by spreading presidential control over the independent mass media, the courts, the Federation Council, the Duma, and security services (Shevtsova 2007: 41-42).

How did Putin succeed to gain such immense public support? Insofar as the overwhelming majority of ordinary Russians were tied of the turbulent reforms during the 1990s, they began to long for stability, certainty, and order. Putin was the adequate political figure to meet these public requirements, as he proposed to lead the country out of crisis and chaos, although at the price of restricting democratic liberties. Thus, when Russians were confronted with a choice between chaos but liberty or order but curtailed liberty, the nation demonstratively opted for the second option. This choice was also influenced by the schism between the upper and lower strata in post-El'styn's Russia. Sergej Kuleshov and Andrej Medushevskij clarify in the study *Russia in the System of World Civilizations*<sup>73</sup> that both the ruling elite and ordinary people obviously lacked the ability to lead a tolerant public dialog. The ruling elite turned to populism, neglecting thereby basic norms of democratic legality and political ethics, whereas ordinary people decided to sacrifice democratic values in the name of "order and discipline" (Kuleshov and Medushevskij 2005: 717).

#### 5.1.2 'Imitation Democracy' and a Controlled Civil Society

Obviously, the entrenchment of Putin's bureaucratic-authoritarian model of democracy exerted much influence on the public sphere and civil society. In his highly informative study *Russian Politics and Society*, Richard Sakwa justly observes that "one of the key questions of the democratic transition in Russia was how society was to be integrated into the post-communist political order." In Sakwa's opinion, "the experience of democratization in Russia demonstrated that the autonomous representation of social interests was subsumed into a broader process of regime consolidation, and

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<sup>73</sup> Сергей Кулешов и Андрей Медушевский, *Россия в системе мировых цивилизаций* (2005).

independent civil society associations were eclipsed” (Sakwa 2008: 330). The significant decrease of independent public organizations was ‘compensated’ by the intensive growth of the bureaucracy. This allows Sakwa to aver that “the reconstruction of state authority in the 2000s was accompanied by ever tighter regulation of public life in general, and civic activity in particular” (Sakwa 2008: 341). Nonetheless, political power intended to stimulate the development of civil society. For this purpose, as Shevtsova notices, “the center managed [...] to rally around itself servile social groups that were willing to support every initiative the Kremlin took. A special forum was created for the most loyal: the Public Chamber, whose function was to mimic civil society” (Shevtsova 2007: 47). The simulative character of state-controlled organizations of civil society became an axiom for many other scholars. Maria Lipman and Nikolaj Petrov, Russian scholars affiliated with the Carnegie Moscow Center, confirm in their recent study *Society and Citizens in 2008-2010*<sup>74</sup> that the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation was designed as “a kind of ministry of civil society,” as “a controlled voice of publicity” (Lipman & Petrov 2010: 22).

Hence, civil society in Putin’s Russia assumed a hybrid model comprising the characteristics of public openness and independent judgment on the one hand, and the characteristics of managed civic activity on the other. With that, the relations between the spheres of politics and civil society became increasingly regulated by what Sakwa calls “the technocratic ethos” of the Putin presidency, implying that Putin’s understanding of democracy “did not repudiate democracy but it did encourage a para-constitutional bypassing of the constitution. Putin’s system was legalistic, but it often acted in a spirit contrary to that of constitutionalism” (Sakwa 2008: 341).

If the greatest disaster of El’tsyn’s presidency can be associated with the systemic crisis and the emergence of oligarchism, the main problems of Putin’s presidency were the unprecedented expansion of the state bureaucracy and the imitative character of core democratic institutions, such as civil society, the rule of law, the judicial system, the public prosecutor’s office, and the free press. In this regard, it is vital to understand the implications of imitation democracy for the life of society. In general, imitation democracy entails “the retention of the formal institutions of democracy in order to conceal authoritarian, oligarchic, or bureaucratic tendencies and most often all three at once”; this leads to the public denouncement and distrust of the whole system of government

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<sup>74</sup> Мария Липман и Николай Петров (ред.) *Общество и граждане в 2008—2010 гг.* (2010).

administration (Shevtsova 2007: 49). Under the conditions of pervasive public distrust, the political leader has no other option than to criticize the seemingly powerful but ineffective system of bureaucratic administration. Nonetheless, the president's critique does not improve the situation because the bureaucratic apparatus has no stable and developed system of democratic institutions to rely on. In result, "Putin continues to distance himself successfully from his apparatchiks in the eyes of the populace [...] meanwhile the bureaucracy has society firmly ensnared in its tentacles" (Shevtsova 2007: 59).

I suppose, the key remedy to overcome imitation democracy is the reinvigoration of people's trust in government or, using the concepts of liberal democratic theory, the reinvigoration of an understanding of government as trust. Because, unless citizens regain trust in democratic principles and democratic institutions, the political system will be bound to proceed on artificial politics and simulated public debate and therefore will not be able to become effective and responsive to the interests and needs of the electorate. However, instead of the reinvigoration of trust in the democratic system, Putin made his choice in favor of the "imitation" of the democratic system. Shevtsova clarifies, "In the Russian case we are dealing not with the 'collapse' of democracy, as many think, but with the deliberative use of democratic and liberal institutions in order to conceal traditional power arrangements" (Shevtsova 2007: 50). In essence, the system of government administration and the nature of political power have not radically changed with the transition to democracy. This conclusion is also corroborated by Sakwa's assessment of the Putin administration as "the heir of the oversight functions once fulfilled by the Party apparatus." Furthermore, the scholar notices, the preservation of traditional power arrangements is mainly maintained by the executive power itself. When "executive power is [...] exercised by the president and the government," there emerges "a dual executive system with an unclear relationship between the two," which is the case in Russia. The constitution endows the president with control over foreign and domestic policy, whereas the government, analogous with its Soviet and Tsarist predecessors, remains traditionally restricted to managing the economy and the social sphere (Sakwa 2008: 114).

The overt indicators of imitation democracy can be specified, according to Shevtsova, as three interdependent dysfunctions, namely: corruption, centralization of resources, and favoritism. All three dysfunctions are evident in present-day Russia. First and foremost, Shevtsova reveals how

“the burgeoning of officialdom is accompanied by a burgeoning of its corruption” by arguing that “Russian corruption received its boost when the state authorities returned to the mechanism of appointing officials on the basis of their loyalty to the leader rather than their professional competence” (Shevtsova 2007: 59). With Russia’s transition to democracy and a market economy, the bureaucracy managed to get control over the corporate sector. As a result of its amalgamation with governmental structures, business lost its independence and public accountability, which became more than ever notorious during the privatization in the early 1990s. In fact, Shevtsova correctly observes, “the merging of power and business was just one more manifestation of the principle of indivisibility” of political power (Shevtsova 2007: 3). The centralization of political power gave impetus to the subsequent centralization of financial and economic recourses. However, this trend is dangerous because the redistribution of economic resources between the center and the regions, with a clear centralization of financial recourses in Moscow, “could become the source of growing social dissatisfaction and even turmoil in the regions in the future” (Shevtsova 2007: 61).

Moreover, the Russian political system is affected by “one more inevitable consequence of personalized power – favoritism,” which also testifies to the underdevelopment of democratic institutions and civil society. On the one hand, the formation of what Shevtsova calls “a political family” or “kitchen cabinet” is the unavoidable upshot of “the technical impossibility of the leader’s fully exercising all his tremendous powers.” On the other hand, “the elimination of independent institutions by the executive makes the executive itself dependent on random individuals in the service of the presidency” (Shevtsova 2007: 61). The formation of “the political family” consolidates *gemeinschaftliche* dependence of the leader on his favorites and, as a result, contradicts the system of governance by chief officials who are democratically elected according to their professional qualities. In the end, “the leader, with no institutions to back him up, inevitably tends to convert functional relations to personal relationships based on trust” (Shevtsova 2007: 62). Using the German sociological parlance, I define the described process as the *Vergemeinschaftung* of relations within the political system. Insofar as the *Vergemeinschaftung* of political relations is founded on the combination of authoritarianism and favoritism, the political leader is bound to balance between the trust in his favorites and the fear of betrayal. The stability of such a political system is even more at risk when institutions are immature and civil society is weak, because then

the dysfunctions within the political system reach neither the leader's controlling organ nor the public. Shevtsova explicates that the difference between institutionally developed and institutionally underdeveloped democracies consists in "that in developed democracies there are systemic checks, among them freedom of the press, political opposition, and independent institutions that prevent favorites from taking over the dominating the system." Alternatively, if these systemic checks are absent, "the authority of the state is inevitably privatized by the leader's entourage, sometimes without the leader's even noticing" (Shevtsova 2007: 62). In this case, we are dealing with underdeveloped democracies, manifestations of which are perceptible in the political system of contemporary Russia.

Obviously, the sketched political climate influences the development of civil society in contemporary Russia. Jurij Krasin insightfully reveals this influence in the article 'Civil Society, Pluralism, and Tolerance.'<sup>75</sup> Now that "the huge credit of trust, which political power received from society in the early 1990s, has been almost totally exhausted as a result of radical liberal experiments," political power "intends to receive new credits of trust and does so by demonstratively endorsing civil society, yet trying to shape it in the desired direction" (Krasin 2002: 34). As a reaction to the declining trust in public and political institutions, the Putin administration tried to compensate for the dysfunctions of core democratic institutions by stimulating democratic initiatives from above. Thus, in 2006, the government initiated the establishment of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation and supported the organization of the National Civil Forum, the first held in 2001 and the second in 2008. The fact that the dialog between politics and society is necessary in present-day Russia is obvious for the representatives of both civil society organizations and government institutions. Nonetheless, the question who will play the leading role in the dialog is unresolved. Is it the administrative bureaucratic apparatus or the effective and vibrant network of grassroots initiatives? I suppose, both parties should contribute to the dialog. With a view to facilitating an equal and balanced dialog, past misconceptions need to be refuted, and future prospects need to be mapped out.

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<sup>75</sup> Юрий Красин, «Гражданское общество, плюрализм и толерантность» // Владимир Марахов (ред.) *Стратегии формирования гражданского общества в России* (2002).

### 5.1.3 Hindrances and Prospects of Russia's Democratic Project

The main hindrance to Russia's democratic consolidation pertains, in my view, to the state's underestimation of the normative value and function of civil society in the system of democratic government. The more the state tends to monopolize political power and equalize the political landscape, the lesser freedom civil society retains. Hence, the monopolization of political power tends to undermine the significance of civil society for public politics.<sup>76</sup>

The sources of the current tendency toward monopolizing political power by the state are related to the specifics of Russian political culture because this tendency mainly reproduces the mechanisms typical of the previous political regimes. On this account, the state's underestimation of society's independent value ensues from the long-term tradition of the state's primacy over society. Konstantin Kostjuk claims in the contribution 'Political Morality and Political Ethics in Russia'<sup>77</sup> that by undermining the independent value of society, "Russian political culture has demonstrated its persistent incompetence to harmonize social order as an independent order and establish institutional relations when the traditional hierarchical authoritative-legal structures weaken" (Kostjuk 2000b: 34-35).<sup>78</sup> Agreeing with Kostjuk, V. Dakhin concedes in the article 'Historical Determinants of the Political Development of Contemporary Russia'<sup>79</sup> that the old characteristic features of Russian political power, such as "indivisibility, irremovability, autonomy from society, as well as structural amalgamation of power and property," have been again reproduced in Russia's democratic polity. The re-establishment of these old features has been also promoted by the fact that the ruling elite, despite the political change in 1991,

<sup>76</sup> The centralization of the political-administrative system has been frequently legitimized by the geopolitical position of the Russian state, which historically evolved as a composition of many nationalities, spread over vast territories and continuously expanding its frontiers. The diversity among Russia's regions was so high that it required the ideology of integral unity to keep up the appearance of an empire.

<sup>77</sup> Константин Костюк, «Политическая мораль и политическая этика в России» // *Вопросы философии* (№ 2, 2000).

<sup>78</sup> Kostjuk specifies consequently a number of external as well as internal factors that determine the idiosyncrasy of Russian political morality. In the first place, he points at the political geographic position of Russia as 'squeezed' between the West, with its European Christian civilization, and the East, with its prevalent tradition of power and collectivist values. Indeed, Russian culture has been forged by the distinct influences coming from Byzantium and Western Europe; it absorbed both the ideas of Christian humanism and Eastern authoritarianism.

<sup>79</sup> В. Дахин, «Исторические детерминанты политического развития современной России» // Т. Заславская (ред.), *Куда пришла Россия?.. Итоги социальной трансформации* (2003).

remained unchanged. Dakhin explains that the ruling elite, with a view to retaining its political monopoly, systematically precluded the formation of any political rivals and did so by means of social engineering. Eventually, social engineering consolidated the practice when spontaneously emerging social groups and movements were submitted to the controlling organ and subsequently deprived of their autonomy and responsibility (Dakhin 2003: 37). Thereby, the state managed to behold its tutelage over society.

Obviously, the forced centralization of society around the political center and the directly coordinative role of political power contradict the very logic and structure of functionally differentiated society. As Seweryn Bialer noticed in the article 'The Question of Legitimacy,' in a politics-centered society "the symbolic sphere of all order is centrally managed and controlled from the political sphere, and no rival claims to legitimate symbolic communications are recognized" (Bialer 1983: 429). Consequently, the dominant self-positioning of the state and the homogenization of the political sphere are no longer sustainable under the conditions of liberal democracy because then society becomes the subject of politics. Indeed, as Jurij Solonin convincingly demonstrates in his contribution 'Civil Society in the Context of Russian Problems,'<sup>80</sup> the democratic state should assume the 'secondary status' in relation to society because the state is just one of the functions generated by society itself and thus has a serving role (Solonin 2002: 17). In society that can organize itself, channel and direct its diverse social needs into adequate functional subsystems, the state becomes one of the subsystems of society. Hence, it is impossible to build civil society: civil society emerges in an organic manner. In this connection, Solonin points at the socialist project in Soviet Russia, aimed at building up an artificial society according to a certain theoretical model. Then, the organism of society was treated as a mere material for the designed experiment. However, "the coerced nature of the socialist experience has determined its fate," as the experiment has failed (Solonin 2002: 17-18). In contradistinction to the universal normativity typical of the socialist model of society, "the function of the theoretical model of civil society does not have a firmly normative character; it is essentially flexible, guiding, and allowing definition of varying value parameters" (Solonin 2002: 18). In this sense, society itself becomes an ultimate value and goal of societal organization.

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<sup>80</sup> Юрий Солонин, «Гражданское общество в контексте российских проблем» // Владимир Марахов (ред.), *Стратегии формирования гражданского общества в России* (2002).

Hence, it is not the very idea of the dialog between government institutions and organizations of civil society that is particularly worrying, but it is the intent of the state to construct civil society. Indeed, many contemporary Russian scholars and analysts regard state interference in the sphere of civil society as impeding the spontaneous and voluntary character of public life in a democratic state. For instance, the volume *Strategies of the Formation of Civil society in Russia*, the proceedings of the Second National Scientific-Public Forum ‘Civil Society in Russia as the Democratic Project,’<sup>81</sup> held in 2002, criticizes the negotiations between civil society and political-administrative structures. Amongst others, Krasin warns that the state should abandon the “ambitious idea of ‘building-up’ or ‘formation’ of Russian civil society from above” (Krasin 2002: 34, 35) because this ambitious idea would revive the principle of *derzhavnichestvo* (autocracy) and thus would put again the interest of the state above that of society.

Analyzing the principle of *derzhavnichestvo* from a historical perspective, the contemporary political analyst and historian Irina Glebova<sup>82</sup> compellingly argues that in Russia, communication between society and state has always reminded communication between ruler and ruled. Such kind of communication presumes unifying the supreme power of the state and the power of the people in the symbolic figure of the ‘tsar,’ whereby the tsar becomes “the embodiment of overcoming the contradiction between the world of people and state power” (Glebova 2006: 83). The key figure of the tsar, called during the Soviet period *vozhd’* (the leader) and nowadays the president, provided and continues to provide the direct organic link between the people and the state, which allows Glebova to classify Russian political culture as “power-centered” (Glebova 2006: 84). The scholar explains that the ubiquitous identification of the nation with the tsar is a “confidential” procedure. Unlike public consensus, it does not presume any conditions and thus is legitimized only within the ideological framework of “collective salvation,” whereby the nation is supposed to attain salvation through the state while the state functions as the instrument of the nation’s salvation (Glebova 2006: 85-86). The soteriologically oriented unification of the nation and the tsar makes the tsar responsible *for* the people, i.e. for their collective salvation, and not *in front of* the people. Hence, it is public

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<sup>81</sup> Владимир Марахов (ред.), *Стратегии формирования гражданского общества в России* // Материалы Второго российского научно-общественного форума «Гражданское общество в России как демократический проект», 21-23 февраля 2002 г (2002).

<sup>82</sup> Ирина Глебова, *Политическая культура России: образы прошлого и современность* (2006).

accountability that distinguishes autocracy from liberal constitutional democracy, where government is legitimized primarily by people's trust.

The monopolistic character of Russian political power attained an unprecedented scale during the Soviet period. The Soviet state aimed at a total unification of *homo Sovieticus* and the supreme power of the Party in the notion of the Soviet nation. While, "the monolith of the Party was corresponding to the monolith of the nation," Soviet society became subsequently deprived of any independent, individual forms of social relationships, of any possibilities of free self-expression. It was shackled by the terror of the Soviet system, which operated by means of punishments, threats, and privileges. The ultimate goal of the Soviet system consisted in the eradication of individuality and in the creation of a society without individual. In other words, it was ultimately aimed at the "dehumanization of society" (Glebova 2006: 182). The consequences of this dehumanizing politics of the Soviet state are still very perceptible in the behavior of *homo post-Sovieticus*: post-Soviet citizens tend to avoid any contact with the representatives of state authority.

Reflecting on the presented critical accounts, I became gradually aware that Russia's democratic project is impeded not only by the state's tendency toward monopolizing political power and the resultant state's underestimation of the significance of civil society, but also by the persistent political attitudes held by a significant number of post-communist Russian citizens. Examining these attitudes, scholars generally admit the pervasive influence of the communist experience. They argue that the communist experience is so deeply engraved in the political consciousness of post-communist citizens that it still determines citizens' wide-scale alienation from political activity. Diligenskij maintains that contemporary Russia is an example of a transforming country where "the sphere of political consciousness is strongly affected by society's homogenization at the restorative communist basis" (Koval' 2001: 105). The homogenization of political activity becomes even more visible in comparison to the differentiation in the sphere of social and economic activity.

It is vitally important to realize that the depicted homogenization of political activity in post-communist Russia has resulted not only from Soviet ideology of political passivism, but also from the learnt practice of alienation from political institutions and structures. This practice had been entrenching the mentality of Soviet citizens during the seventy years of the Soviet regime, when the Party claimed to know what is good and what is bad for all citizens alike. Citizens' wide-scale alienation from political activity was

not cured by the democratic reforms in the early 1990s. Instead, it was rather facilitated by these cardinal transformations, as they made many post-communist citizens even more confused, disillusioned, and suspicious. Otto Latsis asserts in the article "The Political System: Power and Society"<sup>83</sup> that societal transformations have had a traumatic effect on Russian society insofar as they touched upon almost all spheres of society and changed the whole complex of social processes. Presumably, this has to do with the fact that the transformations led to "the collapse of so-called socialism and transition toward a market economy with unclear social policy." They led to "the breakdown of the empire, whereby the center of the previous empire became just another ordinary big state." Moreover, the transformations involved the collapse of communist ideology and transition to no ideology at all, while they were accompanied by "fruitless efforts to fill up the vacuum by nationalism or by nostalgic imperial motifs." Latsis is convinced that these traumatic and radical transformations did not eradicate but rather enhanced "marginal political consciousness," which was typical of Soviet citizens and later was inherited by post-Soviet citizens (Latsis 2003: 21). Noteworthy, Latsis's conception of marginal political consciousness bears resemblance to Weber's classification of charismatic leadership. Both phenomena are characterized by the prevailing focus on the figure and image of the political leader instead of the political program. Thus, citizens with marginal political consciousness tend to follow their emotions and intuition, rather than to rely on rational debate and logic. They also tend to believe in complot theories and exaggerate the influence and competence of the state.

Contending that contemporary Russians inherited "marginal political consciousness" from the Soviet past, Latsis identifies the causes of this legacy with the specific mode of industrialization and urbanization practiced in the Soviet Union. During the Soviet period, industrialization and urbanization were, as a rule, artificially stimulated by the authorities. Relying on the demographic data, Latsis claims that the urban population of Soviet cities consisted of the migrant peasants, who usually held marginal political views. However, when the processes of industrialization and urbanization occur naturally, the marginal individual, a former peasant, constitutes the minority in the city. In Latsis's view, the influence of marginal political consciousness is still very perceptible in post-Soviet Russia. The reason is

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<sup>83</sup> Отто Лацис, «Политическая система: власть и общество» // Т. Заславская (ред.), *Куда пришла Россия?.. Итоги социальной трансформации* (2003).

obvious. Only since 1968, the majority of the whole population of the Soviet Union consisted of urban citizens by birth. However, this group of urban citizens still constitutes the minority of all politically active population in present-day Russia, whereas the majority is still constituted by those born in the village.

Deliberation about the prospects of democratic development necessitates us to examine whether the discussed two hindrances, namely the monopolization of political power and citizens' alienation from political activity, indeed pose serious problems for democratic consolidation and the development of civil society in Russia. Certain scholars hold an opinion that these hindrances are caused by the current demographic composition of Russian society and will be resolved with time. For instance, Latsis optimistically assesses the prospects of democratic development in future Russia. He claims that marginal political consciousness is not engraved in Russian political culture, but rather is a symptom of the transient stage in general social evolution (Latsis 2003: 22). As soon as the group of urban citizens prevails over the group of peasants, political consciousness will lose its marginal character and gradually assume a more rational and engaged character.

Pertaining to the problem of citizens' alienation from political activity, I hold a more precautionary view, presuming that the problem will not be simply resolved by the change in the demographic constitution of Russian society. More precisely, the predicted political reinvigoration among future generations will probably collide with the persistent tendency of political power toward homogenization and centralization. In this regard, I would agree with Dmitrij Furman, who provocatively discusses in his contribution "The Political System of Contemporary Russia"<sup>84</sup> the crisis scenario. The collision between two incongruous tendencies, i.e. liberalization of society on the one hand, and centralization of political power on the other, will destabilize the political system in general. Conceding that the political system has achieved in Putin's Russia a stage of completion and stability, the analyst claims that this currently stable system is liable to reveal over time certain elements of a deep crisis. The crisis will break out because the centralizing tendency of Russian political power contradicts the process of democratization and societal modernization. Post-Soviet Russian society undergoes the process of rapid functional differentiation, which is also

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<sup>84</sup> Дмитрий Фурман, «Политическая система современной России» // Т. Заславская (ред.), *Куда пришла Россия?.. Итоги социальной трансформации* (2003).

evident from the demographic data. In this process, the structural edifice of Russian society transforms from a traditional *Gemeinschaft*, which prevailed in Soviet cities due to the imposed Soviet urbanization, toward a modern *Gesellschaft*, which is characterized by a highly differentiated and pluralized structure. In this sense, Furman is correct when affirming that the generation of Soviet citizens who were brought up with the fear of political power and of one's individual choice is going away. The new generation is accustomed to such phenomena as private property, freedom of speech, and life without totalitarian control. That is why this new generation is naturally inclined toward democracy founded on the alternative elections of power (Furman 2003: 33). To the extent that Russian society becomes emancipated and open, it tends to reject the system of unchangeable and centralized political power, requiring instead the system of rotation of political power.

Besides the increasing incompatibility of emancipating society with centralizing political power, the crisis of the political system will be stimulated, as scientists predict, by the authoritarian element within the democratic system. The authoritarian element will put the stability of the democratic system at risk. Pertaining to the problem of stability, Tat'jana Vorozhejkina provides a compelling account in the article 'Is Contemporary Russia Stable?',<sup>85</sup> where she asserts that the stability of a political system is dependent on "the established mechanism of reproduction and continuous reconstruction of societal relationships and thus on the established balance of interests in a given society." This means that the stability of social-political development cannot be undermined by emerging alternatives. On the contrary, a stable system requires alternatives because it is the choice among alternatives that renders social-political development stable (Vorozhejkina 2003: 59). Hence, the crisis of Russian political system is preconditioned, as Furman presumes, by the system's intrinsic tendency toward elimination of alternatives (Furman 2003: 33).

This tendency is especially evident, as Vorozhejkina maintains, from the non-alternative character of democratic elections. To draw an explicit example, she depicts the appointment of El'tsyn's successor, which occurred on the eve of 2000, as the act that precluded any alternative. The non-alternative character of democratic elections, both at the presidential and parliamentary levels, testifies to the incapability of Russian political authorities to use elections as the mechanism of achieving public consensus

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<sup>85</sup> Татьяна Ворожейкина, «Стабильна ли нынешняя Россия?» // Т. Заславская (ред.), *Куда пришла Россия?.. Итоги социальной трансформации* (2003).

between concurrent ruling elites. It also testifies to the incapability of political authorities to create an effective relationship with the elites in any other form than vertical subordination (Vorozhejkina 2003: 59). Moreover, as the scholar fairly observes, the non-alternativeness of presidential elections is not only the result of clever manipulation of public opinion by coordinating mass media and using administrative resources. The non-alternativeness of so-called democratic elections is also rooted in the behavior and mentality of the citizens who are ready to support the actual power for the fear of the worst, or because of their passive hope for the better (Vorozhejkina 2003: 56).

The latent problem of the non-alternative character of democratic elections consists, according to Furman, in that “the illusionary character of democratic elections, when one candidate stands for an office unopposed, will gradually but inevitably become even more explicit, degenerating thus in a boring ritual.” Given that the legitimacy of the democratic system is founded on free elections, the eradication of the illusions concerning democratic elections cannot but lead to the de-legitimization of the system. When loosing legitimacy, political power simultaneously loses its vital bond with society, and the task to govern society becomes then almost insurmountable. Furman rightly asserts, “As soon as political authority has achieved formal control over society, it loses real control, because it ceases to receive timely the alarming signals,” which constitute essentially the task of civil society. Consequently, “with the loss of the direct feedback from society, the crisis threatens to strike the whole political system all of a sudden” (Furman 2003: 34).

Without the dialog between civil society and political authorities, the crisis of the democratic system is inevitable. For that reason, it is especially worrying that Russian political power still chooses to function in the framework of an “institutional vacuum,” which is filled with “nothing more than the president’s high rating.” The institutional vacuum is an evident symptom of the process of deinstitutionalization, whereby independent organs of executive power are consistently liquidated, and political institutions and mass media lose their autonomy (Vorozhejkina 2003: 60). In the conditions of institutional vacuum, the direct link existent between the leader and the public, endorsed solely by the high rating of the president’s person and the low rating of public trust in the presidential administration, testifies to the deficient institutional structure and unsustainable legitimacy of the political regime.

However, what is even more disappointing is that the condition of institutional vacuum precludes political authorities to discern and use society's innovative potential. The destructive consequences of such "incapability of internal renovation," coupled with the absence or the suppression of any alternative to the monopolistic system, undermined Russian political system during the twentieth century already twice: during the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 and during the break-through to the democratic polity in 1991 (Vorozhejkina 2003: 60-61). Each time, the social, economic, and cultural crisis thrust Russian society back in its progressive development and necessitated the reproduction of the same authoritarian model of political power as the only option to help society out of crisis.

At the present moment, politicians can better attend to the instigated differentiation of Russian society and employ society's innovative potential with a view to legitimizing the political system. Such a move is essential because "a social system can be considered stable if it is capable of reproduction, self-development, resistance to destructive external influences, continuity, and renovation of human resources in the sphere of government institutions" (Levada 2003: 168). Political authority should abandon "the flattened vision of societal processes" (Kuleshov and Medushevskij 2005: 717) and re-assess the actual impact of the transition on social, cultural, and moral life of post-Soviet citizens. In this sense, I agree with Medushevskij that the ultimate meaning of democratic transformation consists in "the gradual overcoming of the dualism between the nominal and real law, the substitution of an ideological monopoly by an ideological pluralism, and the substitution of the dogma of class theory by the principles of civil society" (Medushevskij 2003: 39). Indeed, the democratization process entails transformation of moral norms and values upheld by society. In this sense, it requires a significant degree of autonomous and critical judgment, civic initiative, respect for the rule of law, and a critical and qualified perception of the socio-political reality. Only when these conditions are met, i.e. when these values and norms are accepted and endorsed by the greater part of population, one could justifiably confirm the implementation into public life of such cardinal principles of civil society as publicity (*glasnost*), individual rights, multi-party system, strength and efficacy of public judgment.

On this account, I associate the hope for the future progress of Russia's democratic project with the increasing differentiation of society, which warrants the genuine heterogeneousness of public, cultural, economic, and political life. I concur with Kuleshov and Medushevskij on the importance

of the economic factor for the diversification of the political and public landscape. The diversity of the political landscape is directly connected with the socio-economic stratification and strengthening of the middle class because the diversity of political parties reflects the diversity of socio-economic interests and needs of the citizens. The insufficient social representation of the middle class explains the underdevelopment of the multi-party system and the general perplexity of existing political parties in contemporary Russia. Insofar as there is vagueness about what certain social classes want, and how they intend to achieve their goals (as, for instance, through establishing and participating in civil society organizations), political parties are forced to speak on behalf of a certain, often mythical, social class (Kuleshov and Medushevskij 2005: 718). On this view, we have arrived at the following point of discussion: the evaluation of contemporary Russian civil society in the context of economic reforms.

## 5.2 Civil Society in the Context of Economic Reforms

The conception of civil society typical of the late-*perestrojka* period has changed drastically as compared to the conception established during the Putin era.<sup>86</sup> In the late-*perestrojka* period and the early 1990s, the concept of civil society was used in academic debates and in the rhetoric of liberal democrats as a counterbalance to the dominating state-bureaucratic apparatus. Alternatively, the current discussion on civil society tends to consider civil society in the framework of its relations with the spheres of politics and business. According to the strategic conception of democratization project, the three involved spheres are supposed to function mutually supportive.<sup>87</sup>

The noticed shift in the perception of how civil society functions (or should function) in its relations with the state and the corporate sector induced me to reconsider the structural and socio-economic background of Russia's transition to a market economy during the 1990s and trace the emergence of the middle class, which constitutes the important social basis of civil society (§ 5.2.1). Furthermore, I shall address the impact that the economic transformations have had on the political attitudes of Russian

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<sup>86</sup> For the discussion of the 'adventures' of the concept of civil society in late Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, see an interesting survey by Evert van der Zweerde, which he characteristically calls "a major sideshow" (Van der Zweerde 1997).

<sup>87</sup> The tripartite model of relations was discussed in § 2.3.2.

citizens (§ 5.2.2). Finally, the state's strategy with regard to the sectors of business and civil society will be evaluated (§ 5.2.3).

### 5.2.1 Socio-Economic Consequences of Russia's Transition to a Market Economy

Russia's transition to democracy and a market economy implied drastic changes both for the agents and for the structures of post-communist economic space. What constituted the core of these changes and which effect did they have on the development of civil society?

Radical transformations in the economic sphere, provoked by the "shock-therapy" of 1992, was experienced by many Russians as extremely painful. The reform of market liberalization was implemented too rapidly, as it had not been preceded by the preparation of a proper social policy or by the necessary transformation of social-economic and legal structures. In result, people started to lose any feeling of being in control.

This turbulent experience had deep structural causes. After the collapse of the Soviet system, post-communist Russia was immediately confronted with the legacy of a state-controlled economy. One of the main deficiencies relates, according to Fish, to "a highly peculiar and weakly differentiated social structure." The scholar explicates, "State control over property and employment, the absence of markets, and the pervasiveness of policies that compressed wage differentials and divorced material compensation from occupational station and economic performance have left Russia with a social structure," characterized by the visible elimination of divisions between classes and private economic interests (Fish 1994: 33). In the article 'On the Meaning and the Provisional Results of the Russian Transformation,'<sup>88</sup> Tat'jana Zaslavskaja corroborates Fish's presumption. She maintains that although the democratic revolution was aimed primarily against the authoritarian power of the party nomenclature, the social forces involved in the protest appeared immature to assume power and implement democratic reforms on behalf of Russian citizens. That is why the revolutionary exaltation dropped rapidly, whereas real power remained in the hands of the slightly renewed ruling elite, which was primarily concerned with their private interests (Zaslavskaja 2003: 390). A fair question is how this situation emerged.

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<sup>88</sup> Татьяна Заславская, «О смысле и предварительных итогах российской трансформации» // Татьяна Заславская (ред.), *Куда пришла Россия?.. Итоги социальной трансформации* (2003).

Although the reforms touched upon the fundamental structures of transforming Russian society, these reforms did not suffice to unlock a genuine revolution. For instance, Zaslavskaja points at the generally absent conception of the events of 1991-93 in terms of revolution. In accordance with the established tradition of a hierarchical relationship between political power and society (elucidated also in § 4.2.2), the main initiator of the reforms was state power, whereas actual subjects of social revolutions were supposed to be broad social forces in the form of diverse self-organizing social movements. On this view, Zaslavskaja is right when observing that Russia underwent in the 1990s not a revolution, but “a long sequence of poorly prepared, contradictory, one can say, convulsive reforms and explicit political measures, which caused a range of political and socio-economic crises.” That is why the scholar classifies this process as a “crisis transformation” (*krizisnaja transformacija*) (Zaslavskaja 2003: 391-92).

To systematize the socio-economic consequences of Russia’s “crisis transformation” toward a market economy, Zaslavskaja distinguishes three stages in the transformation process: the period of radical liberal democratic reforms and the resultant wide-scale privatization (1991-93), the period of spontaneous social reorganization as a reaction to the reforms (1994-98), and finally, the present period of legal regulation and economic stabilization.

The period between 1991 and 1993 was characterized by the implementation of *radical* political and economic reforms, generally defined by their initiators as liberal democratic reforms. While the reforms in the political sphere were aimed at creating legal and political preconditions for transforming the communist system toward a *Rechtsstaat*, the socio-economic reforms were aimed at creating the preconditions for transforming a state-controlled economy towards a free market economy. The main goal of the economic reforms was to establish the institute of private property. However, the unleashed privatization of the former Soviet state’s property did not lead to the expected economic liberalization and prosperity of *all* post-communist citizens. As Vladimir Mau explains, the intended course of the economic reforms was undermined by general social instability because social chaos precluded any proper functioning of the institutes of the market economy (Mau 2003: 68).<sup>89</sup> This general social instability inhibited the subsequent reforms of taxation policy, budgetary system, land codex, labor legislation, pension, natural monopolies, customs

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<sup>89</sup> Владимир Мау, «Экономические реформы в России: итог и перспективы» // Т. Заславская (ред.), *Куда пришла Россия?.. Итоги социальной трансформации* (2003).

service legislation, banking industry, and financial markets. Although these reforms were aimed at establishing “a favorable climate for investment and entrepreneurship” and contributing to the stable economic growth” (Mau 2003: 68), the actual result of Russia’s transition to a market economy diverged from this normative ideal.

As far as state bureaucracy is concerned, liberalization of the economy stimulated the formation of a new financial elite. While the reform was initially meant to distribute state property by means of voucher privatization among the whole population of post-Soviet Russia, the majority of ordinary citizens did not profit, however, from this privatization. Instead, a new narrow class of financial-bureaucratic oligarchy emerged. Zaslavskaja justly remarks that the institutional reforms of the early 1990s served primarily the interests of the ruling elite, of the state bureaucracy, and of private capital (Zaslavskaja 2003: 392). Vladimir Sogrin corroborates in his article ‘Revolution and Thermidor. On the Historical Typology of the Socio-Political Process in Russia in the 1990s’<sup>90</sup> that the consequences of the economic liberalization were immediately used by the emerging economic elite, who, in turn, generously returned the favor to the representatives of the state bureaucratic apparatus (Sogrin 1998:13). Once the prerequisite institutions had been established, the elite focused on their private interests, abandoning the initiated reforms unfinished and the nation disoriented and discouraged. In the meanwhile, a terrifying preponderance of ordinary people found themselves outside the free market economy and were viewed by the political and economic elite as a burden (Zaslavskaja 2003: 394).

Reassessing the disappointing result of the radical liberal reforms, Sogrin wonders whether the fair redistribution of state property was possible in principle. The scholar provides a positive answer. The fair redistribution of state property was possible under the conditions of “rational and moral bureaucracy, a strong and unbiased state, which is able to legally balance and serve the interests of all citizens, and a developed civil society, which is apt to control state-bureaucratic activity and citizens’ equal access to entrepreneurial opportunities” (Sogrin 1998: 13). However, because these conditions had not been fulfilled before the commencing of the reform, Russian society was absorbed in the 1990s by the savage market mentality.

It did not last long before the socio-economic consequences of the radical liberal reforms became obvious. During the socialist era, the official

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<sup>90</sup> Владимир Согрин, «Революция и термидор. К исторической типологии общественно-политического процесса в России 90-х годов» // *Вопросы философии* (№ 1, 1998).

economy was frozen by state policy of fair distribution, but the unofficial market thrived. This resulted in the increasing breach between the official state economy and the citizens. With the transition to a market economy, the pursuit of private economic interest by utilizing private interpersonal networks was suddenly legalized. However, given the weakly differentiated social structure of communist society, the unprepared liberalization of the market unleashed the mechanisms of underground economic exchange and hence sharpened the muffled conflict between quickly differentiating social classes.

During the next period (1994-98), broad social strata took initiative in their hands and began adjusting to the newly established institutional setup. Citizens started to engage in diverse forms of legal and semi-legal activity to improve their living standards. Accordingly, new social practices and institutional forms started to emerge spontaneously, without administrative control. Zaslavskaja comments, "Eventually, the actual transformations of social structures were not so much the upshot of the purposeful and controlled reorganization from *above*, but rather the upshot of spontaneous transforming activity from *below*, because these transformations were guided by conflicting interests of participating groups" (Zaslavskaja 2030: 393). The process of planned economic reforms gave place to "a spontaneous transformation of society, which was guided by the struggle between interests of totally different groups" (Zaslavskaja 2003: 392). Hence, in the eyes of many ordinary Russians, the major economic, cultural, and social transformations had the spontaneous and disorganized character and signified rather degradation than progress.

Having reached the bottom point during the default of August 1998, Russian economy started to recover, stimulating other sectors of the society to recover as well. By 1999, the process of redistribution of state property and natural resources seemed to be completed. Subsequently, the elite considered possible and appropriate to resume liberal reforms and renovate the extant legislation with a view to securing the institute of private property. Zaslavskaja holds the opinion that contemporary Russia is undergoing the period of the resumed reforms, which appears similar to the early 1990s, but which is, nonetheless, qualitatively different from it. Presently, the institutional structure obtains support from broad social strata and employs already established social mechanisms, not excluding "the corrupted bureaucracy and criminality" (Zaslavskaja 2003: 393).

From the above analysis, it has become clear that Russia's transition to a market economy instigated radical changes in the field of national social

policy. Indeed, the conditions for the free market economy have been created, albeit at a very high social price: High inflation caused immense disproportions at the socio-economic level of life. A. Klepach<sup>91</sup> correctly noticed that the specificity of Russian dramatic experience of societal transformation consists in “the barbarian and cruel character of transformation, which has turned destructive for the majority of the population, as well as for the material and scientific-technical potential accumulated during the Soviet period” (Klepach 2003: 76). The elite took important decisions without a due preparation and initiated a radical type of reforms without public consensus. In result, these reforms were perceived by the majority of post-communist citizens as aggressive. Instead of benefiting from the free market economy, post-Soviet Russian society became internally polarized between the ruling elite and the rest of the population. More than a half of the national wealth is accumulated in the hands of the elite (5-7 percent of the population), whereas the lowest social ranks, representing one-third of the whole Russian population, can be classified as poor, because they are totally deprived of private property and, even more grievously, of normally paid labor (Zaslavskaja 2003: 394). Moreover, this class of the poor comprises not only the so-called ‘socially weak’ individuals, like invalids and pensioners, but also qualified and working people, whose salary is hilariously low compared with the standards of an affluent society. As a result of the indicated schism, Klepach fairly observes, the intended transformation of the whole economic system never occurred, and the breakthrough toward consumer society became a reality only for a small group of new economic elite (9-15 percent),<sup>92</sup> which is essentially the group comparable with the Western middle class (Klepach 2003: 76-77).

Obviously, the socio-economic polarization in post-Soviet Russia significantly inhibited the formation of the middle class. Debating on this issue, certain scholars make a pessimistic prognosis, as they are convinced that the Russian middle class has not yet emerged, and the process of its formation will take, even under favorable conditions, the greater part of the present century (Solonin 2002: 14). Others are rather inclined to assert the

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<sup>91</sup> А. Клепач, «О трансформации и модернизации экономических институтов России» // Т. Заславская (ред.), *Куда пришла Россия?.. Итоги социальной трансформации* (2003).

<sup>92</sup> In contrast to Zaslavskaja, Klepach argues that the new economic elite includes, beside the thin layer of property magnates, a relatively small group of successful entrepreneurs, young professionals and high-ranking bureaucrats, who are apt to participate in consumer society according to the Western standards.

existence of the middle class in Russia, with an important reservation, however, that the Russian middle class can be properly conceived only within the corresponding societal structure that has been established in post-Soviet Russia. In this regard, Zaslavskaja explicates that the Russian 'middle class' designates a social stratum that is quite different from the middle class in Western societies. The sociological description of the Russian middle class is closely associated with the problem of poverty and of the unjust redistribution of economic and political resources after the collapse of the USSR (Zaslavskaja 2004: 288-305). Notwithstanding which particular point of view one would hold, I share Tat'jana Maleva's general presumption, which she formulated in the contribution 'Social Policy and Social Strata in Contemporary Russia'.<sup>93</sup> The very fact of the formation of the middle class can be considered as a crucial evidence and even as a criterion of the effectiveness of the reforms, which indicates the stability of the whole system of political, economic, and social institutions in contemporary Russian society (Maleva 2003: 103).

Taking into consideration the importance of the economic factor in the formation of the middle class, Maleva developed a complicated method to evaluate which classes of the Russian population can be considered as the middle class. The scholar specified three chief criteria for a household to be reckoned as belonging to the middle class: first, the material resources, including the level of income, consumption, savings, property; second, the non-material resources, including the level of educational, professional qualification and social status; and third, the social self-identification of the individual, including evaluation of one's social success and capacity to adapt to changing social conditions (Maleva 2003: 105). Maleva's study has demonstrated that only 7 percent of the whole Russian population can be said to have all the mentioned criteria and therefore can be reckoned as the most stable middle class, or "the nuclear of the middle classes." Furthermore, 12 percent of Russian households meet two other criteria; nonetheless, they can be reckoned as the representatives of the Russian middle class. In total, the average middle class constitutes only 19 percent of all Russian households (Maleva 2003: 106). The question is whether these 19 percent provide a sufficient social basis for civil society to flourish.

I presume, the posed question needs to be considered in relation to the moral evaluation of the institutional transformations because the problem

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<sup>93</sup> Татьяна Малёва, «Социальная политика и социальные страты в современной России» // Т. Заславская (ред.), *Куда пришла Россия?.. Итоги социальной трансформации* (2003)

of slow development of the middle class cannot and should not be restricted to the success or failure of government policies. The problem of the emergent middle class and of the emergent civil society is intimately connected not only with the constitutional and economic crisis, which accompanied Russia's transition to democracy, but also with the general moral crisis, which affected every member of post-communist society. I suppose that the moral crisis has manifested itself most obviously at the level of political orientations held by contemporary Russian citizens. What do Russians think about the results of the liberal democratic reforms? Are they still content with the liberalization of the market? Do they endorse democracy with the same vigor as they did during the *perestrojka*, or have they become disappointed with and indifferent to the perpetual changes in the political, economic, and social sphere? Reflection on these questions provides new trajectories for assessing the impact of the economic reforms on the democratic project in post-Soviet Russia.

### 5.2.2 'The Shift in Russians' View on Democracy

How has the depicted 'crisis' transformation influenced the political orientations of Russian citizens? This is a legitimate question and needs to be considered seriously.

El'tsyn's successor cleverly employed the major economic crisis associated with the radical liberal reforms of the early 1990s. Rejecting the assaults of Western critics that his administration was becoming increasingly authoritarian, Putin defended his politics by referring to the negative experience of the liberal reforms. In contrast to the liberal course of El'tsyn's politics, the two subsequent terms of Putin's presidency demonstrate, as analysts generally agree, an opposite, rather paternalistic, attitude on the part of the government toward the corporate sector. Thus, Diana Schmidt perceives Putin's standpoint as a reaction to the "shifting balance of forces and to the dangerous growth of the influence of economic clans in Russian regions" (Schmidt 2006: 13). She admits that Putin's policy contradicts the normative conception of democracy as based on pluralism, election, decentralization of government administration, and the free market economy. Nonetheless, Putin justifies his restricting measures with regard to business by arguing that it is the balance between competing economic actors, and not economic growth itself, that stabilizes new democracies. On this view, he claims that the monopolization of power by the actors on the

market is extremely dangerous, and intervention by the state therefore necessary.

Hence, the view that the sphere of business needs governmental control gained popularity among the Russian public during the Putin era. Such view proceeds on the assumption that Russians adjust the conception of democracy to their experience of the socio-economic consequences of the transition to democracy. Timothy Colton and Michael McFaul compellingly argue in their article 'Are Russians Undemocratic?' that "in all democracies, especially new ones, dissatisfaction with the practice of democracy has the potential to erode the normative preference for democracy" (Colton and McFaul 2001: 7). It would be correct to correlate Russians' general endorsement of democracy in abstract and vaguely normative terms with their immense disappointment with the actual results that democracy was supposed to bring to them. The general passive support of democracy by the majority of Russian citizens does not relieve their permanent anxiety caused by the far-reaching socio-economic consequences that accompany the actual process of transition to a market economy and democracy. I suspect that the contrast between the normative idea of democracy, eagerly hailed by many Russians at the beginning of the democratization process, and the socio-economic polarization, which brought many Russians below poverty level, is the main reason why the population largely supports state intervention in the sectors of business and civil society.

Having explained the reasons of state intervention into the sphere of business, we need now to consider another, perhaps, even more radical, upshot of the indicated discrepancy between the practice and the normative understanding of democracy – the declining public trust in the state. An exhaustive investigation of the problem of declining trust has been suggested by Rudra Sil and Cheng Chen in their contribution 'State Legitimacy and the (In)significance of Democracy in Post-Communist Russia.' The scholars insightfully address the question as "why continuing mass support for 'democracy' in the abstract coexists with declining trust in a Russian state that is more democratic than any in the past?" (Sil and Chen 2004: 356).

Sil and Chen argue that Western liberal democracy is not explicitly associated with any specific socio-economic order or policy, whereas a distinctively Russian understanding of democracy is "fundamentally intertwined with assumptions about the kinds of social and economic outcomes a democracy ought to produce. In particular, public order, material security and distributive justice figure prominently among the

expectations most Russians had of the new democratic state proclaimed after the break-up of the USSR.” Now that these expectations proved unrealized, permanent anxiety affects the greater part of contemporary Russian society. As the results of public surveys indicate, the most important source of anxiety pertains to the complex of interconnected socio-economic maladies such as increasing inflation, unemployment, a growing gap between rich and poor; these maladies are even more aggravated by corruption in the public sectors of education and medical care and by a high rate of crime. Given the above, Sin and Chen conclude that economic insecurity and growing crime have resulted in a strong preference “for greater public order and for a more active, paternalistic state that can ‘look after us,’ a preference that appears to be shared by the Russian middle class.” Accordingly, most Russian citizens are ready “to trade off specific features of democracy in exchange for any state that can deliver greater order and economic security” (Sil and Chen 2004: 356).

Disappointment with the economic reforms provides “the plentiful evidence that most Russians view the post-Soviet Russian state as simply unwilling or unable to deliver the collective goods most valued by ordinary citizens in the midst of an extended and uncertain process of transformation.” On this view, Sil and Chen indicate “the inadequacy of the state, and not the insufficient consolidation of democracy” as “the primary reason for the low level of state legitimacy in Russia.” I consider this conclusion not to be entirely correct, as I believe that the inadequacy of the government in resolving socio-economic difficulties is caused exactly by the insufficient democratic consolidation and the insufficient vitality of civil society in post-communist Russia. This is also evident from the comparison the scholars draw between manifestations of public protest against policies in consolidated liberal democracies and in Russian democracy, “In long consolidated liberal democracies a government’s poor performance on substantive policies and outcomes of interest to citizens may lead to low popularity ratings for leaders, but generally does not lead to declining trust in the institutions, laws, and practices constituting the democratic state. In Russia precisely the opposite appears to be true: The government’s poor performance on substantive policies and outcomes is associated with low levels of trust in institutions, but the President’s popularity has grown rapidly and remains high” (Sil and Chen 2004: 358). Insofar as liberal democracies are legitimized by citizens’ trust in democratic procedures and institutions, the democratic consolidation is the precondition for citizens’ judgment about the inadequacy or, on the opposite, the rightfulness of

democratically adopted policies. This certainly applies to the case of Russia as well.

Investigating the putative sources of declining legitimacy in post-communist Russian context, Sil and Chen indicate the general trend of dissatisfaction resultant from “the substantive expectations” of the vast majority of Russians in relation to the state’s success in addressing social-economic anxieties. After the turbulent years of the democratic transition, ordinary citizens place a high value on such public goods as “social order, economic stability, guaranteed welfare, and a greater measure of distributive justice.” Therefore, the degree at which the state administration has succeeded to attain these public good determines a lot in the legitimacy of the post-communist regime. Indeed, as Sil and Chen astutely observe, “initial support for democratization rested on assumptions that ‘democracy’ was inherently connected to these very outcomes, and evidence to the contrary is a key reason for the growing nostalgia for the Soviet regime” (Sil and Chen 2004: 349).

A possible clue to the contradictory situation in post-Soviet Russia can be associated with the apparent misbalance caused by the overemphasized expectations of Russian citizens concerning the effect of actual policies on the one hand, and the inadequacy of the means that the government employs to carry out their policies on the other. This suggestion presumes an underlying question whether Russian citizens managed to develop, over the last two decades, a proper understanding of the theory and practice of democracy. Sil and Chen assume that the significance of democratic orientations in accounting for declining trust in most democratic institutions is “low compared with the significance Russian citizens attach to the state’s effectiveness in providing public order, socio-economic stability, reduced elite corruption and social stratification and a coherent national identity that provides a sense of distinctiveness and continuity with the past.” Accordingly, “the hope for resorted state legitimacy, whether under Putin or his successors, depends less on democracy and more on measures taken by the state” (Sil and Chen 2004: 363). On that account, contemporary Russian society is characterized by an essential dualism: It is divided between ample public support of a normative idea of democracy and, at the same time, ample public distrust of democratic institutions and procedures.

### 5.2.3 The State's Directive in Regulating Civil Society and Business

Taking into account the tripartite model of the democratic system, I suggest that the relationship between the sectors of business and civil society poses new problems, as well as new opportunities for the democratic project in contemporary Russia. Characteristically, the nexus connecting civil society and business has not gained as much attention as the nexus connecting civil society and the state. Currently, certain scholars start to focus on the relationship between business and civil society, discovering similar tendencies in the state's attitude to the sphere of business as to civil society. Obviously, the state tends to take a lead in regulating its relations with both civil society and business. The question at stake is whether this tendency is inhibitive or facilitative for the democratization process in present-day Russia.

Within the scope of available studies, I can distinguish two different evaluations of the state's involvement with the structures of business and civil society. One group of analysts positively evaluates the regulating measures of the Putin administration with regard to the corporate sector, whereas another group remains rather critical of these measures. Not accidentally, the view that an intensive cooperation between the three sectors is rewarding for the democratic regime is largely endorsed by the members of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation. In contradistinction to the 'balanced' model of cooperation between state institutions, business corporations, and organizations of civil society, critical scholars hold the opinion that such a cooperation tends to restrict the development of Russian business and civil society. These two antagonistic positions ensue from two different evaluations of Russia's transition to a market economy and the effect that the liberal reforms have had on Russian society. In what follows, I shall analyze these contradictory evaluations and try to sketch future trajectories in the relations between the state, business, and civil society.

As noticed above, the view that the structures of the state, business, and civil society should cooperate is more popular with the experts affiliated with the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation. In order to illustrate this point, I shall refer to E. Petrenko and G. Gradosel'skaja's contribution 'Russian Civil Society Today: The Revision According to the Results of

Wide-Scale Surveys of the Forum of Public Opinion 2007-2008.<sup>94</sup> This contribution is a typical example of the 'pro-cooperation' standpoint. It was published in the volume *Empirical Studies of Civil Society*, which contains the proceedings of the symposium organized by the Public Chamber. The scholars endorse the argument in favor of a closer cooperation between the mentioned sectors, as they assume that such a cooperation would resolve one of the urgent problems underlying Russian society today – the problem of diminishing public trust and civic engagement.

Summarizing the results of public surveys Petrenko and Gradosel'skaja observe an important change in the way in which Russians perceive the presence of civil society in their private lives and in the life of the country. The change consists in a significant decrease of people's trust in both social organizations and state institutions (67 percent of respondents). This observation is more worrying because the scholars are convinced that trust constitutes "the basis of all grass-root informal economic and social relations in society." Trust emerges from mutual support and friendship at the individual level, develops further as confidence in social institutions, and attains its highest form as trust in the state (Petrenko and Gradosel'skaja 2008: 105-6).

Obviously, the idea of a closer cooperation between the spheres of state institutions, business, and civil society gains more support from those analysts who interpret this cooperation as facilitating trust and breaking with the communist legacy of distrust. While trust is the essential precondition for people's eagerness to engage in the network of civil society organizations, the communist legacy of mass distrust, revolt, and fear of any kind of public or state organizations remains one of the most important obstacles to genuine civic engagement. Insofar as trust is generated primarily in the immediate environment of the individual and thus is engraved in the individual's experience of the private sphere (in the form of family and friendship), the experience of the public sphere, such as engagement in different kinds of associations, clubs, political parties, and interest groups, should be as much as possible approximated to the individual's trust-based relations typical for the private sphere. For that reason, the prospect of a closer cooperation between state and civil society organizations would

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<sup>94</sup> Е. Петренко и Г. Градосельская, «Российское гражданское общество сегодня: реконструкция по результатам крупномасштабных опросов ФОМ 2007-2008 гг.» // А. Лопухин (сост.), *Эмпирические исследования гражданского общества* (2008).

facilitate filling up the distance between the citizens' trusted private sphere and the new unfamiliar public sphere.

Compared with the depicted normative model of trust enhancement, the results of Petrenko and Gradosel'skaja's survey are dramatic: 20,2 percent of respondents hoped to receive help from public organizations, but only 2,7 percent actually got it; 37,8 percent relied on the support of government services and government institutions, but there was not a single respondent whose hope was justified. Remarkably enough, although public trust in religious organizations is relatively low (19,2 percent), the actual support provided by religious organizations is confirmed by 3,9 percent of respondents, which is significantly higher in comparison with public organizations (Petrenko and Gradosel'skaja 2008: 106). On that account, religious organizations are able to create new resources of generating trust. But what about the role of business in facilitating public trust?

Indeed, there are few indications that the negative image that is traditionally ascribed to business and to the market economy undergoes a significant transformation in Russia of the twenty-first century. The previously popular association of (private) business and economic success with the twilight economy, corruption, and even criminality becomes increasingly obsolete. Instead, a new phenomenon of the stable, prosperous middle class, consisting of young professionals, entrepreneurs, and intellectuals is gradually emerging. Within the new middle class, a special place belongs to a group of successful businessmen who are actively involved in public life. These publicly conscious representatives of the Russian economic elite embody, according to Petrenko and Gradosel'skaja, the "ideals of public behavior that positively influence the development of civil society" (Petrenko and Gradosel'skaja 2008: 107). Publicly engaged and conscious businessmen become increasingly aware of the efficacy of new democratic institutions, thus encouraging the growth of social capital and social trust. Nevertheless, it is also true that the group of these new businessmen/public activists is insignificant, constituting less than 1 percent of the whole population of Russia.

Having said that, I do place my hopes on the positive influence of the publicly engaged businessmen because such a positive contribution of the entrepreneurial elite to the rise of the public sphere is not absolutely new in the history of Russia. The contemporary nascent trend of providing support to public initiatives strengthens my belief that the old pre-revolutionary tradition of patronage (*metzenatstvo*) can be restored indeed, even after seventy years of the state-owned economy and state-owned art. Moreover,

this contribution is essential for Russian civil society due to a relatively limited economic potential of the middle class. The Russian middle class is still struggling for security after the notorious attempts to reanimate the stagnant economy in the 1990s by the “shock-therapy,” whereas active public life requires a certain degree of financial independence, as well as sufficient freedom from job obligations and private affairs. In this sense, the contribution of successful businessmen is necessary and appropriate. Evidently, the arena of Russian civil society disposes over diverse recourses where public trust can be regenerated, among which a prominent position belongs to religious communities and business-charity organizations that frequently function jointly in the form of religious charity organizations.

Concerning the project of closer cooperation between the state, business, and civil society, I agree that trust should constitute the common value of all three sectors and that certain forms of cooperation indeed can lead to generating trust (like, public initiatives of successful businessmen, charity and educational organizations, etc.). In this sense, publicly engaged businessmen can be seen as contributing to relieving the sector of entrepreneurship from the stigma of corruption. However, facilitating trust by means of joint governmental, entrepreneurial, and public initiatives does not overweight the complex of structural problems that underlie the relationship between the state and the corporate sector in contemporary Russia.

As we can recall from the analysis of civil society provided by Cohen and Arato (extensively discussed in chapter two), the main precondition for a balanced cooperation between the spheres of the state, the economy, and civil society is the tripartite model. Such a model warrants a relative autonomy for each sphere but allows, at the same time, their intersections. The differentiation between the three sectors distinguishes the system of liberal democracy from the communist system, where the state embodies the total authority over economic and societal relations. Taking the tripartite model as a normative criterion, we can argue that the pertinent problem in post-Soviet Russia consists in the directive role that the government strives to retain with regard to business and civil society. In the first place, I am concerned with the following possible upshot. The state’s directive might inhibit those independent initiatives on the part of business organizations that are aimed at expending social responsibility of business and at contributing to the development of corporate citizenship. As noticed above, Russian business retains much potential for generating trust in public institutions of civil society. This potential should not be underestimated, but

rather skillfully employed by state authorities. In the second place, the state's directive in regulating both civil society and business touches upon the complex of structural problems.

In the article 'Civil Society as a Subject of Public Politics',<sup>95</sup> Sergei Peregudov analyzes the implications of the state's dominant position. Insofar as state authorities prefer to structure their relations with the organizations of civil society and business according to the model of vertical subordination, "the relationships between the state and these two subjects of politics proceed not in the form of triangular cooperation, but rather in the form of separate, detached from each other channels – 'the verticals'." With regard to business, the main channel is represented by the Government Council on Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship; with regard to civil society, the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation serves as the regulative organ (Peregudov 2006).

A legitimate question can be posed: Why is the democratic state still able to uphold the directive in its relations with business and civil society? I would agree with Peregudov that the underlying problem lurches in the distinctively Russian "relations of property, which have been forming and continue to form in the post-Soviet period" (Peregudov 2008). In his article 'Convergence in the Russian Way: "A Golden Middle" or a Halt Halfway?',<sup>96</sup> Peregudov compellingly argues that the redistribution of property in Russia has continuously involved the interaction between two distinct authorities, namely the state bureaucracy and economic structures. The vertical line of political power operates by command, whereas the horizontal line of economic power operates at the level of business deals. In the Russian system, these two lines structurally intersect. During the Soviet period, the bureaucratic-administrative apparatus merged with major economic structures. Subsequently, during the redistribution of state property in the 1990s, the intersection between the structures of business and bureaucracy facilitated the re-creation of the Soviet symbiosis between these two authorities. As a result, big business and the bureaucratic-administrative apparatus amalgamate not only as two mutually interested parties, but also as functionally equivalent elements of one whole,

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<sup>95</sup> Сергей Перегудов, «Гражданское общество как субъект публичной политики» // *Полис – Политические исследования* (№ 2, 2006). Internet publication, last visited on 28 July 2010.

<sup>96</sup> Сергей Перегудов, «Конвергенция по-русски: «золотая середина» или остановка на полпути?» // *Полис – Политические исследования* (№ 1, 2008). Internet publication, last visited on 28 July 2010.

constituting the 'ruling class' that controls all national affairs in the name of so-called society (Peregudov 2008).

The evidence of such structural intersection can be found in post-El'tsyn's Russia as well. The Putin administration aimed to weaken the horizontal power of Russian business and increase state ownership of major industries. This purpose was achieved by appointing influential administrative officials and politicians as CEO's of major industrial enterprises (Peregudov 2008). However, these new (partially) state-owned enterprises did not assume the status of commercial ones and thus remained constrained yet real participants of market relations. The fact that the leaders of these companies are bound with governmental structures not only enhances the political role of Russian business, but also precludes business from becoming a full member of political process. This explains why the relationship between big business and political power is so different in post-El'tsyn's Russia and in the West. As Peregudov astutely formulated it, Russian business is not free in choosing its party-political commitments. The established arrangement of political forces endowed business with the prerogatives of the market economy but allowed state authority to regain its monopoly on taking major political decisions. Peregudov remains pessimistic in his prognosis. As long as the relations between the state and business remain "state-corporative," partnership and trust will be substituted by hierarchy and exterior loyalty; this will preclude creating optimal conditions for entrepreneurial initiative and a healthy competitive economy.

A similar tendency is traceable in the relationship between the state and civil society. Namely, the state's directive aims at depriving civil society of its political autonomy (Peregudov 2008). Given that Russian civil society, as compared with business, disposes over a more modest arsenal of instruments of political influence, state power does not have to resort to force, as in the case of Mikhail Khodorkovskij, the chief of Yukos Oil Company. Moreover, state power was and is aware that civil society is an essential element of the democratic system, for it mediates urgent needs and moods of society to political authority. Without civil society, any democratic system loses its legitimacy and assumes the character of dictatorship. In order to avoid this scenario, the Russian state makes concessions in creating the space for relative autonomy of civil society organizations.

Despite the pervasive tradition of the powerful vertical in Russian political culture, the process of political democratization and economic liberalization is carrying on. One cannot speak about a return of Soviet

totalitarianism, simply because, as Peregudov justly notices, the totalitarian system is incompatible even with a minimal freedom presumed by the market economy. Consequently, a crucial factor in balancing the relations between political authority, business, and civil society is the institute of private property. Once private property has become fully legitimized, no illegitimate redistribution is any longer possible, even under the conditions of political upheaval or economic instability. For that reason, chief figures of Russian big business are extremely interested in the process of property legitimization and in securing their property from a new wave of (coerced) redistribution (Peregudov 2008). Ultimately, Russia's transition toward liberal democracy and a market economy has not only led to a qualitative change in the political-social system, but has also created the situation when political power is continuously controlled by either civil society organizations or business structures. Notwithstanding rigid control on the part of the state bureaucracy, contemporary Russian market is premised on the legality of property, on the mobility of people and capital, and on a relative openness of both society and the economy.

### **5.3 The Moral Crisis and the Problem of Trust**

In the above, I have examined the effect that major political, social, and economic reforms have had on the development of civil society in post-Soviet Russia. Now, I want to address moral problems that have accompanied Russia's transition to democracy and a market economy. I shall start with explicating the reasons why an ethical evaluation of the democratic project is necessary and which new aspects it will reveal (§ 5.3.1). Next, the function of trust in the system of liberal democratic society will be explicated (§ 5.3.2), and finally, on the basis of the attained theoretical insights, the problem of public distrust will be addressed (§ 5.3.3).

#### **5.3.1 Ethical Evaluation of the Democratic Project in Post-Soviet Russia**

My core presumption is that the institutional weakness of Russian civil society resides in the moral attitudes that the majority of Russian citizens retain with regard to the state, the economy, and civil society. The success of the democratic project is determined prevalingly by the civic maturity of citizens, namely by the degree to which citizens perceive themselves as autonomous, responsible, and engaged participants of a democratic society. On this view, an ethical evaluation becomes an indispensable part of the

broad-spectrum evaluation of the democratic project in post-Soviet Russia. Doubtlessly, the ethical evaluation entails also an empirical descriptive component, for it allows examining the existing network of civil society organizations, associations, clubs, social movements, which all together constitute the public arena of civil society and which frequently border with the sectors of business and government (in the form of such organizations as political parties and business-charity associations). At the same time, the theoretical component of the ethical evaluation allows examining the institutional makeup of civil society as a reflection of the core values and norms that underlie public and civil life.

Furthermore, the ethical evaluation of Russia's democratic project provides a deeper conception of the traumatic experience that is generally inherent in the citizens of post-communist societies. In this sense, William Outhwaite and Larry Ray correctly notice in the study *Social Theory and Postcommunism* that the concept of civil society attains its moral significance insofar as it strikes a delicate balance between "excessive state power and atomized individualism" (Outhwaite and Ray 2005: 147). The scholars clarify that the normative understanding of civil society is invoked whenever the rise of authoritarianism and totalitarianism on the one hand, or the rise of citizens' alienation from the allegedly democratic state and the free market on the other, threatens to destabilize the balance in the legally regulated relationships between civil society, the state, and the market.

Specifically, the ethical evaluation of civil society elucidates cultural and moral preconditions that are necessary for the establishment of fundamental democratic institutions, which regulate interactions of civil society with the sectors of business and state government. As the experience of the speeded democratic reforms in East-Central Europe has demonstrated, civil society cannot emerge out of a historical vacuum; on the contrary, it requires traditions and conceptions in order to be sufficiently entrenched in the culture of a society. That is why the claim that a certain moral maturity should precede societal transformations became a well-known refrain in the studies on the emergence of civil society in post-communist countries. With a disarming frankness of argumentation, this statement was also suggested by Charles Taylor in his broad definition of civil society as an heir to the Western tradition of liberalism (Taylor 1995: 204-24). What seems to be fundamentally wrong with the democratic revolution in Russia is that it occurred at high speed, whereby crucial socio-political and economic transformations were implemented in a top-down manner, being initiated by the state. However, as we have concluded from the analysis of the

emergence of civil society in the West, civil society develops in an organic bottom-up manner, as an upshot of uncoordinated and voluntary activity of citizens who are eager to communicate with each other on matters of public concern (chapter two).

Contemporary Russian scholars have already underscored the importance of an ethical perspective in the research on Russian civil society. Evgenij Rashkovskij provides a critical yet correct observation in his publication 'Civil Society: A Religious Assessment of the Problem.' He states that although societies of Eastern Europe did succeed to outgrow "ideologies of socialistic change and the atheistic pressure accompanying them," nonetheless, "they made the transition even without deep comprehension of the principles of personal dignity, of law-regulated society, or social support" and therefore proved unable to put these concepts in practice (Rashkovskij 2004: 114). Ruben Apresjan and Abdulasam Gusejnov also concede in their work *Civic Participation. Responsibility. Community. Power*<sup>97</sup> that "the question of civil society is ultimately the question of how individuals become citizens." Grounding their conception of civil society on the idea of citizenship, the scholars understand civil society to be "constituted by the conjunction and the legitimate concordance of different forms of autonomous activity of people, wherein they perceive themselves in their sovereignty, or, in other words, perceive themselves as citizens" (Apresjan and Gusejnov 1997: 13).

Ethical analysis of the institutional transformations induces us to focus on such relevant yet insufficiently studied aspects as the development of political ethics and social morality in post-communist Russian society. Kostjuk perceptively claims that the degree of the development of political ethics determines the degree of stability of the democratic system, as it provides the mechanism of social trust in democratic institutions. On this view, Kostjuk sees the main cause of the chronic failure of Russian reforms in the insufficient interest of the populace in institutional ethics. In the post-communist context, this prevalent lackadaisical attitude inhibits the formation of institutional democracy (Kostjuk 2000b: 32). The analyst emphasizes the moral character of the main disastrous social phenomena, which have become the symbols for Russia's thorny path to democracy and a market economy. Namely, these are the rise of mafia, interpenetration of semi-legal structures and officialdom, oligarchism, corruption, privatization

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<sup>97</sup> Рубен Апресян и Абдуласам Гусейнов (сост.), *Гражданское участие. Ответственность. Сообщество. Власть* (1997).

of privileged functions, 'new Russians,' financial pyramids, flight of capital, contract murders, moral decadence, ethnic and civil conflict, criminality, and narcomania (Kostjuk 2000b: 34). In this sense, I cannot but fully agree with Kostjuk that contemporary Russia undergoes "the moral crisis," which is predominantly caused by "the underdevelopment of the principles of social-ethical consciousness" (Kostjuk 2000b: 33).

Hence, I maintain that the success of the democratic consolidation cannot be assessed only by socio-economic, political, or legal aspects that altogether contribute to the institutional weakness of contemporary Russian civil society. An ethical perspective is indispensable for the research, as it allows analyzing moral attitudes typical of contemporary Russian citizens. However, prior to this step, we need to elucidate the role and the significance of trust in the framework of civil society theory.

### 5.3.2 Trust as the Foundational Principle of Democracy and Civil Society

Trust is, in my view, one of the crucial mechanisms that enable interpersonal and inter-institutional relations in liberal democratic society. In what follows, I want to investigate why trust is vitally important for the system of liberal democracy and which specific function trust performs in that system.

Trust touches upon the typically modern distinction between the public and the private. The distinction between these two domains frequently leads to contradictory decisions on the part of modern individuals and thus needs to be related to the original source of potential contradistinctions – namely to the perception whom and what we, modern individuals, trust or, alternatively, reckon as too risky and not to be trusted. Analysis of trust in relation to the theory of civil society and to the theory of structural differentiation offers a new opportunity to combine the ethical and sociological perspectives. From the ethical perspective, trust can be viewed as the foundational principle of communal life in liberal democratic society. In this sense, the concept of trust suggests a solution for resolving the ethical dilemma that arises from the contradiction between individual right to freedom and public plea for individual responsibility. Alternatively, from the sociological perspective, trust can be conceived as a structural precondition for the working of a complex system of differentiated society. These two different yet complimentary understandings of trust need to be researched more thoroughly.

Trust became the foundational principle of Western civil society with the rise of new social order in early modernity. In the process of structural differentiation, “sovereignty was transferred from the figure of the monarch to the state, which also underwent a process of differentiation into administrative, judicial, and representative functions. Further, the development of trade, commerce, and markets increased the complexity of economic organization” (Outhwaite and Ray 2005: 149). This “new commercial social order” came to be grounded not on “*any* kind of informal or private social relations, which exist in all societies,” but rather on “morally guided, rule-following relations that make possible anonymous social exchanges” (Outhwaite and Ray 2005: 148, 151). Thus, when individuals started to act as autonomous political and economic subjects, that is, to engage in anonymous, formal, and rational relations, they started to ground their interactions on the principle of trust: trust in each other and trust in new social institutions.

Pertaining to the focus of my research on civil society, we can make the following conclusion. Insofar as the normative idea of civil society presumes a complex differentiated societal structure, it requires all members of the society to attain a certain degree of civic maturity, which is expressed in their political engagement, rule-following behavior in the sphere of the economy, respect of the rule of law and of each other’s right to privacy. Civic maturity can be seen as the behavioral reflection of citizens’ trust in the institutions of society, as well as in the integrity of each individual person. Hence, it would be correct to maintain that the democratic system functions properly when it is endorsed by moral agreement of participating individuals to have confidence in social, political, and economic structures and in each other. This suggestion has been corroborated by Outhwaite and Ray, “Civil society is linked to trust in that it is dependent on the existence of norms of reciprocity and civic engagement” (Outhwaite and Ray 2005: 164). For his part, Seligman also argues that “a specific form of generalized trust – rooted in modern individualist norms – is necessary for the workings of civil society” (Seligman 1997: 6).

Such observations point at the inherent connectedness between trust and individuals’ primary rights to freedom, autonomy, and responsibility, which necessarily underlies the interactions of autonomous, contracting, market-oriented individuals. Commenting on this point, Seligman explicates that trust, which underlies our primordial human longing for mutual promise-keeping, “arises from the moral agency and autonomy, from the freedom and responsibility, of the participants to the interaction. Moreover, without

the prior existence of these conditions, rights really – to freedom, autonomy, and responsibility, the moral dimension of promise-keeping, and hence of trustworthiness – cannot be adequately explained” (Seligman 1997: 6). In fact, the ethical understanding of trust is invoked every time when we want to conceive of the foundational principle of civil society. Every time, it is invoked to strike a delicate balance between the individual’s fundamental right to freedom and the individual’s moral obligation to act trustworthy.

Besides the objective conditions of trust, such as the rule of law, right to political activity and individual privacy, we need to consider the function of trust in the system of modern differentiated society. The structural understanding of trust exceeds what Seligman called “an understanding of trust as a discreet form of human interaction and an ideal model of communal life.” It makes possible to explain in which way trust “among social actors is necessary for the continued operation of any social order” (Seligman 1997: 7). Insofar as a modern understanding of civil society is premised on the web of “complex, organic, and differentiated orders” (Outhwaite and Ray 2005: 148), structural analysis of trust would elucidate which mechanisms help to hold differentiated civil societies together and prevail a systemic crisis.

To deepen the structural understanding of trust, I resort to Niklas Luhmann’s study *Trust and Power*.<sup>98</sup> This choice is motivated by Seligman’s presumption that Luhmann’s analysis would let us better grasp the structural nature of trust as a phenomenon tied to the specific social forms of functional differentiation (Seligman 1997: 8). Luhmann’s approach to trust brings us back to the problem of structural complexity of modern society we have discussed earlier (in 3.3). In the framework of systems theory, trust performs the pivotal function of reducing complexity and, in this sense, proves indispensable for an increasingly organized social structure of modern societies (Luhmann 1980: 25).

According to Luhmann, insofar as modern social order has foundations in trust, society’s advancement depends on the degree of trust individuals have in their social environment. Trust takes various shapes depending on the degree of societal complexity of a given society. In archaic societies, trust “arises spontaneously,” thus, it is “personal and built up in a tactical-perceptive manner.” Conversely, in modern functionally differentiated societies, trust implies “trust in general system mechanisms” (Luhmann

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<sup>98</sup> The English translation of Luhmann’s work *Trust and Power* was first published in German as two separate volumes: *Vertrauen* in 1973 and *Macht* in 1975.

1980: 93). That is why Luhmann considers the system of modern differentiated society to be advanced to the extent that individuals trust social systems and institutions. In the context of functionally differentiated society, the pivotal function of system trust consists in reducing “social complexity by going beyond available information and generalizing expectations of behavior,” whereby trust “replaces missing information with an internally guaranteed security” (Luhmann 1980: 93).

Why is this understanding of trust vital for functionally differentiated society? It is important, as Luhmann explains, because the world, while “being dissipated into an uncontrollable complexity,” contains an infinite number of possibilities for each individual to act freely. Modern societies managed to structure themselves in such a complex and organized way that they are able to survive under the conditions of permanent contingency. The mechanism of complexity reduction by means of trust allows modern individuals to deal with contingent decisions and actions of other individuals. In Luhmann’s estimation, trust “reflects contingency,” for it allows individuals to rationally assess and structure their expectations with regard to contingent actions of others (Luhmann 1980: 24). Accordingly, system trust is also an essential precondition for the democratic system because “system trust builds upon the fact that others also trust and this common possession of trust becomes conscious.” Concisely, system trust “rests on trust in trust” (Luhmann 1980: 69).

Given this presumption, the consolidation of trust constitutes exactly “an advantageous solution for the primordial problem of social order, the existence of a free *alter ego*, though one which is subject to all kinds of conditions.” On that account, Luhmann’s systems theory provides an insightful answer to the underlying ethical dilemma of modern social order, denoted by Seligman as how to achieve the common good without suppressing individual autonomy and freedom. Specifically, Luhmann suggests that “instead of arming oneself against the unpredictability of the other person in the full complexity of all possibilities, one can seek to reduce the complexity by concentrating on the creation and maintenance of mutual trust, and engage in more meaningful action in respect of a problem now more narrowly defined” (Luhmann 1980: 64).

Having said so, Luhmann emphasizes that both reflexivity (i.e. trust in trust) and highly risky character of system trust often remains latent because “latency can make the creation of trust more simple and act as a safeguard against uncontrollable fears” (Luhmann 1980: 69-70). To illustrate his argument, Luhmann addresses the topical issue of trust in the financial

sector. He asks what would happen if everybody lost confidence in the system of the economy and cashed all their money. Or, what would happen if everyone suddenly lost confidence in the security on the streets and appeared armed in public places? On this view, we can agree with Luhmann that “the rational basis of system trust lies in the trust placed in the trust of other people” (Luhmann 1980: 70).

Having concluded that trust appears in Luhmann’s account as latently ubiquitous in complex differentiated society, we can better understand now such a pertinent problem for post-communist societies as widespread public distrust. If not based on trust, are these societies inherently undemocratic? Or is public distrust a consequence of the institutional dysfunction of the new democratic system? Within Luhmann’s systems theory, distrust can be conceived as an equivalent *negative* strategy of citizens’ adaptation to the democratic polity and the market economy. Let me resort to Luhmann’s work to clarify this assumption.

For Luhmann, distrust is essentially “a *functional equivalent* for trust.” Because distrust and trust constitute the “binary code” of the system, “only a *choice* between trust and distrust is possible.” However, the primary function of trust, which is to reduce social complexity by means of avoiding risks in the contingent environment, does not resolve the problem of complexity. Anyone who refuses to confer trust restores the original complexity of infinite potentialities of the situation and puts too many demands on oneself. Therefore, anyone who does not trust must turn to “functionally equivalent strategies for the reduction of complexity” and substitute one’s positive expectations by negative ones. The repertoire of negative strategies is wide. It includes combat, mobilizing reserves, as well as renunciation of all needs that can be written off. Eventually, these various negative strategies do not only make possible individual’s existence without trust, but also create such a situation where individual can act rationally within the imaginative boundaries of individual’s hostile and not-to-be-trusted world. In Luhmann’s words, “The consciousness of distrust is thus often lost and the strategies of reduction demarcated by it become autonomous, become a habitual outlook on life, a routine” (Luhmann 1980: 71).

Although distrust is also able to reduce social complexity, its mechanism of reduction leads, nonetheless, to “often drastic simplification” of societal structures. Luhmann elucidates, “A person who distrusts both needs more information and at the same time narrows down the information, which he feels confident he can rely on. He becomes *more* dependent on *less*

information. The possibility of his being deceived becomes once more something to be reckoned with" (Luhmann 1980: 72). In result, negative expectations tend to absorb "the strength of the person who distrusts to an extent which leaves him little energy to explore and adapt to his environment in an objective and unprejudiced manner" (Luhmann 1980: 72), that is, to be open to learning and reflecting on information.

At the same time, the implication of the conceptual pair 'trust/distrust' to the systemic view on society excludes personal motives of action. On Luhmann's account, trust and distrust can be secured in modern differentiated society by means of organization that operates by impersonal motives of action. Such "organization in no way makes trust and distrust superfluous but it depersonalizes these mechanisms." In result, "the person who trusts no longer does so at his own risk but at the risk of the system." Conversely, "the person who distrusts no longer does so by going back to personal modes of reduction, such as personal animosity, hostility or safety precautions." The person who distrusts relies on "the strength of the system, which has already programmed in advance the mode of behavior for cases of disappointment, and guards the distruster against any excess" (Luhmann 1980: 93).

In modern functionally differentiated society, this organization theory performs a function analogous with that of ethics, namely it provides rational directions whether to trust or distrust but never tells the actor how he should act. Systems are "rational" insofar as they "possess understanding of how to make use of trust and distrust without placing too heavy demands on the person who finally shows trust or distrust: the individuals" (Luhmann 1980: 93). However, there is an important difference between ethics and organization theory. From the perspective of ethical theory, the choice between trust and distrust is essentially a *moral* choice, whereas in Luhmann's systems theory, the choice between trust and distrust pertains to the system's capacity of reducing complexity through *institutionalizing* the consequences of trust and distrust.

For his part, Luhmann remains a convinced value-free sociologist. He asserts, "Trust is not the sole foundation of the world; but a highly complex but nevertheless structured conception of the world could not be established without a fairly complex society, which in turn could not be established without trust" (Luhmann 1980: 93-94). In Luhmann's opinion, trust does not have an ultimate normative value, or a foundational metaphysical significance; it is rather a sociological instrument to measure the degree of structural complexity of a given society. As for me, I consider

trust both as a sociological instrument and as a moral value because trust has a deep moral significance for civil society theory. Let me shortly clarify the connection between trust and democracy.

According to the ethical interpretation of civil society theory, political engagement attains a high priority, for it embodies a core civic virtue. Civil society theory presumes thus “an active public sphere in which citizens engage in reasoned argument over affairs of state and morality” and builds on such key concepts as “*virtue*, the moral requirement to be a good citizen, and rational debate” (Outhwaite and Ray 2005: 148). Thus, democratic consolidation is possible if citizens perceive political engagement as their moral duty. However, to express this moral duty publicly, citizens need to learn to trust their social environment. Considering trust to be a prerequisite for successful democratization of post-communist societies, I cannot but entirely share the following admonition astutely uttered by Seligman, “To call for the establishment of civil society without taking into consideration the fundamental terms of trust in society is but an empty enterprise” (Seligman 1997: 6). Besides, it is also vital to realize that “the development of trust is dependent on a number of conditions, including a legitimate and legal-rational state, relative (or perceived) absence of corruption in public life, active regulatory bodies, and embeddedness of economic and political institutions” (Outhwaite and Ray 2005: 164). If these conditions are weak, massive distrust is likely to affect the formal channels of economic exchange and political engagement.

### 5.3.3 Distrust of Public Institutions as the Post-Communist Legacy

In the context of post-communist society, the conceptual pair ‘trust-distrust’ reveals a lot in the moral-psychological portrait of a common *homo post-Sovieticus*. If we agree, given the above analysis, that trust is an essential precondition for the stability of any democratic system, the lack of trust can be considered one of main factors that inhibit democratic consolidation and institutional development of civil society in post-Soviet Russia. Therefore, the communist legacy of persistent distrust of public institutions can be reckoned among main sources of the crisis that permeated public morality in post-Soviet Russia.

Evidence for this claim is abundant in the relevant literature. For instance, Marc Morjé Howard confirms in his study *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*, “One might think that the disappearance of the communist system and its mass organizations would lead to an

outpouring of public participation in new organizations that are truly voluntary and autonomous.” However, notwithstanding the period of spontaneous mobilization between 1989 and 1991, the nascent civil society turned to be short-lived. New opportunities that emerged in democratic Russia did not lead to an increase in participation. Instead, as Howard justly observes, “If anything, participation has actually decreased in recent years” (Howard 2003: 27).

Reluctance of post-communist citizens to engage in the democratic process can be explained by their negative memory of obligatory participation in Soviet formal organizations. Indeed, many scholars associate the fact that the most citizens of post-communist Europe “still strongly mistrust and avoid joining any kind of formal organizations” with “a direct legacy of the communist experience” (Howard 2003: 27). In the article ‘Postcommunism and the Problem of Trust,’ Richard Rose investigated the circumstances under which distrust emerged in Soviet Russia. He assumed, “Since the communist party insisted that it alone knew best how society ought to be ruled, there was no point in individuals’ expressing their views through elections or through institutions organized independently of the party-state” (Rose 1994: 18). Hence, distrust grew in Soviet society as the upshot of totalitarian organization of society by the rigid communist logic. Insofar as Soviet citizens were forced to participate in formal organizations without their active cognitive and moral attachment, now they tend to cling to this negative memory, viewing any kind of participation as semi-mandatory.

However, having concluded that trust is a necessary precondition for citizens’ participation in public institutions, we need to understand how the Soviet system managed to sustain itself, given the mandatory character of civil participation. An interesting insight has been suggested by Seweryn Bialer. His publication ‘The Question of Legitimacy’ can be considered, in my view, as one of the most qualified and objective accounts of citizens’ participation in Soviet Russia. His initial claim is daring, “Depending on one’s point of view, an analyst could maintain with equal justification that political participation in the Soviet Union is very high indeed or that it is almost non-existent” (Bialer 1983: 420). The choice would depend primarily on the difference between what Bialer signifies as “high politics” and “low politics.” Therefore, analysts who make such a distinction would confirm apathy and alienation from the sphere of high politics on the one hand, but invigoration and involvement in the sphere of low politics on the other.

On that account, in order to compare citizens' participation in Soviet versus Western democratic societies, a correct research question should pertain not to the *kind* of participation, but rather to the *function* performed by citizens' participation. Instead, Bialer recognizes that many analysts erroneously focus on the distinction between "authentic" and "controlled" participation and thus disregard the pivotal legitimating function of participation, which is common to both Western democratic and Soviet socialist societies (Bialer 1983: 421). It does not matter whether citizens' participation originates from below or from above because participation performs the same legitimizing function and serves the same goal, which is to maintain political order. Bialer's comparison between Soviet and Western democratic societies confirms the importance of "the elite dimension of legitimation of power for the stability of political regimes with regard both to their survival and effectiveness" (Bialer 1983: 423). Moreover, the evaluation of Soviet citizens' participation depends even more on the very definition of participation. Bialer comments, "If one were to define 'real,' 'authentic' participation as consisting of spontaneous actions alone, fully voluntary and largely uncoordinated from a center, one would describe the Soviet phenomenon as 'penetration' of the society by the authorities, 'mobilization' of the society by the party, 'transmission belts,' and other such terms; but one would not use the term participation" (Bialer 1983: 421).

Taking Bialer's account seriously, we cannot employ the term 'participation' to designate coerced, non-voluntary, and artificial engagement of Soviet citizens in formal organizations. Such kind of participation, although serving the legitimizing function, contributed to a lingering psychological trauma of Soviet citizens. It nourished the attitude of hypocritical submission and deep distrust with regard to official authorities. Insofar as the totalitarian system was aimed at acquiring total control over civic and private life of the citizens, "the state systematically invaded and undermined relations of trust, privacy and intimacy" (Outhwaite and Ray 2005: 156). Ultimately, "the nature of communist rule meant that centralized power undermined norms of cooperation by eliminating negotiation from public life and undermining respect for anything other than official positions, which themselves came to be distrusted" (Outhwaite and Ray 2005: 164).

This clarifies the paradox of the Soviet system. On the one hand, it required public engagement and respect of official political life, but on the other hand, by curtailing citizens' freedom of thought and speech, it

consistently eradicated public trust in official political life. In result, as Outhwaite and Ray astutely observe, “the intrusion of the security services and other state agencies into everyday life meant that anyone, including friends and relatives, could be an informer, which undermined relations of informal authority and trust [...]. Increasingly a gap appeared between official and private realms, the latter based on informal conduct, while the former had only limited relations of trust” (Outhwaite and Ray 2005: 156-57). The gap between official and private realms became particularly noticeable in the sphere of economic relations, where “high levels of impersonal distrust are likely to be combined with trust based in personal commitments, client networks and strong particularistic identities.” This gap between public distrust and personal trust stimulated “the creation of new impersonal market transactions” (Outhwaite and Ray 2005: 164), which is still noticeable in private networks in post-communist Russia.

Given the pervasive cynicism that resulted from the bifurcation between public acquiescence to the communist system and private rejection of it, we can correctly define the negative memory of semi-mandatory participation as the main source of current public distrust of democratic institutions and citizens’ reluctance to participate in any kind of official organizations. In reaction to the entrenched widespread public distrust, the concept of civil society was invoked in the post-communist context exactly as the “key to closing the chasm between public and private realms” (Outhwaite and Ray 2005: 156). In the invigorated public discussion in late Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, the concept of civil society denoted the balance between the totalitarian control of the state and the atomized individualism of post-communist society. In this discussion, the pertinent question arose as to how post-Soviet citizens would deal with the communist legacy of public distrust, avoidance, and cynicism.

Addressing this question, Glebova provocatively suggests that there is a common way in which Russians deal with traumatic experiences in their history, and that the communist experience is no exception from this rule. In her opinion, Russians tend to reflect on their historical past in terms of national guilt and responsibility, national identity and self-sufficiency; however, they tend to avoid an important question as ‘For which past do we, Russians, bear responsibility?’. Instead, Russians’ historical memory is concerned with the questions like ‘Which past should be responsible for us? Which past can support and justify us, let us be proud of ourselves and let

us love ourselves?'. Exactly these questions underlie "the practice of overcoming of the communist legacy"<sup>99</sup> (Glebova 2006: 46).

Although the practice of overcoming of the communist legacy involved repentance and denouncement of the past, this repentance was short-term and had a utilitarian character. As Glebova observes, once the confession had been offered to the world public, the communist legacy was regarded as overcome and buried in the historical memory. Indeed, the maneuver of ardent yet short-term denouncement followed by total rejection characterizes the way in which Russians integrate traumatic experiences into the national historical memory. Every time when the time is ripe, massive dissatisfaction leads to a political coup, and the tragic and wrong past is publicly denounced. This public exposure would release huge amounts of negative social energy, creating an illusion "as if the past ceases to exist and, despite its presence in the public domain, does not exert any influence on actual political practices" (Glebova 2006: 47).

Nevertheless, whenever it is required and can be used by certain social forces, the past definitely returns but does so "in a transformed, acceptable for the society condition" (Glebova 2006: 47). Thereby, the images of the past are reproduced artificially. We can better understand this tendency if we conceive of it in the context of Russian political culture. According to Glebova, the nation's self-identification through collective 'we' constitutes one of the ubiquitous features of Russian political culture. Insofar as the unification through this depersonalized 'we' denies the very possibility of plurality, Russian historical memory rather tends to create a unified, monolithic picture of the past, instead of a plurality of diverse, potentially contradictory pictures. This is even more true because for Russians, history is "not the place for disputes or discussion, but the space for firm, rigid certainties and exact formulations" (Glebova 2006: 77). Such a utilitarian selective approach to the historical past disrupts the organic continuity. Accordingly, the tradition becomes invented, and the historical memory can be easily manipulated by utilitarian considerations. Glebova presumes that the function of these artificially created images consists in providing the present system with compensation, protection, and relative stability (Glebova 2006: 88).

What does Glebova's critical account contribute to the discussion concerning the enduring impact of the communist experience on the

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<sup>99</sup> Reflection on these pertinent questions started during the Soviet period, in the circles of Soviet political dissidents. The dissident movement will be addressed in § 6.4.1.

conduct of contemporary Russians? By artificially reproducing the historical past, Russians replace the 'wrong' past with the acceptable images of the past and, in so doing, evade a critical self-conception. However, the mechanism of exposure and rejection does not relieve public awareness of past negative experiences. The problems of the past are continuously carried to the present, so that this transmission of the manufactured past renders the present order to be susceptible to crises. This explains why the political, economic, and social transformations that accompanied Russia's transition to democracy did not proceed in a smooth and gradual manner. Until now, the burden of the communist experience remains extremely difficult to be accepted, comprehended, forgiven, and yet not forgotten.

Taking into account the traumatic experience of the communist past, we can better realize why the reinvigoration of public trust proves problematic. In the post-Soviet context, the technique of exposure and rejection is incapable of eradicating the entrenched practice of avoiding obligatory participation. Thus, distrust continues to form "a major obstacle of a civil society in which representative institutions can link the interests of individuals and families with the actions of government" (Rose 1994: 18). Consequently, Rose explains, "substantial majorities of citizens in post-communist regimes want democracy, but find that their societies lack a key ingredient: trustworthy institutions capable of mediating between individuals and the state," among which trustworthy political parties. In result, "the citizens of post-communist Eastern Europe do *not* trust the parties that they vote for" (Rose 1994: 19). In 1994, Rose had sufficient evidence to claim that "about half of all Russians do not trust any significant cluster of institutions" and "continue to see their country as divided between 'us' (the individual and his family and friends) and 'them' (distrusted institutions of authority)" (Rose 1994: 27-28).

Moreover, it is important to underscore that heavy reliance on informal connections and mutual support, which is typical of the Soviet system, testifies not only to the overall corruption of the party machinery, but also to the weak legitimacy of the communist countries (Outhwaite and Ray 2005: 165). In the early 1990s, the acute crisis of legitimacy induced Russian political elite to take the problem of legitimacy more seriously. Politicians started to search then for the traditional sources of legitimacy, such as the Church, the idea of national unity, the army, etc. Thus, the problem of participation and trust gradually came to be considered in relation to the problem of legitimacy.

It is not accidental that the evaluation of public trust includes the discussion of “the level and sources of state legitimacy.” As the analysis of Sil and Chen demonstrates, legitimacy “depends not so much on the behavior of leaders or the design of institutions as on how these are judged by those whom the leaders and institutions claim to represent” (Sil and Chen 2004: 347-48). Viewing legitimacy as “analytically and normatively prior to arguments about the functioning and robustness of democracy,” the scholars correctly argue that “the absence of widespread social upheavals, the popularity of top leaders and the overall stability of national political institutions do not constitute evidence of state legitimacy.” On the contrary, the deficiency of state legitimacy is evident from “mass attitudes reflecting a low level of trust in national institutions, growing protest at the local level, mass detachment from political and economic elites, the pervasiveness of informal private networks and arrangements to bypass official public channels, and frustrations over crime and corruption” (Sil and Chen 2004: 348).

Relying on Sil and Chen’s account, we can aver that post-Soviet Russia currently undergoes the crisis of legitimacy and public trust because “any optimism accompanying the arrival of a new ‘democratic’ Russian state quickly gave way to growing dissatisfaction with political institutions and actors” (Sil and Chen 2004: 353). Putin’s wide popularity notwithstanding, public opinion surveys indicate widespread dissatisfaction with almost all social-political institutions, as well as with the key political figures that form the edifice of representative democracy. Sil and Chen are concerned about declining public trust in democratic institutions and representative bodies in Russia because trust citizens place in government institutions is especially important for the legitimacy and effectiveness of newly democratized regimes (Sil and Chen 2004: 349-50). Although social unrest has not yet occurred on a nationwide scale, mass social-economic anxiety determines “the frequency and intensity of collectivist protest at the local level,” as it provokes ordinary citizens to evade the rule of law in order to improve the level of one’s individual welfare (Sil and Chen 2004: 353).

As we can conclude from the above, the institutional weakness and insufficient efficacy of Russian civil society can be explained by Russians’ subjective experiences of democracy. Moral attitudes play in this respect a pivotal role. In present-day Russia, democratic institutions do not function properly not because these new institutions deserve no credit, but rather because Russians do not have confidence in these institutions initially and thus avoid participating in democratic institutions in a legal, transparent, and

formal way. Preferring to use illegal and informal methods instead, Russians maintain the vicious circle of self-fulfilling prophecy: Insofar as the informal method repetitively proves quicker and more effective, the formal institutional way appears as deficiently functioning, and consequently the new institutions prove legitimately distrusted.

#### 5.4 The Human Individual and Public Morality in the Context of Institutional Transformations

In the context of institutional transformations, the revealed problem of public distrust affects both the individual existence of each citizen and the common life of society. On this view, I consider examining the moral-psychological portrait of *homo post-Sovieticus* necessary for the ethical evaluation of civil society in Russia. In what follows, I shall indicate, firstly, some core mechanisms of social behavior whereby contemporary Russians tend to compensate for their distrust of democratic institutions and cope with the declaiming state legitimacy. In this context, the pertinent question of whom and why Russians tend to trust will be examined (§ 5.4.1). Next, I shall speculate whether it is (im)possible to define contemporary Russian society in terms of functionally differentiated society and which prospects for Russia's democratization ensue from the provided sociological depiction (§ 5.4.2).

##### 5.4.1 Adaptation and Collective Trust as Strategies of Survival

Adaptation is frequently considered a widespread mechanism of social behavior that is typical of post-communist citizens. As the contemporary Russian sociologist Boris Dubin confirms in the article 'Institutions, Networks, Rituals,'<sup>100</sup> adaptation has become, since the second half of the 1990s, *the* prevailing behavioral mechanism, whereby *homo post-Sovieticus* copes with the undesired consequences of the transition to democracy (Dubin 2008: 24). In what follows, I intend to trace the function of adaptation in Soviet society and consequently to elucidate the impact of this recurring mechanism on the behavior of contemporary Russian citizens.

The behavioral mechanism of adaptation is inextricably connected with the state's intrusion into private life of each individual citizen. Dubin convincingly argues that the mechanism of adaptation has been engraved

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<sup>100</sup> Борис Дубин, «Институты, сети, ритуалы» // *Pro et Contra* (Март-июнь 2008).

into the mentality of *homo Sovieticus* as a reaction to the omnipresent fear of illegitimate punishment or persecution on the part of state authorities. In search of security, Soviet citizens retreated into the private sphere and restricted it only to trusted family members and close friends. For years, they led such a binary existence, characterized by the retreat into the private sphere and alienation from public life. Now, after the democratic revolution, this habitual pattern of adaptation recurs, albeit, in a new form and in a new context.

In the public sphere, adaptation evolved as a reaction to the totalitarian system, which allowed no alternative thinking or acting. In the article 'Institutional Deficiencies as a Problem of Post-Soviet Society,'<sup>101</sup> Lev Gudkov and Boris Dubin explain that totalitarian control of the public sphere, while producing a myth of common control and civil participation, precluded genuine individual involvement in public life. Since the contents of public activities had been *a priori* prescribed, only a mere performance was needed on the public scene (Gudkov and Dubin 2003: 43). In this sense, Bialer correctly characterizes the behavior typical of Soviet citizens as "unconscious, amorphous, and unfocused," based not on the citizens' commitment to the system, but rather on unanimous and passive "acceptance." This behavior went hand in hand with "mass absenteeism, lack of labor discipline, turnover at the workplace – all of which testify to dissatisfaction with many policies and, most importantly, to the overwhelmingly private concern of the working man with his own wellbeing" (Bialer 1983: 421-22).

With regard to the post-Soviet situation, Dubin correctly observes that the mechanism of adaptation, coupled with the deficiency of basic economic resources, leads to drastic fragmentation of social life, which is evident from the decrease of social relations and the growing isolation of citizens. Citizens' social life becomes again restricted to their family and friendship relations. Outside this trusted private niche, citizens perceive themselves as essentially vulnerable, unprotected by law, abandoned by social organizations, silent, and submissive. Dubin signals the alarming fact that the described self-perception still haunts two thirds up to three quarters of Russians. Consequently, he understands distrust and adaptation as widespread strategies of survival (Dubin 2008: 26).

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<sup>101</sup> Лев Гудков и Борис Дубин «Институциональные дефициты как проблема постсоветского общества» // *Мониторинг общественного мнения* (Май-июнь 2003).

Adaptation denotes the reluctance to take control over the situation and the liability to compromise. It depicts “passive and prevailingly reactive behavior of the majority of social strata” as the behavior entirely dependent on the centralized power of the state and the alienated, unchangeable, and uncontrollable order. Glebova associates this behavior with the distinctively Russian virtue of patience and qualifies the mechanism of adaptation as passive. The scholar emphasizes that Russians rather hope to survive the far-reaching turmoil of the economic reforms instead of tackling the arising problems in a serious and constructive way (Glebova 2006: 66). According to Dubin, Russian citizens avoid autonomous action and individual responsibility. In so doing, they also avoid making choices, which is necessary for change. Instead, essential non-inclusiveness, coupled with the rhetoric of exclusiveness, is pivotal to the way in which Russians tend to identify themselves (Dubin 2008: 30). Obviously, individual activism and desire of change are at odds with the habit of passive adaptation. Change needs activism, whereas the preponderance of Russian citizens, consisting mostly of elderly generations, still longs for the old system and looks for the smart mechanism of adaptation to the new system. As the results of Colton and McFaul’s public survey of 1999 indicate, a significant number of respondents over age 60 (29 to 45 percent) prefer either a reformed or unreformed Soviet political system (Colton and McFaul 2001: 17).

What does the mechanism of adaptation clarify about Russians’ attitude towards public life and participation? Bialer argues that the self-centered orientation and the retreat into the private sphere are overt symptoms of political apathy (Bialer 1983: 422). For his part, Dubin is convinced that widespread adaptation betrays the general negative attitude towards any kind of social activity. This general aversion to public activity has become an established collective norm. Russians not only avoid participating in public organizations but also despise public achievements, ambitions, and activities of others (Dubin 2008: 24). This depreciative attitude towards civic engagement also affects the attitude towards new democratic institutions. Russians tend to blame these institutions for their “persistent paternalistic-repressive character, essential unaccountability, and irresponsibility” (Gudkov and Dubin 2003: 43-44).

The deep-lying cause of the indicated problem pertains to the fact that the institutional system was formed in democratic Russia under the influence of the interests of the ruling elite instead of the actual needs of common citizens. As a result, Russians tend to judge new democratic institutions by the “degree of damage reduction” (Gudkov and Dubin 2003:

45) and not by the criteria of transparency, predictability, and accountability. This criterion of minimum damage confirms that Russians recognize the dysfunction of the institutional system and, for that reason, avoid participating in the new institutions.

Notwithstanding the prevailing negative attitude towards public activity, certain institutions still deserve trust in the eyes of many Russians. It is interesting to investigate whom and why contemporary Russians tend to trust. For the most part, Russians trust institutions that are predictable and contributive to the ideals of social order, stability, and national unity. As the results of the longitude study conducted by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (*VTsIOM*) demonstrate, public trust in the figure of the president has significantly increased during the Putin era. In addition to the charismatic figure of the president, Russians trust the Russian Orthodox Church (henceforth: the ROC) and, to a lesser degree, the army and security structures (Dubin 2008: 28).

Concerning Russians' trust in the president, the army, and the Church, Dubin insightfully observes that Russians' conception of trust is quite different from system trust, which is central to Luhmann's theory of functional differentiation (discussed in § 5.3.2). Trust in the institutions that embody superior authority testifies to society's institutional weakness, non-differentiation, and socio-cultural poverty (Dubin 2008: 27). This is true because the institutions, which represent a vertically structured authority, do not require individual responsibility or engagement on the part of the citizens. By contrast, those institutions that presume individual participation and responsibility are considered by most Russians as unreliable. But these are exactly the institutions that are indispensable for democratic polity: the media, government administration (not to be confused with the figure of the president!), local authorities, the court of law, trade unions, public prosecutor's office, police force, The Federation Council, the State Duma (Parliament), and, at the lowest rate, political parties (Gudkov and Dubin 2003: 39). On this account, Dubin fairly concludes that "for Russians, 'trust' denotes a habitual, pre-modern, even archaic conception of the 'proper' social order. The social order is understood then as hierarchical and unconditional, undisputable and invariable, symbolized by the institutions of the army and the Church. In this understanding, trust is grounded in the embodiment of a superpower, which is freed from personal responsibility – the president" (Dubin 2008: 28). This is trust in the absolute supreme ruler who stands above the expectations and needs of his subjects.

The source of wide public trust in the president, the Church, and the army resides, according to Gudkov and Dubin, in the fact that most Russians can collectively identify themselves with the values and goals of these institutions. Russians eagerly speak about “our army, our educational system, our science, our Church, our sport,” and the like (Gudkov and Dubin 2003: 43). Dubin presumes that the images and figures of collective trust function as “compensatory mechanisms of release,” as they release citizens from their individual responsibility for involvement, efficacy, and change (Dubin 2008: 28).

However, it would be unjust to argue that public trust is undermined only by Russians’ tendency to avoid individual responsibility. Distrust of new democratic institutions is also preconditioned by citizens’ disarming ignorance about the aims and functions of those institutions. As the results of Dubin’s study ‘Universal Adaptation as the Tactic of the Weak’<sup>102</sup> show, only one respondent in five maintains that public organizations should defend citizens’ rights and interests, whereas almost one in two (45 percent) thinks that the primary task of public organizations consists in cooperating with the administrative apparatus. Thereby, this cooperation aims at facilitating the implementation of government policies (Dubin 2006). On that account, Jurij Levada is right when calling the motifs and mechanisms that underlie the high rating of public trust in the president “realistic and prosaic.” In the article “Tendencies of the Development of Culture and Public Consciousness,”<sup>103</sup> the scholar argues that Russians trust the president because of his personal successful accomplishments (21 percent), or because they hope for his accomplishments in the future (44 percent), or because they simply acknowledge that there is no one else to trust (31 percent). It is hope, or, more exactly, the desire of hope, that motivates Russians to trust the president (Levada 2003: 168). As far as other tools of political efficacy are concerned, the majority of ordinary Russians remain either distrustful or simply ignorant. Hence, the addressed problems of socio-cultural poverty, ignorance, and collective trust call for examining the structural profile of contemporary Russian society.

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<sup>102</sup> Борис Дубин, «Всеобщая адаптация как тактика слабых» // *Неприкосновенный запас* (№6 (50), 2006). Internet publication, last visited on 28 July 2010.

<sup>103</sup> Юрий Левада, «Тенденции развития культуры и массового сознания» // Т. Заславская (ред.), *Куда пришла Россия?.. Итоги социальной трансформации* (2003).

#### 5.4.2 Russian Society Today: Between *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*

In contemporary Russia, the prospects of democratic consolidation and development of civil society are directly connected to the prevalent type of societal relations and communication. The prospects are more likely to be optimistic if the model of modern *Gesellschaft* prevails over the model of traditional *Gemeinschaft*. However, insofar as contemporary Russian citizens are still inclined to trust informal networks instead of official public organizations, Russian society remains pervaded by the mechanisms and structures that are typical of traditional *Gemeinschaft*. How does this tendency manifest itself at the structural level? This question is addressed in the present section.

The persistence of particularistic relations and private networks is evident from the research carried out by the 'Levada Analytical Center.' Among other scholars who are affiliated with the Levada Analytical Center, Dubin argues that contemporary Russian society is "simple, one-dimensional, secluded from the external world, paternalistically oriented, and vertically structured." Interestingly enough, he associates the source of this societal de-complication not only with the citizens' preference of trusted informal networks over distrusted public institutions, but also with the general course of the presidential administration. Dubin is radical in his critique when asserting that the economic, cultural, and societal complication of contemporary Russian society is purposefully inhibited by the presidential administration. The rigid powerful administration causes "political paralysis and social stagnation" and hence contributes to the ritualization and ceremonialization of politics. Moreover, public politics starts to resemble a public spectacle, as it employs integrative symbols with a view to invoking an illusion that everyone belongs to the collective whole of the nation-state (Dubin 2006).

When analyzing contemporary Russian society from the perspective of the theory of functional differentiation, we are confronted with certain discrepancies. In the first place, the process of functional differentiation entails universalization of societal relations, equally at the level of social institutions and at the level of individual interactions. The practice of universalization of societal relations embodies the political-philosophical ideal of egalitarianism, which is one of the foundational principles of civil society theory.<sup>104</sup> However, as Dubin convincingly argues, Russian society

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<sup>104</sup> The ideal of egalitarianism is discussed in section 2.2.

undergoes rather the process of *personification* than the process of *universalization* of societal relations and explains this phenomenon by the inclination of Russian society towards pre-modern, traditional social order (Dubin 2008: 31). This process of personification of societal relations contradicts the logic of modern differentiated order

In the second place, contemporary Russian society exhibits certain mechanisms that are typical of the process of societal *fragmentation*, which again opposes the process of societal *differentiation*. Having said so, we need to understand the important distinction between these two processes. If societal differentiation entails increasing complication of societal structures, whereby new relatively autonomous social subsystems continuously emerge (for instance, the process of institutional differentiation between different social agents whereby new interest groups, communities, and parties are formed), societal fragmentation denotes the process of subdivision of extant social forms into smaller parts, whereby originally simple social forms preserve their simple structure. The process of societal differentiation facilitates the mobility of social agents in the complex horizontally structured network of social institutions and forms. However, Dubin's analysis demonstrates that the societal stratification of Russian society usually involves "virtual, simulative, and mythologized images of the whole, as well as personified figures representing that wholesomeness." On this view, Russian society employs the mechanisms of social integration that are completely different from those accompanying the process of functional differentiation. On this view, Dubin claims that Russian society undergoes the process of societal fragmentation (Dubin 2008: 30).

The tendency toward integration of society by means of the ideas of unity and wholeness is not typical only of the post-Soviet period. There were many examples in Russian political history when society overtly expressed its longing for a strong figure of the political leader who can restore unity and overcome disintegration. The most obvious example was the 'public' election of Tsar Boris Godunov in 1598. The German political philosopher Gerhard Simon suggests an interesting explanation why Russians tend to identify the ruler with the people so that any possibility of political conflict can be eliminated. Analyzing this tendency, the scholar emphasizes "integral mentality" of Russian political culture. While Western political systems evolved in the culture of conflict, struggling to reconcile different classes, mentalities, and interest groups, Russian society strove for the culture of integrity and therefore cherished the ideals of wholesomeness

and unity (Simon 2001: 115).<sup>105</sup> Simon claims that the “need of consensus” is grounded in the belief that underpins not only Russian politics, but also traditional Russian religion (i.e., Russian Orthodoxy), philosophy, and culture. It is the belief that “there is only one truth, which should be discovered, and that every individual is responsible for this truth” (Simon 1998: 26).<sup>106</sup>

From a sociological perspective, this distinctively Russian tendency towards avoiding conflict corresponds to the widespread phenomenon in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, namely “the phenomenon of a construable majority” (Dubin 2005). The phenomenon of a construable majority means that the views and orientations of the citizens are easily manipulated by political power. In contemporary Russia, political power aims at integrating the fragmented society with the aid of the ideals and symbols of national unity, wholeness, and consensus. In this strategy, ideology plays a pivotal role.

Tracing the origin of the typical post-Soviet phenomenon of a construable majority, Dubin points at “the process of averaging popularization,” which largely determined the development of Russian society in the second half of the 1990s. In his article ‘Outsiders: Power, Mass, and the Media in Present-day Russia,’<sup>107</sup> the scholar clarifies an important distinction between the process of popularization that occurred in Western Europe and the current process of popularization in post-Soviet Russia. If in the modern West, popularization completed the process of modern institutionalization and resulted in the establishment of an open society with a developed public sphere, in post-Soviet Russia, popularization occurs without institutional modernization (Dubin 2005). Contemporary Russian society transforms towards a mass society, which inevitably leads to the simplification of citizens’ political vision and the homogenization of the public sphere.

According to Dubin, the disappearance of the periodical press and its substitution by telecommunication contributed to the creation of a construable majority in post-Soviet Russian society. Russian society becomes “simpler and more homogeneous, flattened, and fragmented, and

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<sup>105</sup> Герхард Зимон, «Специфика России глазами немецкого ученого» // *Общественные науки и современность* (№ 4, 2001).

<sup>106</sup> Герхард Зимон, «Заметки о политической культуре в России» // *Вопросы философии* (№ 4, 1998).

<sup>107</sup> Борис Дубин, «Посторонние: власть, масса и массмедиа в современной России» // *Отечественные записки* (№ 6, 2005). Internet publication, last visited on 28 July 2010.

therefore more acquiescent to external influences exerted on each separated, atomized member” (Dubin 2005). Moreover, the amalgamation between the ruling elite and the key figures in the field of telecommunication aggravates the homogenization of Russian society. The state owns two central television channels. In this fact, Dubin discerns the refusal of political power to seek legitimation by appealing to different social groups and political partners (Dubin 2005). In general, by propagating the concept of the collective majority, the ideologists behind Russian mass media pragmatically implant the idea of a new national identity under the banners of unity and solidarity.

As a result of the strategic usage of the integrative symbols and ideas of unity, Russian citizens tend to construct their social imaginary through the collective image of ‘we.’ In this self-conception, *homo post-Sovieticus* demonstrates his persistent preference of the culture of mediocrity, ordinariness, and depersonalized mass, as well as his reluctance to participate in the differentiated structures of society. Glebova correctly observes in this respect that the symbolical unification through collective ‘we’ is directly associated with the values of order, stability, and certainty, which are essential for Russia’s democratic project. In the eyes of many ordinary Russians, the self-conception through collective ‘we’ makes the realization of these values more feasible and comprehensible (Glebova 2006: 68).

A legitimate question can be asked pertaining to the effect that Russians’ collectivist self-conception has on the relationship between society and political power. According to Dubin, political power becomes increasingly bureaucratic, while society diffuses into an increasingly depersonalized mass. Thus, the weak self-organization of Russian society contrasts the consolidation of political power in the form of a hierarchical pyramid. Paradoxically, citizens’ widespread alienation from the sphere of public politics, as well as their growing dissatisfaction with political power, is combined with the feeling of profound dependence on political power (Dubin 2006).

Given the above, we can spell out an important trend in contemporary Russian society. Although the systematic employment of the integrative symbols provides the system of politics with relative stability and continuity, these simulative forms of symbolic belonging to the virtual whole determine the *particularistic* and *exclusionist* character of collective ‘we.’ Thereby, as Dubin correctly argues, the collectivist self-conception establishes a series of prohibitive sanctions, which produce patriotic mood, trust in social

institutions, overall positive socialization, and moral solidarity. However, the far-reaching effect of this collectivist optimistic ideology is double-edged. The rhetoric of collective exclusiveness consolidates the bureaucratic administrative system on the one hand, and confines society to a one-dimensional and passive existence on the other. It aggravates the institutional weakness and underdevelopment of modern *Gesellschaft*, which is characterized by autonomous and differentiated structures. On this account, I agree with Dubin's diagnosis of deinstitutionalization as the core problem in post-Soviet Russia (Dubin 2006).

Are there any solutions to the problem of deinstitutionalization? In my view, Solonin correctly suggests that Russian society needs to abandon the usual "ideological optimism" and revise the complex of conservative-mystical ideas about Russia's exclusive historical mission. Instead of ideological optimism and artificial projects, Russian society should invoke civil optimism and develop socio-economic programs, whereby civil society plays a pivotal role (Solonin 2002: 14). However, this strategy necessitates the reconstruction of the whole system that now provides "the utmost conservative and patriarchal type of transmission of social information" aimed at legitimating the extant hierarchical socio-political order by the ideal of unity (Solonin 2002: 15). Hence, I associate the success of Russia's democratic project with the transformation of Russian society toward modern differentiated *Gesellschaft*.

Given that modern differentiated society, or modern *Gesellschaft*, presumes polycentricism of societal structures and channels of communication, the structural transformation toward modern *Gesellschaft* implies increasing rationalization. This suggestion can be also underpinned by Weber's theory of rationalization (discussed in 3.1). During society's transition from *Gemeinschaft* toward *Gesellschaft*, formal rationality gradually prevails over affective rationality. Accordingly, the rational type of legitimate order prevails over the charismatic and traditional types. In Russia, however, the emotional-affective component still seems to dominate public mentality, which is evident from the fact that many Russians perceive current social and political developments emotionally. Thus, in order to evolve toward modern *Gesellschaft*, Russian society should overcome, as Solonin has articulated it, its traditional inclination to "rapid progress, impulses, switches from social apathy toward enthusiastic action, as well as its naïveté concerning illusory projects, susceptibility to dreaminess, and persistent aspiration to envisage the ideal in its total completion." In addition, Russian society should not live any longer in expectation of "some miraculous word,

a universal answer, and an immediate solution to vital problems and complications” (Solonin 2002: 15). At the same time, Russian society should discover and welcome existing pluralistic and polycentric tendencies within itself. This would help Russian society to find a right balance between value-oriented rationality, rooted in its cultural-historical and religious tradition, and formal rationality, which guides citizens’ behavior in the framework of a liberal democratic state.

Understanding modernization in terms of society’s evolution towards *Gesellschaft*, I assume that the impetus to this structural evolution originates from long-term cultural traditions, as well as from the level of institutional development of a certain society. On this view, if we want to assess the proximity of Russian society to modern *Gesellschaft*, we are confronted with the tragic break of Russian cultural and institutional traditions as a result of the Bolshevik revolution. The Bolshevik usurpation of political power signified for Russia the break with the pre-revolutionary ideas and experiences. It precluded nascent liberalization of late imperial Russian society, which was stimulated by the establishment of the Duma and public debate about constitutional monarchy.<sup>108</sup>

In my view, the far-reaching impact of the Bolshevik revolution on the formation of the Soviet type of society can be better explained in the light of Russian political culture. Glebova considers this impact as the upshot of Russian “persistent tradition of socio-cultural nihilism” (Glebova 2006: 141). Instead of building upon the foundations of the economic, social, and political order that existed in pre-revolutionary Russia, Soviet society chose for a total renouncement of the former order. The new social order was created “at the expense of liquidating any compromise and as a radical solution to resolve all social conflicts” (Glebova 2006: 178). Consequently, Soviet society evolved not by employing mechanisms of societal complication, but rather by reducing its structural complexity. After the redistribution of economic goods and political power, the structural edifice of Soviet society became extremely flattened and simplified. According to Glebova, the described transformation testifies to the distinctively Russian socio-cultural nihilism and habit of simplification. This habit determines the way in which Russians treat their historical experience and give place to their past. Instead of accumulating historical experience and knowledge, nihilistic mentality tends toward a stringent differentiation between the bad and the good (Glebova 2006: 142-43). The legitimization of a new order starts

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<sup>108</sup> These developments were discussed in § 4.2.3.

from refuting the previous 'bad' order. Thus, Russia's transition to the Soviet order signified the break not only with the pre-revolutionary resources, but also with the West-European trend of modernization in the sense of societal differentiation.

### ***Conclusion***

In the present chapter, I set out to provide a multi-level evaluation of the democratic project in post-Soviet Russia. The focus of this evaluation was on the development of civil society. Such an evaluation suggested a way to highlight four different problem-areas that determine a distinctively Russian conception and practice of democracy: the problems of political, economic, social, and moral order. Thereby, I revealed firstly the deep *interconnectedness* of the problems that accompany Russia's transition to democracy and civil society. Secondly, by analyzing the institutional weakness of Russian civil society in the context of public morality, I have elucidated the moral-cultural *causes* of the revealed problems.

We have started with spelling out the general dynamics of the relationship between civil society and political power in post-Soviet Russia. As we have seen, the dynamics is chiefly determined by the state's tendency to centralize its political power and gain more control over the sector of civil society. Notwithstanding Russia's breakthrough to democracy, the deep authoritarian edifice of political power has remained unchanged. Bypassing the normative model of public consensus and rather employing the model of "delegated democracy," El'tsyn's government came to power in 1991 as a result of the constitutional crisis (Medushevskij 2003: 33-34; Furman 2003: 25). Such an abrupt and militant transformation revealed the lack of a robust and developed civil society, which should have served as an instrument for expressing public will and attaining public consensus. After a short period of spontaneous mobilization in the public sphere during the last years of the *perestrojka* and early 1990s, most of public organizations did not evolve into "more coherent and better-organized formations" and gradually dissolved (Fish 1994: 32). Remaining organizations of nascent civil society faced the consequences of El'tsyn's "moderately authoritarian oligarchic regime," namely: the lack of political strategy, oligarchism, market liberalization, inflation, and the lack of stable national financial resources (Shevtsova 2007: 40).

Subsequently, Putin's "bureaucratic-authoritarian" reorganization of democracy (Shevtsova 2007: 41) confronted civil society with qualitatively

different challenges. The new challenges consisted in the unprecedented expansion of the state bureaucracy and the imitative character of core democratic institutions. The prevalence of “the technocratic ethos” in establishing a new kind of relationship between society and political power caused “ever tighter regulation of public life in general, and civic activity in particular” (Sakwa 2008: 341). Putin’s initiated recentralization of political power led to the spreading of presidential control over the independent mass media, the courts, the Federation Council, the Duma, and security services. Within this trend, a special civil forum was created – the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation. Insofar as the stipulated developments prompted critical scholars to employ such terms as “imitation democracy” and a “controlled civil society” (Shevtsova 2007: 47ff; Sakwa 2008: 330ff), we can conclude that the primary task of contemporary Russian politics consists in bridging the nominal conditions for democratic government and the actual realization of democratic principles.

Obviously, one of the significant obstacles to democratic consolidation in post-Soviet Russia consists in the state’s underestimation of the normative value and function of civil society in the system of democratic government. By diminishing society’s independent value, the state not only re-establishes its primacy over society, but also demonstrates its “persistent incompetence to harmonize social order as an independent order and establish institutional relations” (Kostjuk 2000b: 34-35). The more the state tends to monopolize political power and equalize the political landscape, the lesser freedom civil society retains. For that reason, I have argued that an equal, tolerant, and equilibrated dialog between politics and society is indispensable for the future of Russian democracy. In view of such a dialog, political power should revise its entrenched self-conception as “indivisible, irremovable, and autonomous from society” (Dakhin 2003: 37).

In addition, we have also considered the impact of the regulative tendency of the political center on the nascent democratic system. The strategies of imitation democracy, inadequacies of economic policies, and the persistence of public distrust of new democratic institutions can provoke altogether the crisis of political legitimacy and public trust. Insofar as democratic institutions are deliberately used “to conceal traditional power arrangements” (Shevtsova 2007: 50), they lose their trustworthiness in the eyes of the citizens, which leads to the public denouncement of the whole political system.

Pertaining to the immanent crisis of legitimacy, I emphasized the pivotal role that civil society plays in the restoration of public trust. Under the

conditions of a weakly represented civil society, the democratic system lacks systemic checks in the form of the free press, political opposition, and independent institutions (Shevtsova 2007: 62). Without being checked by independent institutions of civil society, the dysfunctions within the political system remain unnoticed and thus do not reach the leader's controlling organ or the public. Functioning as the mediator between the public and the government, civil society provides the key remedy to overcome imitation democracy. Imitation democracy can be surmounted when civil society represents public concerns to the government, makes these representations effective at the level of policies, and invigorates citizens' understanding of democratic government as trust.

Furthermore, I have argued that the paternalistic self-positioning of the Russian state has become a dominant trend not only in its relations with the sector of civil society, but also in its relations with the sector of business. A putative source of this trend consists in the "structural amalgamation of power and property" that already occurred in the Soviet period and, later, persisted through the re-distribution of state property during the liberal reforms (Dakhin 2003: 37). Nowadays, after the decade of El'tsyn's oligarchic monopoly and the decade of Putin's bureaucratic control, two different positions have been crystallized. On the one hand, there is a view that an intensive cooperation between the three sectors (i.e. civil society, the state, and business) is rewarding for Russia's democratization. This view is widely supported by the members of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation. In contradistinction to their support of the 'balanced' model of cooperation, certain scholars hold the view that such a cooperation restricts the development of business and civil society. Hence, they are suspicious of any attempts on the part of the state to intervene into these spheres.

Whatever position one would endorse, one should remember that the image of business has been significantly damaged by the socio-economic consequences of Russia's transition to democracy and a market economy. Analogous with the gap between the nominal democratic constitution and its deficient implementation, the socio-economic sphere came to be characterized by an immense chasm between the nominal conditions of the market economy and the positive impact of these conditions on economic welfare of common Russian citizens. We have spelled out a number of reasons for the aggravation of the socio-economic conflict in post-Soviet Russia. In the first place, the reform of the market liberalization was implemented in 1992 as a "shock-therapy," without due preparations in the field of social policy and legislation. While El'tsyn's radical liberal reforms

were aimed at the redistribution of state property by means of voucher privatization, ordinary people did not noticeably profit from the reform. Accordingly, the establishment of the middle class has failed. Secondly, after the collapse of the state-controlled economy, the post-Soviet economy was immediately confronted with the legacy of communist rule, which consisted in “a weakly differentiated social structure” (Fish 1994: 33). Thirdly, the Soviet state’s control over the economy inhibited spontaneous market exchange and drove it into the sphere of illegality. The transition to a market economy legalized pursuing private economic interest but also unleashed corrupt mechanisms of underground economic exchange. Together with the weakly differentiated social structure, the privatization of economic relations strengthened the conflict between quickly differentiating social classes.

As a result, the economic reforms led to the polarization between the new financial-bureaucratic elite and the overwhelming majority of disoriented and disappointed ordinary citizens. The conditions for the free market economy were created at a very high social price. Swift inflation caused immense disproportions in the socio-economic composition of post-communist society, and the majority of ordinary Russians came to associate the transition to democracy with anxiety and disillusion. This was further worsened by growing unemployment, corruption, and a high rate of crime (Sil and Chen 2004: 356). The attainment of the living standards of an affluent consumer society became the reality only for a selected class of Russians – the new financial elite.

Understandably, the problems of poverty, enduring anxiety, and socio-economic polarization significantly inhibited the formation of the middle class in post-Soviet Russia. Nowadays, the average middle class constitutes only 19 percent of all Russian households (Maleva 2003: 106). It is arguable whether 19 percent can provide a sufficient social basis for civil society to flourish. Insofar as I consider private welfare as one of the prerequisites for civic engagement, I think that Russian civil society needs a more solid socio-economic basis in the form of a developing middle class.

In view of the above, we can conclude that the socio-economic consequences of the democratic revolution have become the main criteria whereby Russians assess the benefits and the drawbacks of democracy. We can observe a noticeable polarization between citizens with different political orientations. Russian society is characterized by an essential dualism, as it is divided between ample public support of a normative idea of democracy and, at the same time, ample public distrust of democratic

institutions and procedures, which is most obvious at the level of economic policies. Blaming the government for implementing inadequate socio-economic policies, Russian citizens still passively endorse the very idea of democracy in abstract and vaguely normative terms. On that account, Russian society can be correctly claimed to retain more features of developing democracies and than of consolidated liberal democracies. It is a typical example of developing democracies where “continuing mass support for ‘democracy’ in the abstract coexists with declining trust in a Russian state that is more democratic than any in the past” (Sil and Chen 2004: 356).

Additionally, the analysis of the political and economic problems was complemented by a moral assessment of the institutional weakness of civil society. Thereby, we have discussed the significance of trust for Russia’s democratic project. In my opinion, trust is one of the crucial mechanisms that enable all important interpersonal and inter-institutional relations in a liberal democratic society. It is possible to distinguish between the ethical and structural meanings of trust. The ethical significance of trust consists in providing an ideal for communal life. In this sense, trust underlies the primordial human longing for mutual promise-keeping, reciprocity, and civic engagement (Seligman 1997: 6; Outhwaite and Ray 2005: 164). Conversely, the structural significance of trust is premised on the understanding of civil society as a complex web of differentiated systems. Relying on Luhmann’s systems theory, we have seen that trust provides complex differentiated society with continuity and thereby helps it to preclude a systemic crisis. Moreover, trust is indispensable for a democratic system because “system trust builds upon the fact that others also trust and this common possession of trust becomes conscious,” which allows citizens to engage in meaningful societal relations (Luhmann 1980: 69).

Examining the problems of civil society in post-Soviet Russia, I can conclude that not only the establishment of, but also public trust in new democratic institutions preconditions the rise and subsequent development of civil society. Creating formal preconditions for a democratic regime (such as the democratic constitution, *Rechtsstaat*, market economy, institute of private property, citizens’ rights, openness and accountability of the political politics to the public, etc.) does not necessarily lead to a smooth and rapid transition. Even if the mentioned preconditions are declared by the democratic constitution, the actual working of the established institutional-legal framework requires support and trust on the part of democratic citizens. Thus, institutional changes should be comprehended by the citizens of democratizing societies and entrenched in the public morality.

Ethical analysis of the institutional development of Russian civil society has confirmed that the establishment of new institutions is difficult in the post-communist context because a significant number of contemporary Russians still retain attitudes that are typical of communist citizens. On this view, I have argued that the institutional weakness, which is frequently considered as one of the main causes of the underdevelopment of Russian civil society, is essentially a moral problem. Therefore, the problem of institutional weakness should be addressed in the context of public morality.

We have defined the moral-psychological preconditions that are indispensable for both the establishment of democratic institutions and the implementation of democratizing reforms. First, the citizens of democratizing societies should have a “deep comprehension of the principles of personal dignity, of law-regulated society, or social support” (Rashkovskij 2004: 114). Second, they need to possess civic maturity, which means a developed self-perception as citizens imbued with sovereignty and political efficacy (Apresjan and Gusejnov 1997: 13). Finally, they should demonstrate civic engagement and interest in the institutional formation of democracy. In a nutshell, the overall stability of a democratic system is largely determined by the extent of the development of the citizens’ social-ethical consciousness (Kostjuk 2000b: 32-33). Taking the listed preconditions as the criteria for an assessment, we have seen that the problems of Russian democracy ensue from public alienation from participation in official and voluntary organizations, citizens’ pervasive apathy, and their permanent stifled dissatisfaction with the actual outcomes of the transition. These moral-psychological traits account for wide-spread distrust of new democratic institutions.

Accordingly, we can conclude that the institutional weakness and insufficient efficacy of Russian civil society can be explained by Russians’ subjective experiences of democracy. In present-day Russia, democratic institutions do not function effectively not because these new institutions are not trustworthy, but rather because the citizens do not trust these institutions in the first place and thus avoid participating in them. Preferring to use illegal and informal methods, Russians maintain the vicious circle of self-fulfilling prophecy: Insofar as the informal method proves to be quicker and more effective than the formal institutional way, the new institutions prove to be legitimately distrusted.

On this view, we can associate the hope for the future of Russia’s democratic project with the increasing differentiation of society, which warrants plurality, respect, and trust. To attain this goal, however, the

democratization process should exceed a mere constitutional transformation and invoke also a moral one. The ultimate meaning of the democratic transformation consists thus not only in changing political, constitutional, and economic structures of a post-communist society, but also in “the gradual overcoming of the dualism between the nominal and real law, the substitution of the ideological monopoly by the ideological pluralism, the dogma of class theory by the principles of civil society” (Medushevskij 2003: 39). Democratization requires an immense moral effort on the part of citizens because citizens of a democratizing society should abandon a simplistic vision of societal processes, cultivate trustworthy relations, and abandon marginal political consciousness. They need to develop a critical and qualified perception of the socio-political reality, as well as a significant degree of autonomous and rational judgment. This allows society to transform according to the principles of civil society such as publicity (*glasnost*), individual rights, multi-party system, strength and efficacy of public judgment. The question at stake is whether Russian society possesses sufficient moral and cultural resources to adopt the values of pluralistic and tolerant civil society. Bearing this question in mind, I turn to the last part of my study.



# Civil Society and Orthodox Christianity in Russia

## *Introduction*

The role and significance of religion with regard to civil society theory has been extensively discussed in chapter four. Then, I analyzed the relationship between religion and secular society from a historical perspective. At the same time, a comparative perspective was elaborated with a view to juxtaposing the historical developments in Western Europe and in Russia. The present chapter resumes the discussion on the religious factor, but in a different context. Given the primary focus of my study on post-Soviet Russia, I intend to examine how Orthodox Christianity, which is the traditional religion of Russia, and civil society relate to each other. Thereby, my aim is to clarify whether Orthodox Christianity can provide a substantive alternative conception of civil society and contribute to the democratic project in contemporary Russia.

The question concerning the relationship between civil society and Orthodox Christianity became relevant after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, when the Soviet law on restriction of religion was abolished. Abandoning its communist ideology and secular self-identification, post-Soviet society faced the challenge of finding a new self-identity that would simultaneously correspond to new democratic values and suit the specific religious-cultural profile of the millennial Russian history. It was in such a dynamic context that the Russian Orthodox Church (henceforth the ROC) became one of the influential participants in the instigated search for a new

national identity. The ROC succeeded to provide, from within the Orthodox theological tradition, a strong foundationalist program for transforming Russian society.

Pertaining to this program, the following questions arose: Does the foundationalist position meet the needs of democratic society? Is the ROC able to substantiate its foundationalist position in the framework of a constitutionally guaranteed secular democratic order? Driven by these questions, I intend to examine how the ROC conceptualizes its role with regard to democratizing reforms such as the emergence of a democratic state and civil society.

Pursuing this suggestive line of inquiry, I look at the relationship between Orthodox Christianity and civil society from two distinct perspectives: the sociological, or functionalistic, perspective and the theological, or essentialistic, perspective.<sup>109</sup> The sociological perspective is employed to analyze the function of the ROC in the public sphere. Thereby, the objective is to sketch the social-political context in which the ROC currently functions and develops its self-conception. Such an investigation evinces the attempts of the ROC to revitalize its public appearance in a constitutionally secular and pluralistic civil society (6.1). On the other hand, the essentialistic perspective allows examining how the ROC reacts to the prevailing trend of modernization in general, and how the Russian Orthodox tradition conceives of and accommodates the modern idea of civil society in particular. In that way, we are able to trace the internal theological logic that underlies the reaction of the ROC and study the cultural-ideological discourse of the Russian Orthodox tradition.

I suggest systematizing various approaches whereby Russian Orthodoxy relates to civil society in three currently popular trends. First, the politicized version of Russian Orthodoxy will be explicated by considering the movement of Orthodox fundamentalism (6.2). Secondly, the conservative theological teaching of the ROC will be studied on the basis of the recently published ecclesiastical document, *The Fundamentals of the Social Conception of the ROC* (6.3). In this part, I also want to clarify the established relationship between religion and civil society in the post-Soviet context through attending to the turning points in the history of state-church relations in Russia. Finally, the analysis would be incomplete and biased without revealing the liberal-reformative trend in Russian Orthodoxy. This

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<sup>109</sup> The two perspectives have been discussed in more detail in the introduction to chapter four.

remarkable attempt at liberalizing the conservative core of Orthodox theology will be the last issue to be addressed so far (6.4).

## 6.1 The Russian Orthodox Church in the Context of Secular Democracy

To evaluate the relationship between civil society and Orthodox Christianity in the contemporary context of secular democracy, we need to take into consideration the consequences of Soviet anti-religious policy. My presumption is that the way in which the Church re-appeared in the public arena in democratic Russia, has been significantly determined by the traumatic experience of Soviet persecution.

### 6.1.1 The Soviet Trauma: Coerced Secularization of Soviet Society

After nearly seventy years of severe persecution of religion by the Soviet state (1917-91), Russian post-Soviet society can be unmistakably ranked amongst most secular societies worldwide. The attacks of the Soviet state were targeted not only against the ideological influence and the public status that the ROC enjoyed in pre-revolutionary Russia, but also against private religious belief of the Soviet citizens. Being baptized or being married in the Church, let alone attending church services, was equaled to being an ‘enemy of the people’ (*vrag naroda*), where the concept of the people was used as a mask, under which the Communist Party disguised itself and pursued its own interests. Waging an ideological war against religion, the Communist Party persistently tried to impose atheism as the only permitted official ideology of the Soviet state. Thus, religion was totally excluded from public life. Religious education found no longer any respectable place in the curriculum of comprehensive schools and universities. Every aspect of life associated with spirituality and religious experience was invariably stigmatized as superstitious, out-of-date, hilarious, and despicable. Whenever religion was mentioned in the official speeches or publications, it was mocked, being juxtaposed with the ‘enlightened’ and ‘humanistic’ worldview of Marxism-Leninism.

A far more rigorous classification of Soviet atheism has been suggested by the contemporary Russian philosopher Nikolaj Kozin. In his idiosyncratic book *Understanding Russia. An Attempt at a Historiosophical*

*Analysis*,<sup>110</sup> Kozin argues that Marxism brutally intervened in the genetic code of Russian civilization trying to substitute Russian Orthodoxy. The fact that Marxist ideology resembles in certain respects the Orthodox Christian tradition testifies to the enforcement of this “spiritual mutation” upon Russia. Kozin draws an interesting parallel, albeit in fairly grotesque terms, between the Orthodox doctrine and Marxist ideology, “Marx was recognized almost as the new Messiah; proletariat became the Chosen nation, the Church was substituted by the Communist Party; the Second Advent became the socialist revolution; hell became power of capitalism; the Millennium Kingdom became communism.” The scholar points at the analogies between the Ecclesiastical and Marxist texts, namely the analogies between the Holy Scriptures and *Das Kapital*, between the Catechesis and the ‘Manifesto of the Communist Party.’ Additionally, the tripartite division of all Soviet people into the ranks of most devoted revolutionaries, Party members, and the rest is similar to the tripartite Christian division between the priesthood, the clergy (in the sense of not ordained yet assisting members of parishes), and the laity. Finally, the infallibility of the communist leaders bears a striking resemblance to the infallibility of church fathers (Kozin 2002: 195). With regard to the last analogy, it is necessary to clarify, however, that according to the Orthodox tradition church fathers are not considered infallible, for no human being can be infallible, and therefore some of patristic comments can be erroneous. Perhaps, asserting that the ‘preaching’ of the communist leaders was presented to the common people as truly infallible, Marxist ideology went even further than simply parodying the Orthodox Christian tradition.

Besides ideological suppression, religious practices in Soviet Russia were if not officially prohibited, yet clearly banned from the public sphere and marginalized to the private sphere, which was also monitored by the state. According to the normative communist model, everything that was private would be immediately open to the mutual surveillance and thus would be become public, i.e. overtly anti-religious.

Recent studies illustrate the appalling consequences of Soviet suppression of religious freedom. In this connection, I want to emphasize that contemporary Russian scholars show an increasing interest in studying church life during that tragic period. During the last two decades, a great deal of research has been conducted. This testifies to the public awareness of the political crimes committed against freedom of religious belief, as well

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<sup>110</sup> Николай Козин, *Постижение России. Опыт историческо-философского анализа* (Москва: Алгоритм).

as to the deep public regret caused by those crimes. St. Tikhon's Orthodox University<sup>111</sup> in Moscow is just one of the leading centers where intensive research on victims of Soviet repression is continuously carried out. The results of the research have been published in the form of two volumes: *Martyrs for Christ. Persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church, 1917-1956: Biographical Handbook* (1997) and *The Acts of St. Tikhon, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, later documents and correspondence concerning the canonical continuity of church authority, 1917-1943* (1994).<sup>112</sup> In what follows, I refer to the summary of the research provided by Nikolaj Emel'janov.<sup>113</sup>

On the juridical side, the state's assault on freedom of religion was unleashed by the Soviet decree of 20 January 1918, which legalized the separation of the Church from the newly established Soviet state. Adopting the decree, the Bolsheviks legalized not only plundering of church possessions, but also persecution and execution of the clergy. These crimes were committed under the pretext of humanitarian help for the starving population of Soviet Russia, which was devastated by the Civil War of 1921. The ROC was accused of refusing to submit its wealth for the starving people. As Emel'janov indicates, during the subsequent persecution in 1922, twenty thousand people were arrested and approximately one thousand executed (Emel'janov 2004).

Later, in the period between 1923 and 1928, the Bolsheviks elaborated a more sophisticated plan aimed at destroying the ecclesiastical structure within the Church itself. By granting privileges to the renewal movement (*obnovlentsy*), which had split from the canonical institute of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Bolsheviks promulgated the internal church schism. The renewal movement emerged soon after the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, being initiated by the Petersburg priest Alexander Vvedenskij (1889-1946). However, it did not find wide popularity until 1922, when it gained support by the Committee on State Security of the USSR, better known as the KGB. Beneath the apparent task of democratizing the ecclesiastical administration and modernizing church service, the renewal movement had a clear political standpoint, as it declared absolute loyalty to the communist regime. With

<sup>111</sup> The former St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Institute.

<sup>112</sup> The mentioned publications are available only in Russian: *За Христа пострадавшие: Гонения на Русскую Православную Церковь 1917-1956: Биографический справочник* (1997); *Акты святейшего патриарха Тихона и позднейшие документы о преемстве высшей церковной власти. 1917-1943 гг.* (1994). More information is available on the website of St. Tikhon's Orthodox University at [www.pstgu.ru](http://www.pstgu.ru).

<sup>113</sup> Николай Емельянов, «Оценка статистики гонений на Русскую Православную Церковь (1917 - 1952 годы)». Internet publication, last visited on 28 July 2010.

the support of the Communist Party and of the KGB, the renewal movement managed to become, in the span between 1922 and 1927, the only organization of the ROC that was officially recognized by the Soviet state. At that period, the renewal movement embraced more than a half of the episcopacy and parishes of the ROC. After 1927, the movement continued to exist but lost, nonetheless, its primary political significance. Eventually, in 1941, Vvedenskij declared himself the first hierarch of the Russian Church of the USSR, establishing thereby an alternative patriarchal institute, which existed until Vvedenskij's death in 1946.

The third wave of Soviet persecution of religion refers, according to Emel'janov, to the period of 1930-31. This wave tragically resulted in sixty thousand arrests and five thousand executions, being 'triumphed' by the demolition of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow. The Cathedral was symbolically blown up in 1931, and an open-air swimming pool was constructed in its place. Starting from 1932, the Soviet authorities launched the 'godless five-year plan' with the aim of demolishing *all* churches and exterminating *all* believers. However, the outcome of this godless project was, to use the Bolshevik jargon, 'unsatisfactory'. The population census of 1937 demonstrated that one third of the urban population and two thirds of the rural population, i.e. the majority of the population of the USSR, still identified themselves as Orthodox Christians (Emel'janov 2004). Following the relentless Soviet logic, the initiators and executors of that population census themselves fell victim to the subsequent Stalin's terror.

The summit of Soviet repression can be unmistakably related to Stalin's great terror of 1937-38. The policy of terror was designed to implement a large-scale purge of the Soviet state from anti-communist activists.<sup>114</sup> Stalin's terror came to be associated in Russian history with the name of Nikolaj Ezhov (1895-1940) who was then the head of the KGB.<sup>115</sup> During the years of Stalin's terror, one and a half million (1.548.366) citizens were arrested due to the accusation of anti-Soviet activity; among them almost seven hundred thousand (681.692) were put to death. This means that every day one thousand people were killed. Approximately, two hundred thousand people among these victims of political repression were accused of their religious beliefs, and each second one of those accused was

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<sup>114</sup> Vivid descriptions of Stalin's terror and the Soviet practice of labor camps can be found in Robert Conquest's book *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties* (1968) and Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* (1973).

<sup>115</sup> After Ezhov's dismissal in 1938, Lavrentij Beria (1899-1953) headed the office, and the scale of the terror significantly diminished.

executed on this charge. Only in 1937, more than one and a half hundred thousand (162.500) of Orthodox believers, mostly the clergy and their families, were arrested, of whom 89.600 were executed (Emel'janov: 2004).

The upshot of Stalin's terror was undeniable. By 1939, all monasteries were closed in contrast to 1917, when there were more than one thousand monasteries. If in 1917, Russia listed sixty thousand churches, by 1939, merely a hundred of churches remained open. It is necessary to notice here that the mentioned numbers are very hard to trace because many victims have not been found, until now, in the official records, which became relatively open to public since 1989. The memory of the victims of Soviet repression is now observed on 30 October.

The turning point in the history of Soviet aggression against religion is usually associated with the Nazi occupation of the Soviet Union in June 1941. It is interesting that in the period prior to the Nazi assault on the USSR (between 1939 and 1941), the Soviet army was busy liberating the occupied regions in Byelorussia, Baltic countries, and West Ukraine. On the liberated territories, the Soviet state persecuted religious groups and leaders. However, the situation radically changed in September 1943. This occurred during the secret meeting held by Stalin and the chief hierarchs of the ROC: Metropolitan Sergij (Stragorodskij), Metropolitan Aleksij (Simanskij), and Metropolitan Nikolaj (Jarushevich). Although the proceedings of that meeting will remain forever unknown, the outcome of the meeting was obvious. Stalin allowed reestablishing the official Moscow Patriarchate,<sup>116</sup> abolishing thereby the abovementioned renewal movement. As a result, the ROC partially regained its public role in Soviet society, but in return, the hierarchs of the ROC seemed to have promised their loyalty to the state.

It is not accidental that in the second half of the twentieth century, the Soviet strategy shifted from physical destruction of religious citizens towards psychological terror. Psychological intimidation was implemented by means of permanent public surveillance, condemnation, as well as explicit discrimination and restriction of believers' carrier, educational, and medical care opportunities. The latent post-war Soviet persecution of religion manifested itself in the fact that a significant number of churches, which legally belonged to the state, were unpredictably closed or submitted to an alternative public use, such as fabrics, plants, fan clubs, etc. However,

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<sup>116</sup> In September 1943, Metropolitan Sergij (Stragorodskij) was elected the Patriarch of Moscow and All of Russia, followed in 1945 by Patriarch Aleksij I (Simanskij).

even under these explicit and implicit restrictions, the ROC managed to survive the post-war persecution.

As this concise historical overview has revealed, Soviet persecution can be considered as a determinate factor in the recent reappearance of the ROC in the public arena of post-Soviet Russian society. Insofar as the Church and its believers were seen as martyrs who had sacrificially defended their right to religious and intellectual freedom, the Church's public appeal became even stronger and more legitimate after the years of terror. The Orthodox theological doctrine reemerged from the ideological battle with Soviet militant atheism as the undeniable winner.

However, if one can understand the triumphant return of Orthodoxy in public life after the *perestrojka*, one would still wonder how a country with a developed ecclesiastical and theological tradition, such as pre-revolutionary Russia, was able to degrade, in result of the Bolshevik upheaval, to the brutal and uncivilized persecution of religion. Imagine, one may give a very simplistic answer to this question by suggesting that communist ideology was intolerant of any expressions of free thought, as well as of any alternative organization that opposed the clear and straightforward ideology of the Communist Party. Nevertheless, such an answer avoids the discussion of the pre-revolutionary situation in late imperial Russia. Then, the ROC functioned as an institution highly privileged by the state, had a relatively high moral-ideological status, and enjoyed certain juridical rights of an official public organization. How did it happen that in the span of a few months, between the October revolution in 1917 and the Decree of January 1918, the Russian state and, even more regretfully, Russian society shifted from the peaceful, almost paternalistic attitude to religion towards total intolerance and severe persecution.

In my view, that dramatic shift in state-church relations reflects the pervasive tendency of the Russian state toward gaining totalitarian superiority over each individual element in its state machinery. An individual element can be associated with any public institution that claims its institutional autonomy or alternative ideology, or with any individual citizen who struggles for his right to freedom.<sup>117</sup> Against this background, Soviet persecution of the Church appears as a quintessential example of the general inclination of political power toward totalitarian control. The scale of

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<sup>117</sup> The tendency of political power toward totalitarian domination can be traced back to the earlier history of Russia, specifically in relation to the history of state-church relations (the argument set forth in section 4.2). This tendency can be also posed in a broader context of current political-social developments in contemporary Russia (chapter five).

violence and incivility of Soviet persecution was, nonetheless, abhorrent, as it testified to a deep hatred and fear that the Soviet authorities and their adherents felt with regard to alternatively thinking individuals.

#### 6.1.2 The Privileged Position of the ROC in Post-Soviet Russia

From a moral perspective, the ROC reappeared in the public arena of post-Soviet Russian society as a victorious martyr and as an institution to be trusted. In contrast to the oppressive climate of the Soviet regime, the ROC contributed substantially to the religious, cultural, and moral renaissance of the Russian nation. However, from a practical-political perspective, the ROC was perceived by the new democratic government, formed around Boris El'tsyn, as an important remnant of the Soviet regime and thus a player influential enough to be taken seriously. In what follows, my aim is clarify how the ROC manages to combine these two divergent perspectives with a view to gaining a privileged position in the public arena of post-Soviet Russian society.

In the early 1990s, the relations between nascent civil society, new democratic political power, and the ROC evolved spontaneously. In this respect, Alexander T'jakhta rightly asserts in the article 'Political Positioning of the Church in the Time of Putin'<sup>118</sup> that such spontaneity was possible because none of these three major forces had a clear vision of its own strategy and role (T'jakhta 2001). Insofar as the ROC emerged from the Soviet system as a powerful public organization with a high economic status and clear corporate interests, the El'tsyn administration chose to treat the ROC pragmatically, as just another element in the network of civil society on a par with professional labor unions, political parties, and cultural associations.

It is only after a decade of the chaotic interrelations between the secular democratic state and the ROC that the government's pragmatic perception of the Church faded. In fact, it was gradually substituted by the realization that the Church retains real political capital not only due to its legalized public status, but also due to its pronounced alternative view on secular politics and society. Russian politicians were challenged to apprehend the 'extra-political' subject of politics. Namely, while interacting with the ROC, they were dealing with an agent that surpassed the function of a social force

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<sup>118</sup> Александр Т'яхта, «Политическое позиционирование Церкви при Путине» // *Отечественные записки* (№ 1, 2001). Internet publication, last visited on 28 July 2010.

in the public arena and that was able to legitimize its political and public appeal by resources that were radically different from those available in the conceptual arsenal of secular policy-makers and politicians.

This conceptual ambiguity still determines the evasive character of the state's recurring attempts at producing adequate policy with regard to the ROC and other religious organizations. Andrej Sebentsov, one of the leading experts on state-church relations and the government official of the presidential administration, confirms the confusion around religious policy-making in his report "The Law Is Good, So Is the Line?".<sup>119</sup> He argues that even though the Constitution of the Russian Federation does contain a number of relevant articles, the state does not have an articulated, deliberate, and comprehensible standpoint for considered decision-making. The administration continues to address various problems related to religious policy only as soon as these problems arise. Consequently, concrete decisions are taken in an *ad hoc* manner and in conformity with each separate case. In the meanwhile, while governmental structures suffer from an alarming shortage of experts in the relevant field, the ROC impedes governmental attempts to establish the national organ of control presumably because it fears to lose its privileged position (Sebentsov 2001).

In its turn, the ROC does not undertake noticeable efforts to establish procedural norms in state-church relations either. To a certain extent, this reluctant attitude can be explained, according to Tjakhta, by the structure that the ecclesiastical administration of the ROC inherited from the Soviet system. During the Soviet period, social functions of the Church were reduced to a minimum. The only connection of the Church with the Soviet state was maintained through the so-called Department of the Church's External Affairs (*OVTS*), the department that also managed international activity of the ROC in the field of peace-making. Nowadays, the *OVTS* hosts a sort of political-legal and information center, which remains responsible for the dialog with the 'external world' and, regrettably enough, remains feebly connected with the office of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Revising the legal side of the story, we need to take into consideration the fact that in 1990 two different laws were enacted, namely the Soviet law on 'Freedom of Conscience and of Religious Associations' and the Russian law on 'Freedom of Religious Belief.' However, the Constitution of the Russian Federation was continuously altered until 1993, when a new version

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<sup>119</sup> Андрей Себенцов, «Закон хороший, а линия какая?» // *Отечественные записки* (№ 1, 2001). Internet publication, last visited on 28 July 2010.

of the law was adopted under the influence of the leading hierarchy of the ROC, Patriarch Aleksij (Ridiger) (1929-2008). Commenting on this incident of interference, Sebentsov understands the ambition of the ROC to increase its social and constitutional status but considers it unacceptable that a constitutional state permits civil servants to modify the law according to their own religious preferences and thus to limit freedom of other confessions (Sebentsov 2001). Besides, such a biased attitude is problematic given Russia's historical profile as a multiconfessional and multinational Empire.

*The Constitution of the Russian Federation* ratified on 12 December 1993<sup>120</sup> clearly defines the secular character of the Russian state without any ideological preference, "The Russian Federation is a secular state. No religion may be established as a state or obligatory one. Religious associations shall be separated from the State and shall be equal before the law" (Section One, Chapter 1 'The Fundamentals of the Constitutional System,' article 14). Consequently, the Constitution states that "in the Russian Federation ideological diversity shall be recognized" (article 13) and that "everyone shall be guaranteed freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, including the right to profess individually or together with others any religion or to profess no religion at all, to freely choose, possess and disseminate religious and other views and act according to them" (article 28). On 19 September 1997, the Russian State Duma adopted the notorious 'Federal Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations.'<sup>121</sup> This document reaffirms, on the one hand, "the right of each person to freedom of conscience and freedom of religious profession, as well as to equality before the law irrespective of religious affiliation and convictions, proceeding from the fact that the Russian Federation is a secular state." On the other hand, it recognize "the special role of Orthodoxy in the history of Russia and in the establishment and development of its spirituality and culture; respecting Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and other religions, constituting an integral part of the historical heritage of the peoples of Russia" (preamble).

The situation of conceptual and legal ambiguity in state-church relations noticeably changed when Putin became the president in 2000. Power went over into the hands of the Putin relatively young and energetic

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<sup>120</sup> Internet publication, last visited on 30 July 2010. In the present study, the English translation available online is used with some minor emendations of the grammar.

<sup>121</sup> Internet publication, last visited on 30 July 2010. The English translation available online is used with some minor emendations of the grammar.

administration, which suspended El'tsyn's experimental reforms and announced an epoch of stability and conservatism. The chosen conservative course required that the image of the new Russian president comprised a clear religious element. Since Putin already possessed some vital features of a conservative political leader (such as the family and military service), he only needed to publicly affirm his adherence to the ROC, which he eagerly did. Hence, during the elections of 2000, he gained massive support on the part of both the conservative electorate and Orthodox public activists.

Evaluating the established practice of state-church relations in post-Soviet Russia, Sebentsov rightfully suggests that the state's tendency to favor the ROC can be explained by its hope for broad support on the part of the electorate and by the need to fill up the post-Soviet cultural-ideological vacuum. Notwithstanding these evident factors, the proclaimed distinction between traditional and non-traditional religions (which legally endorses the policy of favoring a selected religious group) is at odds with the principles of egalitarianism and liberalism, which are central to a liberal democratic state. Sebentsov perceives in the attempts of the ROC to attain ideological priority over other religious groups "the seamy side of persisting bolshevism" (Sebentsov 2001). The experiment of giving control to a single ideological organization was once put to practice when the Soviet state delegated its controlling function to the Communist Party. Obviously, a similar scenario where one particular ideological organization plays a controlling function needs to be avoided in the future.

Hence, the actions of the ROC demonstrate its inclination toward gaining a privileged legal position and ideological dominance, even in the context of secular democracy and civil society. In the study *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church: Religion in Russia after Communism*, Zoë Knox rightly asserts that in the changing political climate of post-Soviet Russia "the Orthodox Church benefited from the new freedoms more than any other religious organization and denomination." Thereby, it succeeded in reclaiming its prominent position in the heterogeneous religious sphere. Curiously enough, the greatest paradox of the religious renaissance in post-Soviet Russia consists exactly in "the transition of the Moscow Patriarchate from a suppressed institution, directed and regulated by an atheist regime, to an institution which directs considerable effort to suppressing other religious bodies by discouraging religious pluralism and enjoying state-sanctioned privileges in a secular country" (Knox 2005: 2).

Once the liberalism of the *perestrojka* allowed the ROC to reclaim its position at the center of national religious life, it simultaneously

problematized the Church's regained identity. The search for a new public identity assumed, as Knox argues, two contradictory trajectories. On the one hand, some believers formed a group who expected the Church "to encourage the development and consolidation of civil society, integral to Russia's democratic project. Others appropriated the national Church to augment antidemocratic platforms and ideologies." Hence, Knox compares the development of the relationship between civil society and religion in post-Soviet Russia to "the struggle to appropriate Orthodoxy by these diametrically opposed tendencies" (Knox 2005: 1).

The conflict between the described strategic positions continues to underlie the relations between politics, civil society, and religion in present-day Russia. Agreeing with Knox's tacit message, I assume that this conflict rather testifies to the pluralism of the ideological standpoints existing within the ROC itself. When analyzing the civil and moral significance of Orthodox Christianity in post-Soviet Russia, we need to consider the official position of the Moscow Patriarchate not as a solitary statement, but as a response in the dialog with the influential opposition supported by nonconformist clergy and active laity (Knox 2005: 11). It is the dialectics between the influence emanating from the Moscow Patriarchate and the liberal stance of the unofficial Church that characterizes the cultural-ideological discourse in contemporary Russia.

What are the consequences of the reclaimed privileged self-positioning of the ROC in the political and public arena? Primarily, it would be correct to suppose that such self-positioning revitalizes the old ritual of legitimation of political power by ecclesiastical authority. In the provocative article 'State-Church Relations against Freedom of Conscience and the Constitutional State,'<sup>122</sup> Sergej Bur'janov confirms this assumption. The scholar puts forward even a bolder argument when saying that all models of state-church relations extant in the history of Russia share a common deficiency, namely that all political regimes presumed exploitation of the spiritual authority of religion by the state. All along the millennial Christian history of Russia, political leaders would use the ROC with a view to fortifying their own power, as well as to promulgating state centralization.

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<sup>122</sup> Сергей Бурьянов, «Государственно-церковные отношения против свободы совести и правового государства» // *Отечественные записки* (№ 7, 2002). Internet publication, last visited on 28 July 2010.

Nowadays, in Bur'janov opinion, Russian democratic leaders have not avoided the same temptation (Bur'janov 2002).<sup>123</sup>

Indeed, I would agree that the constitutional and cultural-ideological crisis in post-Soviet Russia has stimulated the revival of certain ideas affiliated with the model of Byzantine *symphonia*.<sup>124</sup> This may lead, regrettably, to the situation wherein the Church surpasses its function as an ideological institute and starts to intervene in questions of property, legislation, and election campaigns. Thus, while the ROC invests in establishing its status as a trustworthy institute in the public arena of Russian society, this self-positioning may have a rather gloomy undertone. In return for moral preaching and national stability, the Church reclaims its confiscated property and expects the state to provide significant financial support for its social mission. Accordingly, in the field of state-church relations, the Church insists on respecting the principle of non-interference, but at the same time requires a privileged position appropriate for a traditional religion of Russia and continues reclaiming its jurisdiction over the 'canonical territories,' which separated themselves after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

It is unsurprising then that certain Russian scholars tend to criticize the way in which constitutional democracy is practiced in contemporary Russia. Bur'janov asserts, for instance, that by constitutionally acknowledging of Russian Orthodoxy as the privileged state ideology, the Russian state abandoned the model of a secular state and moved towards "clericalization of the state." With this, the contemporary democratic state has re-established the ancient theocratic principle of sacralization of political power by religious authority. This is, however, utterly incompatible with the secular principle of democratic legitimation, as well as with Russia's multiconfessional and multinational background (Bur'janov 2002).

The tendency toward revitalizing traditional theocratic principles in the context of liberal democracy raises some moral critique as well. If a liberal democratic state identifies itself as secular, it consequently strives towards a minimal regulation of society's religious-moral life. On the contrary, if a state retains certain features of totalitarianism, it strives for accumulating ideological control over society on the whole, as well as over its individual members. The totalitarian system is premised on distrust of individual

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<sup>123</sup> Bur'janov is quite radical in his critique when claiming that democratic leaders aimed "under the guise of the so-called spiritual renaissance to use religion as a moral basis of their amoral politics" (Bur'janov 2002).

<sup>124</sup> The model of Byzantine *symphonia* was examined more thoroughly in § 4.2.1.

judgment and disrespect of individual freedom because individual freedom, as the totalitarian state fears, entails the possibility of being misused for anti-regime goals. With a view to extending ideological control over society, the totalitarian state seeks to interfere in all possible institutions that are entitled to control the ideological-moral sphere of society's life, starting with churches, sects, religious associations, and philosophical-ideological organizations, and ending with such seemingly innocent groups as hobby clubs and local meeting centers. On this view, Bur'janov is correct when apprehending that the contemporary Russian state, notwithstanding its democratic-constitutional order, preserves certain features of the totalitarian Soviet state. This totalitarian tendency is specifically manifest in the state's attempt to privilege the ROC as the foremost ideological-moral force and thereby to control the mindset of Russian citizens (Bur'janov 2002).

However, in Putin's and post-Putin's Russia, some changes emerged. If the state's ideological support of the ROC reached its summit in 2002, which gave ground to many observers to speak about a *symphonia* taking shape, since then, the relations between state and church have cooled down. As Alexander Verkhovskij notices in his recent publication 'Religious Organizations and the Possibilities of Ideological Engineering in Putin's Russia',<sup>125</sup> the state no longer publicly supports the ideas of the hierarchs, but rather undertakes concrete, often financial, projects to cultivate the ROC as an influential social force. Obviously, certain strategic political goals are pursued through these projects. In result, the cooperation between the Federal and ecclesiastical elites is visible only to the experts (Verkhovskij 2009: 168-69).

### 6.1.3 The Prevailing Self-Identification of Russians as Orthodox Christians

From the above analysis, it has become clear that the ROC has regained an influential position in the public and political arena. Ordinary Russian citizens regard it as a trustworthy institute with an immense moral appeal, whereas critical analysts, politicians, and policy-makers regard it as an important political and fiscal subject. What did this regained position of the Church mean for Russian society and culture? I suppose the term *votserkovlenie* reflects best of all the social consequences of the post-Soviet

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<sup>125</sup> Александр Верховский «Религиозные организации и возможности идеологического проектирования в путинской России» // А. Малащенко и С. Филатов (ред.) *Двадцать лет религиозной свободы в России* (2009).

religious renaissance. The term *votserkovlenije* can be approximately translated in English as 'in-churching,' implying the believer's increasing growing into the organism of the Church, accompanied by his acceptance of the whole body of ecclesiastical doctrines, mysteries, rites, traditions, and customs.

Since the last two decades, the trend of *votserkovlenije* has become immensely popular. It reflected a deepening self-identification of newly converted Orthodox Christians and instigated a noticeable shift in the social constitution of the ROC. If previously, during Soviet repression of religious freedom, the Church comprised mostly aged or alternatively-thinking individuals, after the cessation of the Soviet regime, the Church started to attract younger generations. Thus, the emergent middle class embracing young professionals and the intelligentsia in their thirties-forties, as well as the new business and political elite, also constitute the social basis of the ROC today. Possibly, it is education, erudition, and general cultural interest that encouraged these relatively young believers to pursue their intellectual and spiritual search in the Orthodox tradition.

The popular trend of *votserkovlenije* in post-Soviet Russia is a clear testimony that the privileged position of the ROC is no longer a mere legal article, but obtains a feasible social basis (Tjakhta 2001). Various public opinion surveys indicate that 32 to 73 percent of the Russian population identify themselves as Orthodox Christians. Notwithstanding this high percentage, we should be aware that these impressive results do not reflect the qualitative element of the citizens' religious belief. In contradistinction to the overwhelming majority of nominal Orthodox Christians, surveys indicate a relatively low percentage of the so-called 'in-churched' Orthodox Christians (4-6 percent) who indeed actively participate in church life and are more or less competent in theological and ecclesiastical questions. Despite this low percentage of genuinely active believers, general incompetence of the majority of self-identified Orthodox Russians does not undermine the central position of the ROC in the social-political arena because this position relies exactly on the large group of nominal self-identified Orthodox Christians.

Thus, it should be emphasized that the overwhelming majority of self-identified Orthodox Russians ascribe themselves to the ROC in virtue of their ethnic background or passive baptism in their early years. However, many of them have a fairly vague idea of what this identification entails. Probably, a significant number of the respondents would have difficulty in answering basic questions like: What is the content of your belief? What kind of religious practice do Orthodox Christians have? What are the

principles of Orthodox morality (let alone the theological foundations of these moral principles)?

Evidently, Orthodoxy has become for nominal Orthodox Russians a matter of fashion, devoid of profound moral consequences and spiritual-intellectual search. This superficial self-identification does not involve a change in the practical side of life according to the established rules, such as, for instance, engagement in parish life, frequent praying, fasting, and observing religious rites. A high percentage of Orthodox Russians prefer the rites performed once in life (baptism, marriage, and memorial service), to the rites of repetitive character (communion, confession, common prayer, and the like). This preference reveals that nominal Orthodox Russians passively adopt their religious identification. For these Christians, as Dublin correctly observes in his article 'Mass Religious Culture in Russia (Tendencies and Conclusions of the 1990s)',<sup>126</sup> "Christian belief has a rather general 'psychological' meaning. It pacifies the mind emotionally but does not impose any religious obligations. It does not prescribe any collective norms of action or presume any individual responsibility as some practical imperatives for behavior" (Dubin 2004: 40). The essence of religion consists, according to nominal Russian Orthodox Christians, in inspiring people to reflect on the meaning of life, or in teaching patience and tolerance towards human weakness. Plausibly, nominal Orthodox Christians are motivated in their religious choice by the principle of individualism. They consider their choice of religion as an individual way to escape unpleasant realities of the social environment. Accordingly, the considerations of active moral struggle with social realities remain secondary with regard to the individual spiritual search for perfection.

Moreover, it is revealing that the exhibited mass self-identification of Russian Orthodox Christians is susceptible to certain fluctuations over time. As Dubin argues in his article 'Mass Orthodoxy in Russia (the 1990s)',<sup>127</sup> there has been a noticeable increase in Russians' self-identification as Orthodox Christians during the periods of economic and political instability, which were accompanied by acute social anxiety. These critical periods lasted from 1993 to 1994 and from 1998 to 1999. By contrast, the periods of general political mobilization and relative economic stabilization,

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<sup>126</sup> Борис Дубин, «Массовая религиозная культура в России (тенденции и итоги 1990-х годов)» // *Вестник общественного мнения: Данные. Анализ. Дискуссии* (№ 3, 2004).

<sup>127</sup> Борис Дубин, «Массовое православие в России (девяностые годы)» // *Индекс* (№ 11, 2000). Internet publication, last visited on 17 September 2010.

respectively from 1995 to 1996 and the years after 2000, correspond to a significant decrease of Orthodox believers.

The large group of self-identified Orthodox Christians, which actually constitute the social basis of the ROC, is far from homogeneous or stable. Its versatility reflects the pluralized social texture of the Russian Orthodox community. This community includes individuals with different socio-economic backgrounds and different views on how to be an Orthodox Christian in the context of secular democracy and pluralistic society. The examination of these different views is relevant for the present study, as it clarifies how Orthodox Christianity relates to the modernizing society.

According to the specific attitudes towards democracy and civil society, two big groups can be distinguished within the versatile body of self-identified Orthodox Russians. The first group consists of the young and progressive believers who tend to interpret the Church's moral and social doctrine in liberal terms. Dubin correctly argues that these young, educated, and urbanized Russians instigated, by joining the ROC in the 1990s, some crucial changes in the religious culture of Orthodoxy.<sup>128</sup> We can also associate the group of liberally oriented Orthodox Christians with those who invoked the Church "to encourage the development and consolidation of civil society, integral to Russia's democratic project" (Know 2005: 1). In contrast to the minority of liberally oriented Orthodox Christians, the second larger group can be defined as the conservative core. The percentage of elderly or less educated people still prevails over the percentage of liberally oriented neophytes. The conservative core comprises "those who consistently appropriate the national Church to augment antidemocratic platforms and ideologies" (Knox 2005: 1). The conservative view on modern culture and the role of the Church in the secular world is the pivotal issue that unites the adherents of this group, despite of their different political convictions, educational background, social status, age,

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<sup>128</sup> Dubin suggests an interesting explanation of why Orthodox Christianity appeals to young and educated individuals. The scholar points at the long tradition of religious syncretism in Russia. Religious syncretism motivates those who want to (re)discover their identity within the scope of Orthodox Christian teaching and spirituality. Insofar as these young and educated urban citizens have access to mass media, internet, and the press, and possess certain analytic skills, they often remain unsatisfied with the kind of answers they get in Orthodox parishes. Consequently, they try to mend the lack of intellectualism by amalgamating the Orthodox Christian teaching with a wide number of alternative worldviews. Amongst others, extremely popular worldviews range from nostalgic ideas about the organic unity of society and nation (resulting in 'social mysticism' of D. Andreev or in 'social biologism' of L. Gumilëv) to ideas borrowed from theosophy (E. Blavatskaja), or from transhumanism and immortalism (M. Solov'ëv). These syncretism-oriented religious individuals frequently identify themselves as Orthodox Christians.

gender, etc. This group consists of moderate conservative Orthodox believers who are reluctant to form their own opinion concerning social and political issues and therefore tend to join the inert majority. In so doing, as Dubin rightly claims, they contribute to the weight of the routine and conservative convictions, as well as to the general social passivism, which dominates contemporary Russian society. Characteristically, moderate conservatism underlies the official standpoint of the leading hierarchs of the ROC (Dubin 2000).

We should make a distinction between this conservative core and the trend of radical fundamentalism. Hence, we can divide the social strata that currently constitute the social basis of the ROC into three major categories: fundamentalists, moderate conservative Orthodox Christians, and liberally oriented ones. These social groups correspond to the three conceptual standpoints of Orthodox Christianity with regard to civil society. The examination of these positions will elucidate whether Orthodox Christianity can provide a substantive alternative conception of civil society and which traditional theological conceptions can be innovatively used to facilitate the instigated democratic project.

## **6.2 Orthodox Fundamentalism as an Alternative to Civil Society**

Earlier in the study, the problem of religious fundamentalism has been discussed in relation to modern secularism (§ 4.1.4). Then, the discussion had a conceptual character; the intent here is to apply the gained insights by examining the practice of Orthodox fundamentalism in contemporary Russia. Specifically, I want to reveal how Orthodox fundamentalists substantiate their political message by theological arguments and how the Orthodox fundamentalist movement makes use of the public sphere in Russian democratic society today.

It is plausible to assume that the rise of Orthodoxy-based fundamentalism is one of the possible reactions to the process of liberalization of society, which inevitably ensues from the establishment of secular democracy and civil society. In essence, Orthodox fundamentalism is a publicly manifested response to the societal and cultural modernization of Russian post-Soviet society. The disturbing question is whether this public response can be regarded legitimate within the moral-juridical framework of a liberal secular democracy.

### 6.2.1 Theological Substantiation of the Fundamentalist Political Program

Orthodox fundamentalism suggests a clear answer to how Orthodox Christianity should relate to the idea and the reality of civil society. I use the word ‘should’ purposefully in order to emphasize the strong normative orientation of the Orthodox fundamentalist movement. As we can recall from the above analysis (§ 4.1.4), religious fundamentalism is driven primarily by protest against the general trend of modernization. Orthodox fundamentalism is no exception from this general definition, as it comprises main characteristics of the global movement such as reactivity, a dualistic view of the world, consequent separation from the world, and self-identification as a chosen people (Frey 2007: v). Similar to other religious fundamentalist movements, the Orthodoxy-based movement conceives of itself as one of the best “embattled forms of spirituality” and consequently legitimizes its public role by the principle of “militant piety” (Armstrong 2000: xi). With that, fundamentalism adopts a far more rigorous political impact than other religious movements: Its normative fundamentalist ideology proves devastating both for internal and external relations because fundamentalists’ protest tends to unleash “the fanatical-irrational and destructive behavior of extremism and terrorism” – the term suggested by Konstantin Kostjuk in his article ‘Orthodox Fundamentalism: The Social Portrait and the Sources’<sup>129</sup> (Kostjuk 2000a). Relating to the case of Russia, Kostjuk draws the examples of the fundamentalists’ fanatical-irrational behavior by pointing at the Jewish pogroms of 1881 and 1903. It was already in pre-revolutionary Russia that Orthodox fundamentalism adopted a noticeable anti-Semitic orientation.

In Soviet Russia, the movement of Orthodox fundamentalism has not assumed much popularity until the *perestrojka*. The movement reappeared, exhibiting its affinity with the idea of the restoration of monarchy. It would be erroneous, however, to perceive the Orthodox fundamentalist movement as one monolithic trend. On the contrary, the movement embraces many subgroups including extremist-nationalistic movements, as well as groups sympathizing with the Communist Party of Russia, which are all centered around the distinctive fundamentalist core. This core has no extremist character and rather endorses, according to Kostjuk, a moderate

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<sup>129</sup> Константин Костюк, «Православный фундаментализм: Социальный портрет и истоки» // *Полис – Политические исследования* (№ 5, 2000). Internet publication, last visited on 17 September 2010. The article has been referred to earlier in the study (in § 4.1.4).

national-patriotic rhetoric. The fundamentalist movement gains public interest not only due to an impressive network of diverse fundamentalist organizations (brotherhoods), but also due to its use of modern communication techniques. Notwithstanding its noticeable presence in the public arena, we should not overestimate the public potential of Orthodox fundamentalist activity in present-day Russia. As Kostjuk correctly argues, if fundamentalists want to exert any influence on public opinion, they are bound to cooperate with other significant patriotic or religious forces. The scholar discerns the traces of such an alliance in the defense of the White House in 1993, in public support of the Law on Religious Organizations in 1997, and in the canonization of the last Romanoff family in 2000 (Kostjuk 2000a).

On a closer examination, one can rapidly disclose that neither a theological nor a moral aspect constitutes the core of Orthodox fundamentalism in contemporary Russia. Instead, Orthodox fundamentalists seem to be preoccupied with a distinct political program. This political program is pervaded, in Kostjuk's opinion, by the national-patriotic ideal of monarchy, the uncompromising anti-ecumenism, and the critique of Western modernity, especially pertaining to the principles of liberalism and individualism. We should notice that although political fundamentalism borrows many symbolic and semantic attributes from the religious practice of the ROC, its radical political views diverge from moderate conservatism that is officially endorsed by the Moscow Patriarchate. Orthodoxy-based fundamentalism tends to amalgamate the traditional Orthodox symbols and art (such as canonized saints, church feasts, iconography, and hymnography) with the ultra right-wing political views. Coupled with an explicit ethnical identification, these political views acquire a form of moralizing propaganda (if you *are* Russian – you should join us, otherwise you are against us, the genuine successors of the Russian nation). As William C. Gay correctly observes in his introduction to Anastasia V. Mitrofanova's solid study *The Politicization of Russian Orthodoxy*, these fundamentalist religious ideologies are dangerous because "they define religious differences in terms of 'us' and 'them,' thus clearing the way for xenophobia and religiously-motivated violence" (Mitrofanova 2005: 19). For his part, Kostjuk shows how the fundamentalist political program acquires a metaphysical foundation when it is legitimized by the myth of the Jewish-Masonic conspiracy and the myth of the Russian Empire as a state of the truth. These myths depict the course of world history as a puppet show directed by the Masonic leaders and speak about an 'Orthodox' Stalin

whose intention to establish an Orthodox monarchy in the USSR was precluded by the Jewish-Masonic conspiracy. Absurdly, this populist political program of Orthodox fundamentalists coincides with the rhetoric of the nationalist and communist movements in Russia.

The key motif of the fundamentalist political-ideological project is the total and unconditional rejection of modernity and of the secular world (Mitrofanova 2005: 39). Modernity, in its facets of globalization, democratization, and societal differentiation, is perceived by fundamentalists as a sign of the Antichrist's reign, whereas the Orthodox Kingdom appears as an earthly manifestation of the Kingdom of God, which needs to be established before the coming of the Antichrist. The fact that these apocalyptic views are extremely influential in Orthodox fundamentalism is corroborated by wide public interest in publications titled like *Russia before the Second Coming* (1992). Insofar as fundamentalists consider the modern secularizing world to be totally alienated from God, they propagate the idea of escalating apostasy. However, instead of the Weberian flight from the world and the sublimated religious practice of asceticism, Orthodox fundamentalists do maintain a vital connection with the world, since they extol Russia as the only place redeemed from the sinful, secular modernity. In fact, the fundamentalist belief in Russia's leading role among other Orthodox brother-countries disguises anti-ascetic nationalism and self-isolation.

For a systematic study of the ideological doctrine of Orthodox fundamentalists, we can refer to the publications of Ioann Snychev, Metropolitan of St. Petersburg and Ladoga (1927-95), and his press-secretary Konstantin Dushenov. Snychev's peculiar book *Russian Symphony: An Essay on Russian Historiosophy*<sup>130</sup> remains one of the most important fundamentalist accounts today. The underlying idea of his apocalyptic interpretation of Russia's history is that the process of apostasy has been inevitably advancing in the increasingly godless world and is now approaching its end. Since Russia bears a universal soteriological mission as the last haven of genuine Orthodox faith, it suffers such aggressive assaults by the devil. Among these attacks, fundamentalists are mainly worried about the devil's attempt at reversing and thus misusing pivotal Orthodox concepts. If the concept of *sobornost'* (conciliarity) means, in the Orthodox theological tradition, the unity of all Orthodox Christians in their belief, its devilish secular analogue pertains to the ecumenical movement and the

<sup>130</sup> Митрополит Иоанн (Снычев), *Русская симфония. Очерки русской историософии*. (1998).

consequent political unification of all countries under the banner of the Antichrist's super-state (Snychev 1998: 481-83). Fundamentalists believe that, in contrast to the advancing worldwide apostasy, Russia will be the only place to be saved and to harbor the coming Orthodox Kingdom, which will be established as soon as monarchy is restored in Russia. As Mitrofanova correctly observes, "monarchy is, beyond doubt, the most archaic of all archaic ideas put forward by political fundamentalists" (Mitrofanova 2005: 41). The enduring magnetism of the idea of monarchy is reinforced by fundamentalists' utopian belief in a righteous and good father-tsar.

If the legitimization of the fundamentalist doctrine may seem insufficient, a fair question arises why the fundamentalist movement still continues to attract certain individuals. A partial answer has to do, I suppose, with the way in which modern individuals experience modernity. Fundamentalism proposes an attractive alternative to the ongoing secularization and pluralization; thereby, it provides a stable and comprehensive metaphysical structure that opposes the constantly changing world. In response to the modern transformation towards "a society without a top and without a center," as Luhmann trenchantly articulated it (Luhmann 1990: 16), religious fundamentalism advocates the hierarchical vision of society with a top and with a clear center. Kostjuk elucidates in this respect that Orthodox fundamentalism attracts primarily Orthodox neophytes who become fascinated by the sacralizing power of the theological logic and who consequently get absorbed into a mythologized complex of the political-ideological credos. Characteristically, as Kostjuk remarks, the contemporary Russian intelligentsia with a technical background tends to share some of moderate fundamentalist credos. Instead, the intelligentsia with a humanitarian background is represented in the moderate fundamentalist circles to a much lesser degree (Kostjuk 2000a).

By publicly promulgating their political program, Orthodox fundamentalists obviously strive for some changes in actual policy. What do they require from the government? In the first place, they assert that Russian economy and foreign policy should serve national interests and thus remain self-sufficient and fully independent from the global economy. As Mitrofanova explains, "all fundamentalists support the economic autarchy of Russia" and neglect foreign policy topics because of the isolationist orientation of their political vision. This is "the natural outcome of their view of the outside world, which for them is nothing more than a source of danger" (Mitrofanova 2005: 40). In the second place, the Orthodox

monarchic project exhibits an overt totalizing tendency. This claim is further elaborated by Evert van der Zweerde in the article ‘Fundamentalism in Orthodox Russia’.<sup>131</sup> The scholar explains that by radically opposing modern differentiated society, the fundamentalist vision tends to blend specified social spheres into one totalizing social space, reduced to the geographically defined Orthodox kingdom of Russia, Byelorussia, and Ukraine. Consequently, relatively independent spheres of the economy, politics, public administration, religion, morality, law, esthetics, etc. become altogether forged into one undifferentiated entity where there is no place for religious tolerance, multiculturalism, and ethnic diversity, nor for society’s self-criticism and self-reflection. In this de-differentiated society, the whole human community becomes split into two hostile groups: ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Van der Zweerde 2007: 122). Therefore, the xenophobic isolationism, founded on the idea of apostasy, is the chief message that Orthodox fundamentalists propagate in the public sphere.

#### 6.2.2 Russian Fundamentalists in the Public Arena Today

The present discussion explicates public manifestations of the fundamentalist political program. Mitrofanova rightfully notices in this respect that “political fundamentalists commonly use peaceful methods of political struggle, such as meetings and so-called ‘worshipings’ (i.e., when a group of people publicly worship in the street in response to some political event). Nevertheless, some of these organizations are paramilitary” (Mitrofanova 2005: 38). If fundamentalists do not use military violence in public spaces, they still promote religiopolitical violence, mainly for the sake of religious or national-ethnic purity. They see the secular arena of political events as a battlefield between Good and Evil and therefore attach a religious connotation and a moral assessment to essentially non-religious matters. For instance, Mitrofanova traces the genesis of ‘national’ or ‘Orthodox’ patriotism back to the turbulent period of October 1993, when the newly formed democratic parliament was threatened by the communists’ attempt at a military coup. This event “had initiated the awakening of Russian self-awareness, since subsequent national patriotism then began to acquire its religious dimension” (Mitrofanova 2005: 78).

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<sup>131</sup> Evert van der Zweerde ‘Fundamentalisme in Orthodox Rusland,’ in Ignaas Devisch en Marc De Kesel (eds.) *Fundamentalisme Face to Face* (2007).

Characteristically, public manifestations of fundamentalist military piety find place during various demonstrations. These fundamentalist gatherings primarily aim to confront the authorities with civil dissatisfaction with the current economic and political situation. In response, fundamentalist gatherings frequently provoke military restrictive measures on the part of the government. An obvious illustration of this established pattern recurred recently during the public celebration of the victory day on 9 May 2008 – the day when Russians commemorate the victory of the Soviet army over Nazi Germany in World War II. In the Soviet past, the victory day was devoted primarily to the commemoration of the achievements of the Soviet army, emphasized by the impressive parades processing along the Tverskaja Street towards the Red Square. Nowadays, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the termination of the arms race, the emphasis shifted from bragging about ex-glory toward public disapproval of the actual policy. Accordingly, these celebrations assume a politicized undertone. Surely, this public outcry finds support in the weakest social strata, who see the root of the social-economic problems in the government's reforms, which are aimed, in their opinion, at facilitating social injustices. In fact, their message is to mourn the consequences of economic liberalization of the 1990s. Paradoxically, the defense of the interests of the weakest social strata reconciles nowadays two formerly opposed ideological organizations: the Communist Party, which holds since the elections of 1996 the second rate in the Russian parliament, and the Orthodox fundamentalist movement. Both organizations demand social justice by means of a just distribution of Russia's natural resources after the oligarchism of the 1990s. However, the Communist Party and the fundamentalist movement ground their critique of the government in two antagonistic worldviews: Communists are motivated by the socialist ideals, whereas fundamentalists emphasize the national and spiritual treasure of the former Russian Empire and expect the return of the Russian tsar.

Two pictures below depict the Orthodox fundamentalist movement during the demonstrations held on the Tverskaja Street on 9 May 2008.



Typically, the representatives of the Orthodox fundamentalist movement bear the black-yellow-white banner of the Romanovs dynasty with the depiction of Christ to accentuate their Orthodox affinity. When fundamentalists use the official tricolor Russian banner, they decorate it with a picture of the double-headed crowned imperial eagle, which is also the key symbol of the Romanovs Russia.

The next photo provides evidence that the supporters of political Orthodoxy march alongside the adherents of the communist regime.



As a rule, the nostalgic appeal to the communist past is mostly articulated in civil resentment against 'loose' governmental control over national property and against the powerful oligarchs. The banner on the picture below says, "The fruit of the victory is being chewed by the oligarchs," expressing thus a vehement critique of the way state property had been redistributed after the collapse of the USSR.



However, the poignancy of the social outcry is somewhat alleviated by those who see demonstrations as a place quite suitable for having quality time with their pets.



The omnipresence of police officers and military cars is typical of the demonstration on 9 May, as well as of other public events. If during the Soviet celebrations, the military were marching the parade, now their primary task is to keep the outbursts of civil resentment under control.



To conclude, the fundamentalist movement rejects modernization and thereby opposes the very idea of democracy and civil society. Using broad public dissatisfaction with governmental policy on socio-economic issues, fundamentalists tend to join forces with nationalists and communists and

suggest populist solutions. The fundamentalist alternative to the concept of civil society can be summarized as follows: the substitution of secular liberal democracy by monarchy, the return of theocracy, and the restoration of the Church's central role in society's life. This program means the de-differentiation of societal structures. Although the voice of Orthodox fundamentalists is surely present in the public arena of present-day Russia, it should not be overestimated. It should be also distinguished from the official position of the ROC, which is the next issue to be addressed.

### 6.3 Orthodox Conservatism as an Alternative to Civil Society

A succinct summary of the Orthodox conservative view on modernization can be found in the recent ecclesiastical documents of the ROC. These documents have inaugurated a new stage in the relationship between civil society and Orthodox Christianity. The main ecclesiastical document is, doubtlessly, the social doctrine of the ROC. The social doctrine was adopted at the Jubilee Bishops Council held in August 2000 in Moscow. It was subsequently published together with other documents as *The Fundamentals of the Social Conception of the Russian Orthodox Church* (henceforth: the *Fundamentals*) in the *Proceedings of Jubilee Bishops Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, 13-16 August 2000*.<sup>132</sup> After the chaotic period in the history of state-church relations during the 1990s, the ROC came out with a clear statement about its place and role in the modern world. What does this statement mean for Russian society today? Has it sufficiently clarified the Church's attitude towards the problems of a secular society? Has the Church proposed a sufficient theological substantiation to the concept of civil society? And if not, has it elaborated a substantial theological alternative to this concept? These questions form the backbone of my investigation.

#### 6.3.1 The Dialectics between Orthodox Theology and Modernity

In the theoretical framework of secular democracy, the role of religion in the public sphere is dictated by the logic of functional differentiation. Religion becomes just another player in the arena of secular pluralistic

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<sup>132</sup> *Основы социальной концепции Русской Православной Церкви // Юбилейный архиерейский собор Русской Православной Церкви, 13-16 августа 2000. Материалы* (2001). In the present study, the English translation available online is used, with some minor amendments of the grammar.

society and therefore needs to adjust to the hermeneutical methods of secular public discourse. Religious discourse can relate to functionally differentiated society by means of adjusting religious ethics to the internal rationality of differentiated social systems. As Kostjuk explains in his insightful article ‘The Emergence of the Social Doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church,’<sup>133</sup> modernization of societal structures involves a way of establishing norms and values in societal organization that is different from the traditional one. The method of maintaining social order by means of traditional morality gives way to rationalized procedures at the structural-institutional level. Insofar as free and autonomous individual actively adjusts to these procedures, “the task of Christian social ethics is to influence these institutional changes” (Kostjuk 2001: 117).

Applying this general theory of secularization to the evaluation of the current situation in Russia, we can regard the formulation of the social doctrine of the ROC as an attempt of the Church to respond to the trend of modernization. In a later publication ‘The Social Doctrine as a Challenge for the Tradition and Contemporaneity of the ROC,’<sup>134</sup> Kostjuk is, perhaps, too optimistic when asserting that with the emergence of the social doctrine the earlier hostility between the religious and secular standpoints has been pacified. The vein in which the document is written reveals the Church’s eagerness to accept the secular contemporary world as it is and start working in it and with it; thus, the Church is eager to start a dialog with the secular world (Kostjuk 2003). In my view, the social doctrine rather articulates the Church’s ambiguous attitude with regard to secular ethics. Before delving into a detailed analysis of the document, I need to spell out the main sources of the Church’s indecisive attitude.

An obvious source of ambiguity is the nature of secular ethics: Should the Church adopt or reject the ethics dictated by the logic of pluralistic secular society? To illustrate the Church’s attitude, I refer to the interview given by Patriarch Kirill (Gundjaev) of Moscow and all Russia, then Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad and the head of the Department of External Relations of the ROC. The interview was published under the title ‘The Norm of Faith as the Norm of Life. The Problem of the

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<sup>133</sup> Константин Костюк, «Возникновение социальной доктрины Русской православной церкви» // *Общественные науки и современность* (№ 6, 2001).

<sup>134</sup> Константин Костюк, «Социальная доктрина как вызов традиции и современности РПЦ», доклад на конференции «Начало новой эры? – Социальная доктрина Русской Православной Церкви августа 2000 г.» (Mülheim, 19-20 febr. 2003). Internet publication, last visited on 17 September 2010.

Relationship between Traditional and Liberal Values in the Choice of the Individual and of Society'<sup>135</sup> in *Nezavisimaja gazeta* on 16 February 2000, in the anticipation of the emergence of the social doctrine in August 2000. Metropolitan Kirill's standpoint demonstrates the clash between the theological and secular logics in modernizing Russian society. On the one hand, the hierarchy seems to admit one of the three central theses of secularization,<sup>136</sup> namely that religion indeed has become privatized in the modern world. Nonetheless, he regrets this development because as soon as religion becomes a private affair, it loses its universal dimension of a public religion. Metropolitan Kirill concedes, "From the perspective of a liberal secular society, the religious motivation of individual choice is justified and acceptable only when it guides citizens' private and family life. As far as other aspects of human existence are concerned, there is no possible place for the religious motivation" (Gundjaev 2000). Metropolitan Kirill claims that in opposition to this privatization of religion, the Christian motivation, due to its universal and all-embracing character, should permeate every single sphere of life of a believing Christian. Thus, his argument entails a conflict between secular and Christian ethics. For instance, the hierarchy admits that the existence of liberal institutions in the spheres of the economy, politics, social life, and foreign politics is acceptable, reasonable, and morally justifiable only when the principles of philosophical liberalism are not enforced onto the spheres of human personality and interhuman relations. However, the spheres of education and of interpersonal relations should be grounded in traditional Russian values, which oppose the liberalism of the democratic polity. The preservation of traditional Russian values will determine, according to Metropolitan Kirill, whether Russia will survive as an Orthodox nation (Gundjaev 2000).

In my opinion, Metropolitan Kirill's position reveals the underlying dilemma inherent in the Orthodox theological conception of the secular world and morality. The above argument demonstrates a deep moral antagonism that rises from the Church's attempt at conceiving the world within the framework of its theological logic: the antagonism between the normative universal claim of Christian ethics and the practical morality of

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<sup>135</sup> Митр. Кирилл (Гундяев), «Норма веры как норма жизни. Проблема соотношения между традиционными и либеральными ценностями в выборе личности и общества» // *Независимая газета* (Выпуск 28 (2090) от 16.02.2000). Internet publication, last visited on 17 September 2010.

<sup>136</sup> Casanova stipulates three theses of secularization theory: differentiation of secular spheres from religious institutions and norms, decline of religious practices, and privatization of religion (discussed in § 4.1.2).

Christians acting in the world. The antagonism is evident from Metropolitan Kirill's appeal to uphold secular liberal values at the level of democratic institutions but at the same time to uphold traditional Orthodox values at the level of personal relations. On this view, society appears split into two distinct subspheres: the subsphere of societal relations, or *Gesellschaft*, which is guided by secular ethics, and the subsphere of communal and private relations, or *Gemeinschaft*, which is guided by Christian ethics. However, I wonder if Orthodox theology also supports such a schism between public and private ethics. In my view, the revealed moral dualism contradicts the universal character of Christian moral plea to act always and invariably according to one's Christian belief. Bearing this in mind, I think that the greatest obstacle for Orthodox theology to accommodate secular liberal ethics consists in adopting the principle of individualism, which indeed lies at the foundation of modern liberalism. It is thus interesting to investigate whether Orthodox theologians have succeeded, in the social doctrine of the ROC, to overcome this obstacle.

The social doctrine reveals the ambiguous attitude of the ROC not only with regard to secular ethics, but also with regard to general modernization of contemporary Russian society. On the one hand, the Church has undertaken a noticeable step by addressing the new 'secular' issues of human rights, pluralization, mass media, war, democracy, secularization, globalization, and bioethics. Thereby, the taboo has been clearly broken (Kostjuk 2003). Alexander Agadjanian also confirms in his article 'Religion between Universal and Particular: Eastern Europe after 1989' that the emergence of such a "semitheological document" as the *Fundamentals* testifies to the intention of the ROC "to become modern and relevant, to cut off the inherited endemic other-worldliness and cultural isolation, to build a bridge between natural and supernatural, to affirm the value of *this* world." In this sense, Agadjanian argues, the document "*ipso facto* is a thrust to modernity" (Agadjanian 2004: 80).

Nevertheless, one can pose, according to Kostjuk, a legitimate question whether the social doctrine succeeded to elaborate a substantial theological conception of the contemporary world and provide necessary methodological tools for such a conception. In his opinion, "the social doctrine, instead of suggesting an established postulate, rather manifests the very process of conceptualization" (Kostjuk 2003). Agreeing with Kostjuk, Agadjanian maintains that the text of the *Fundamentals* clearly reflects "various competing voices within church hierarchy"; it is "multivocal in many senses: in vocabulary, in concepts that are used, in references to

traditional authorities, and in ideas.” That is why “with a closer approach to the text, you would find something quite different from, if not the opposite of, the previous.” Specifically, Agadjanian pinpoints the continuous juxtaposition of the Church as a God-established institute to the rest of society, which is understood in terms of the “non-Christian state, associations and individuals.” That is why the document can be said to be permeated by an “extremely strong *border sensitivity*, a constant concern, sometimes an obsession with self-identity, and a permanent reification of the ‘us-them’ dichotomies operating on several levels” (Agadjanian 2004: 80). Agadjanian explicates how the universalistic impulse given in the initial overture of the *Fundamentals* is consequently limited by the implicit particularistic definitions that emphasize the national identity of Russian Orthodoxy. Thus, while “opening itself to the new global order, inscribing itself therein, the tradition simultaneously resists it,” as it identifies this new social order with secularism, apostasy, and anthropocentrism (Agadjanian 2004: 81).

The social doctrine can be seen as a courageous attempt of the Church to embrace modernity on the one hand, and rediscover its self-identity within this new modern world on the other. However, this intensive search for a new self-identity eventually precludes the intended acceptance of modernity. This is because the process of the Church’s self-identification reinvigorates the traditional Orthodox dualism between the earthly and the spiritual, the profane and the sacred, the secular and the divine. A short glimpse at the history of the ROC reveals the essence of this dualism. I refer to the famous controversy that emerged in the late fifteenth century between two influential hierarchs: Iosif Volotskij (1440-1515), the leader of the so-called ‘possessors,’ and Nil Sorskij (1433-1508), the inspirer of the ‘non-possessors.’ The possessors insisted on the Church’s right to property and emphasized the socio-political role of the ROC, whereas the non-possessors rejected the worldly dimension of the possessors’ standpoint and concentrated on the hesychast spiritual tradition, which had been established by St. Sergij Radonezhskij (1314-92) a century earlier.<sup>137</sup> The

<sup>137</sup> In the end of the debate, the possessors were victorious and the non-possessors were condemned as heretics. The hesychast movement went underground for about two centuries and reemerged with the publication of *The Filokاليا* in 1793. The book was translated into Church-Slavonic by the Ukrainian monk Paisij Velichkovskij. *The Filokاليا* contained the anthology of ascetic and mystic texts (Boobbyer 2005: 10). Translated into Russian in the nineteenth century, *The Filokاليا* became a source of inspiration not only for the Orthodox clergy, monks, and believers, but also for Russian writers of the Golden Age. However, as Boobbyer observes, “the

controversy between the possessors and the non-possessors exhibited the discrepancy between the two distinct tendencies that exist even nowadays within the ROC. On the one hand, there is a tendency towards a more prominent political and public self-positioning of the ROC; on the other hand, there is a tendency towards hesychast contemplation and retreat from the world. Accordingly, these two spiritual traditions signify two opposite poles in the dualistic self-identification of the Orthodox Church.

What are the consequences of the Orthodox dualistic attitude to the world for Orthodox Christians? In the ‘Analysis of the First Five Chapters of the *Fundamentals of the Social Conception of the ROC*,’<sup>138</sup> the contemporary Orthodox liberal theologian Veniamin Novik describes the inherent Orthodox dualism as “one of the causes of the human drama.” The dramatic consequences of the Orthodox dualism ensue from the dilemma with which every Orthodox Christian is inevitably confronted. Specifically, how can a religious individual pursue one’s earthly path of salvation if the temporary world is radically different from the spiritual world, which is eschatologically oriented to the moral excellence, the communion with the divine, and witnessing of the sacred? That is the reason, Novik maintains, why “the temptation of spiritual escapism, inner withdrawal from the mundane world, and minimization of any relation to this world is extremely great for Orthodox believers” (Novik 2002: 68). As a result, Orthodox social ethics underestimates the secular world and the earthly existence of the human individual. Instead, Orthodox theological thought is oriented towards a theocentric vision of the world; it sees the world in its perfect transfigured state, as the eschatological realization of the Divine Kingdom on earth. This eschatological vision determines the way in which the ROC formulates its social doctrine. Next, I intend to analyze how the depicted theocentric dualism manifests itself in the Orthodox conception of politics (§ 6.3.2), society (§ 6.3.3), and human rights (§ 6.3.4).

### 6.3.2 Orthodox *Symphonia* in Contrast to Secular Democracy

In essence, the Orthodox conception of politics rests on the understanding of the state as a compulsory form of political organization of society. In its legitimation of political power, the Orthodox social doctrine relies on the

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weakness of nineteenth-century Russian Orthodoxy was that it rarely appealed to people with radical social and political instincts” (Boobbyer 2005: 14).

<sup>138</sup> ВЕНИАМИН НОВИК, «Анализ 1-5 глав Основ социальной концепции РПЦ» // *Социология религии* (2002).

distinctively Orthodox theological principle of theocentric dualism. This is especially obvious from antagonistic claims that are present in the *Fundamentals*. On the one hand, the document pleads for the Church's greater integration with the state according to the model of Byzantine *symphonia*, but on the other hand, it endorses the idea of an independent Church. To safeguard the Church's autonomy, the social doctrine employs such concepts as human rights, civil disobedience to the state, the borders of political influence, and non-disclosure of private confession (Kostjuk 2003). The question at stake is whether the Church is inclined to integrate with the state or fight for its institutional and moral autonomy.

To start with, I need to clarify the significance of the state in the system of Orthodox theology. As a temporary transitory organization, the state does not obtain a substantive status equivalent to that of the Church. The origin and status of the state is related to the core postulates of Orthodox anthropology, especially to the doctrine of the original sin. Orthodox anthropology is pervaded by dualism, as it makes a distinction between the fallen state of the secular world caused by the original sin and the perfect state of the Divine Kingdom. From this dualistic perspective, the state is considered as an imposed regulative skeleton on the living organism of society; this is due to society's inability to establish social order without state intervention. As the *Fundamentals* explain, the state is necessitated by the complication of social relations, whereas it was the family that initially constituted the vital cell of human society (*Fundamentals* III.1). Insofar as the world of social relations grew ever more complicated, it offered more possibilities for the manifestation of the sinful nature of men. It was after the fall of Adam and the murder of Cain by Abel that "people in all known societies began to establish laws restricting evil and supporting good" (*Fundamentals* III.2). Thus, in order to prevent society's self-devastation, "God blesses the state as an essential element of life in the world distorted by sin in which both the individual and society need to be protected from the dangerous manifestations of sin" (*Fundamentals* III.2).

Asserting that the state is obligatory for the fallen humanity, the Holy Scriptures ascribe a moral value to the state: It is established to restrict the dominion of sin over the world and prevent anarchy. Nonetheless, this moral value is not identical with the substantive value. The *Fundamentals* comment, "The emergence of the temporal state should not be understood as a reality originally established by God. It was rather God's granting human being an opportunity to order their social life by their own free will, so that this order as a response to the earthly reality distorted by sin, could

help avoid a greater sin through opposing it by means of temporal power” (*Fundamentals* III.1). The law and the state, being authentically human establishments, possess no substantive ontological status. Due to the restrictive function of the state, “power itself has no right to make itself absolute by extending its limits up to complete autonomy from God and from the order of things established by Him. This can lead to the abuse of power and even to the deification of rulers” (*Fundamentals* III.2). The state cannot claim its preeminence either over social organization or over individual, but acquires its legitimacy as a product of collective decisions made by members of a certain society.

While the *Fundamentals* reject the substantive ontological status of the state, the document contains explicitly articulated theocratic ideas. The ROC overtly prefers a theocratic model, which was established during the biblical Judge’s rule where the semi-political, semi-prophetic authority of the Judge was directly sanctioned by God (*Fundamentals* III.7). Similar to ancient theocracy, the *Fundamentals* extol the model of monarchy because such a model is also based on the divine sanctification of the monarch’s political power. However, the preference of a theocratic model does not allow the ROC to avoid the question of the divine legitimation of political power, which has become especially relevant after the adoption of the principle of freedom of conscience by the Democratic Constitution in 1993. If in theocracy and monarchy, political power seeks legitimation by ecclesiastical authority, contemporary democracies “do not seek the divine sanction of power” because “they represent the form of government in secular society that presupposes the right of every able-bodied citizen to express his will through elections.” With that, the Church demonstrates its practical awareness that “the form and methods of government is conditioned in many ways by the spiritual and moral condition of society.” It is due to this awareness that “the Church accepts the people’s choice or does not resist it at all” (*Fundamentals* III.7).

Theocracy remains an Orthodox dream, and the power of this nostalgic dream is particularly evident from the scrupulosity with which the *Fundamentals* discuss the *symphonia* doctrine. The Orthodox *symphonia* is juxtaposed with the Roman-Catholic and the Protestant models of organization of ecclesiastical and political life. The Roman-Catholic normative model, which gained recognition in the medieval Western Europe, relies primarily on the Augustinian doctrine of “two swords.” According to the Augustinian binary model, “both Church and state power, the former directly, the latter indirectly, go back to the Bishop of Rome,” so

that the Roman-Catholic bishops were “princes with state-like jurisdiction over their territories, with their own governments and armies of which they were leaders” (*Fundamentals* III.4). An alternative model emerged in Western Christianity during the Reformation. Then, the Roman-Catholic bishops were deprived of their power in the Protestant regions, and state-church relations were established on the territorial principle, “giving to state full sovereignty over territory and the religious communities found in it” (*Fundamentals* III.4). The territorial principle implies that the religion of the political sovereign is the religion of the country. Thereby, the official religious community is acknowledged as state church and is granted privileges over alternative communities.

In contrast to the Roman-Catholic model of two swords and the Protestant territorial model, the model of *symphonia* was established in the Orthodox world as “an explicit ideal of state-church relations. Since state-church relations are two-way traffic, the abovementioned ideal could emerge in history [...] only in an Orthodox state” (*Fundamentals* III.4). As we can recall from the above discussion (§ 4.2.1), the model of Byzantine *symphonia* denotes a symphonic cooperation of state and Church with a clear differentiation between the spheres of their influence. A peaceful symbiosis of ecclesiastical and political authorities is possible, however, only when the borders of a state coincide with the borders of a national Church. If this was indeed the case in the medieval Byzantine Empire, the same model cannot be employed in the political context of contemporary Russia, which is a secular democratic state with the multiconfessional population. Therefore, the model of Byzantine *symphonia* is inappropriate to the current situation in Russia.

The practical uselessness of the model of *symphonia* does not discourage certain Orthodox hierarchs and theologians still to adhere to this model. This adherence reflects their longing for the biblical period of the Judges when the Israelite nation was directly ruled by God whose authority was embodied in the figure of the Judge. For instance, Vsevolod Chaplin, the vice-chairman of the Department of the External Affairs of the ROC and the eminent advocate of the official political position of the ROC, considers modern secular democracy, due to its inherent rejection of God, to be an inferior form of the state compared with theocracy where political authority is legitimized by the divine blessing. He is convinced that only anarchy can be worse of secular democracy. In the article ‘Orthodoxy and the Social

Ideal Today',<sup>139</sup> Chaplin affirms that "Orthodoxy shows preference to an authority that is sanctioned by God and is aware of its religious mission. The same is expected from the society, or the nation, which is perceived within the Byzantine and the Russian Orthodox tradition as the united community of faith (*edinaja obshchina very*). A society that rejects the God-established authority and considers possible and desirable to 'become autonomous' from God is, to say the least of it, far from ideal" (Chaplin 2005a: 164). Preferring the model of theocracy, conservative Orthodox theologians identify society with the religious-political community and refute the value of society as an independent extra-political community.

An obvious weakness of the official political theology of the ROC consists, in my opinion, in its persistent amalgamation of two different dimensions of the social order: the secular dimension of a worldly community and the religious dimension, which perceives interhuman relations as grounded in the ontological primordial connectedness of all human beings. When the secular and religious dimensions are amalgamated, distinctively theological arguments, such as the truth claim or the divine sanction, intervene with the rationality of the secular spheres. The described amalgamation is evident from the way in which Chaplin uses the theological concept of the community of faith to articulate the Orthodox conception of society, "It is not so important whether Orthodox Christians [...] form an Orthodox nation or constitute just a small group. They feel themselves to be the nation of God (*narod Bozhiy*), the society-Church (*obshchestvo-Tserkov'*), which has a right to its own social order, without imposing this order on others. In a country where Orthodox Christians constitute the majority, this must signify their right to the corresponding way of the nation's life, which does not oppose respect for the rights of the minority." Thereby, this universal society-Church is aimed to unite all people beyond their political, national, or social differences and to overcome the obstacles towards the Evangelic ideal of unification formed by "pluralism, multi-party system, poly-confessionalism, and competition" (Chaplin 2005a: 165). This argument brings us to the question how the ROC deals with the tension between the concept of the nation and the universal character of the Orthodox Church.

Assuming a concrete manifestation in the mundane world, the Orthodox Church is confronted with its division into the Local Churches.

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<sup>139</sup> Всеволод Чаплин, «Православие и общественный идеал сегодня» // Александр Верховский (сост.) *Пределы светскости* (2005).

Accordingly, the concept of the nation remains a notorious issue in the field of Orthodox theology. Wil van den Bercken rightly observes in his article 'A Social Doctrine for the Russian Orthodox Church' that although the *Fundamentals* contain some disturbing eulogies on Orthodox patriotism, monoconfessionalism of the Orthodox nation and loving brothers by blood, the document signifies, in general, a clear attempt at moderating those insights by setting "the balancing act between Christian universalism and Orthodox nationalism" (van den Bercken 2002: 3). Indeed, the *Fundamentals* proclaim that "the universal nature of the Church does not mean that Christians should not have any right to national identity and national self-expressions. On the contrary, the Church unites in herself the universal with the national" (*Fundamentals* II.2). This is evident from the fact that the Orthodox Church consists of many Autocephalous Local Churches. However, while the document explains how the cultural diversity is expressed in the specificities of liturgy, church art, and lifestyle, it does not delve into the character of national organization of the Local Churches. In my opinion, the Local structure of the Church does not imply ethnical criterion for inclusivity/exclusivity and therefore does not impose an ascriptive membership on the members of a particular Local Church. Moreover, given the worldwide extension of the Orthodox Churches and the increasing globalization of the cultural space, the social conception of the ROC should include some kind of welcoming of an intercultural dialog, also in view of the growing number of Orthodox newcomers who have no ethnical affinity with Russian culture.

Returning to the discussion of how the ROC conceives of modern secular democracy, we should notice, relying on the *Fundamentals*, that the Church recognizes the reality of a secular state and the consequent separation between Church and state. The document explicates, "In the contemporary world, state is normally secular and not bound by any religious commitments. Its cooperation with the Church is limited to several areas and based on mutual non-interference into each other's affairs" (*Fundamentals* III.3). At this point, the Church seems to accept the empirical reality of an established secular state in Russia. Accordingly, the Church does not require the model of theocracy, or of any kind of alliance between Church and state in the form of *symphonia*. Instead, there is a clear separation between the domain of the state as providing well-being of its citizens and of the Church as promulgating morality and caring for eternal salvation of the people. Hence, the social doctrine of the ROC rather tries to synthesize the Church's normative vision of state-church relations and its realistic

acceptance of the established relations. It demonstrates an attempt at compromising between the ideal of theocracy and the political reality of secular liberal democracy.

Having said that, I have to admit that the Orthodox social doctrine has not been able, nonetheless, to legitimize and accept the model of liberal democracy. This rejection is primarily caused by the pluralized texture of the democratic multi-party system. The concept of the political, which implies the possibility of conflict, is appalling in the eyes of Orthodox conservative theologians. The *Fundamentals* regard the possibility of conflict as a serious disease of liberal democracy and not as an encouragement for public debate. Accordingly, the ROC neither approves nor criticizes the current political system in Russia but opts to underscore its exceptional status in state-church relations as “a divine-human organism” (*Fundamentals* I.2). With this claim, the Church maintains that it has not only a mysterious transcendental nature, but also a historical immanent component through which the Church comes in touch with the state (*Fundamentals* III.1). This immanent component is guided by the soteriological mission of the Church because the Church’s task in this world consists in promulgating “the unity for her children and peace and harmony in society and the involvement of all her members in common creative efforts” (*Fundamentals* V.2). In contrast to conflict, “the Church preaches peace and cooperation among people holding various political views” but refuses to participate in political struggle explicitly through supporting political parties or influencing election campaigns. This does not mean, however, “her refusal to express publicly her stand on socially significant issues” (*Fundamentals* V.2). With that, the ROC assumes a cautious standpoint, choosing not to intervene into secular politics and requiring a similar policy of non-interference from the state.

### 6.3.3 Dualistic Theocentrism of *Ekklesia* and Liberal Anthropocentrism of Civil Society

Since the Constitution of the Russian Federation established the existence of civil society and democratic polity in 1993, the ROC was challenged to define its standpoint with regard to civil society, which became an independent factor in the political and religious organization of social life. It is against this historical background that I address the question whether the ROC has succeeded to elaborate a sufficient theological legitimation for the concept of civil society.

Defining its standpoint with regard to civil society, the Church is confronted with the choice between two options: either to deny the established reality of secular civil society and focus on its internal theocentric self-conception, or, alternatively, to repudiate this traditional reflex and try to relate to civil society. I presume that by addressing such topical issues as secular law, democracy, (bio)ethics, human rights, human dignity, war, conflict, etc. the Church shows its eagerness to abandon its traditional “monastically-contemplative character,” which previously reinforced the Orthodox focus on liturgical-ascetic ethics instead of social ethics (Novik 2002: 68-69).

At the same time, this attempt at a theological conception of civil society has proved challenging for the Orthodox social teaching. The difficulty that the ROC experiences when formulating its standpoint with regard to civil society is caused by a deep discrepancy between two distinct traditions of thought. If the idea and the reality of civil society has foundations in the history of modern liberalism and individualism, the Church traditionally defines its identity by means of theological God-centered concepts. The juxtaposition between the liberal anthropocentrism of civil society and the traditional theocentrism of the Orthodox worldview is evident. The exhibited juxtaposition points at the distinction between the secular model of civil society and the theological imaginary of social order. If the model of civil society presumes a horizontal structure, reflected in the tripartite model of relations between the state, the market, and civil society, the Orthodox social doctrine remains fundamentally theocentric. It opts for a hierarchical social imaginary with God at the top of it, the Church as a mediating actor in the middle, and the human individual at the very bottom of the social hierarchy.

It should be noticed that the traditional hierarchical vision of the world also dominated Western Christianity during the Middle Ages. However, later documents on the social teaching of the Roman-Catholic Church reconsider the hierarchical theocentric worldview. If we refer to *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (published in 2004; henceforth: *Compendium*), which can be regarded as the Roman-Catholic document equivalent to the Orthodox *Fundamentals*, we can notice that the *Compendium* tends to pose the idea of human individual as the corner stone of the Roman-Catholic social doctrine. The *Compendium* founds this anthropocentric vision in the theology of Thomas Aquinas. In contrast to the Roman Catholic Church’s attempt at a humanistic revision, the ROC consistently endorses the idea of the Church as a pivotal point in the world

order, which allows the human being to be conceived only through the Church and for the Church. With that, Orthodox social conception remains loyal to the theocentric model and leaves very limited space for the autonomy of the human individual.

Similarly, the autonomous, self-reliant sphere of civil society is not accommodated by the Orthodox social doctrine. Since Orthodox theology employs the theocentric model to conceive of the world order, it adheres to the hierarchical imaginary, which can be described as the formula: God – Church – man. The established theocentric conception is also employed to conceive of social reality, whereby theological categories are substituted by social-political categories. In fact, the ensuing theological conception is used to legitimate the ideal political system, which is a sovereign state with an invisible society. The following formula emerges: sovereign – state – subject. At the top of this sovereign-centric model is the figure of the tsar, the mediatory position is taken by the institute of the state, and the state subject is again at the bottom of the structure. This ‘politicized’ counterpart of the Orthodox hierarchical conception of the world order dominated the archetypes of political culture in pre-revolutionary Russia; nowadays, it finds expression in the nostalgic dreams of the Russian Orthodox Empire. Within this triangular model (sovereign – state – subject), I am especially concerned about the missing place of society. Society seems to be dissolved either in the concept of the Church or in the concept of the state. The lack of a pronounced Orthodox conception of society as an independent, self-regulatory, and self-reliant factor constitutes, in my view, a serious obstacle to the emerging civil society in democratic Russia.

Following the tradition of theocentric dualism, the ROC proposes to conceive of society in terms of the normative ideal of the *Ekklesia*, or the community of the universal Church. The emphasized dualism and theocentrism are overt from the statement that “the Church is a divine-human organism.” This means that the Church has sources of legitimacy that are different from those of the secular order, which cannot claim its foundations in the sphere of the divine. The distinctive feature of the *Ekklesia* is its two-dimensional nature as semi-divine and semi-human, which consequently “makes possible the grace-giving transformation and purification of the world accomplished in history in the creative work, ‘synergy,’ of the members and the head of the Church body” (*Fundamentals* I.2). With this statement, the Orthodox discourse clearly distinguishes the *Ekklesia* as a grace-giving organism from the secular world and ascribes a limited value to the secular world. The secular world is valued to the extent

that it is incorporated into the divine-human organism of the Church. As a God-reliant institute, the *Ekklesia* cannot be identified with civil society, which functions exclusively in the secular dimension.

For that reason, the Orthodox theological attempt at resolving the pivotal dilemma of civil society cannot be fully comprehended within the conceptual framework of secular public debate. As we recall, the core dilemma of civil society has been most saliently articulated by Seligman as “how to posit a social whole beyond the particular interests that define individual existence” (Seligman 2002: 26). When resolved through the concept of the *Ekklesia*, one would probably get the answer: Insofar as the task of every individual is one’s personal salvation, and the salvation is obtainable through joining the Body of the Church, there could be no disagreement between individual interests and the common good. Since the ROC provides answers to socio-moral problems only through the prism of the theological concept of the *Ekklesia*, it chooses to address these problems only from the vantage point of its internal theological logics and thus refutes to search for alternative sources to legitimate the existence of secular civil society

In this connection, Evert van der Zweerde suggests in his contribution ‘Civil Society and Orthodoxy in Russia: A Double Test-Case’<sup>140</sup> a constructive solution to the problem. Namely, if Russian Orthodoxy is eager to become an active participant in civil society, “it needs to abandon its disapproval of the formal nature of the law and juridical procedures, and moreover, to abandon its ‘otherworldliness,’ yet to remain loyal to the idea of community,” i.e. the idea of *sobornost’* (van der Zweerde 2006: 277). However, as van der Zweerde admits, such a modernizing step constitutes a serious obstacle for both the ROC and the Orthodox intelligentsia. Indeed, to undertake this step, Orthodox intellectuals have to resolve the paradoxical situation in which the ROC continues to find itself after Stalin adopted the seemingly amiable policy in 1943.<sup>141</sup> Although Russian Orthodoxy is capable of contributing to the conceptualization of civil society by connecting the idea of *sobornost’* with the idea of building-up a community in a bottom-up fashion, the close relationship between the ROC and the state affects the role of the Church. Van der Zweerde explains that insofar as the state relies on the Orthodox idea of national unity and the

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<sup>140</sup> Эверт ван дер Зверде, «Гражданское общество и православие в России: двойное испытание» // А. Литвинова (ред.) *Проблемы философии права* (2006).

<sup>141</sup> This policy was discussed in § 6.1.1.

Church's genuine traditionalism, the Church, in order to safeguard its privileged position in the public arena, is supposed to endorse the antiliberal idea of the community 'from above' (van der Zweerde 2006: 276).

It should be noted, however, that the ROC, while developing its social doctrine, tries to break up with the tradition of theonomy, which takes origin, as Kostjuk affirms, in the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea (263-339). Through the formula 'one God – one Emperor,' Eusebius envisaged the world as one integral entity uniting social and ecclesiastical communities, which are at the same time dissolved in the monad of political power. Trying to abandon the theonomic vision of the world, the ROC opts for an alternative theological tradition, established by John Chrysostom (347-407). This tradition revised Eusebius's logic by asking the question: If the social world and political power are united, then why are they not united in the Church? In response, John Chrysostom suggested the formula 'one God – one Church.' However, Kostjuk correctly considers the Church-centered tradition of John Chrysostom as inappropriate for conceptualizing modern secular society as well, because this tradition denies society's autonomous value and dynamics. The scholar resolutely concludes, "The social doctrine is not able to perceive the metaphysics of society. In this sense, it proves to be helpless, and that is why the Orthodox public does not accept it. It regards society and political power as a fact, and not as a substance. In essence, it is not then the *social* doctrine" (Kostjuk 2003).

This inability of the Church to perceive the metaphysics of society explains the absence, in the *Fundamentals*, of an important chapter on 'Church and Society.' Typically, the Church discusses its relationship with the secular society in the framework of its relationship with the secular state, whereby the concept of society entirely dissolves in that of the state. This is, presumably, the legacy of the *symphonia* doctrine, which does not differentiate between the political and ecclesiastical communities. The ROC acknowledges no independent reality beyond the ecclesiastical community (*Ekklēsia*) and the state; in this sense, the alleged cooperation of the ROC with diverse NGO's, as well as the alleged social service, remains merely an implicit recognition of civil society (*Fundamentals* III.8).

As we can see, a great deal of research needs to be done with a view to invoking a genuinely Orthodox theological understanding of the concept and the reality of civil society. So far, we are bound to conclude that the ROC did not succeed to develop a substantial conception of civil society. The Church envisages civil society as an inevitably given reality, against which it should defend its transcendence-related identity. While trying to

embrace the modern concept of civil society, the Church gets absorbed into the intensive search for self-identity. Thereby, the Church affirms its own theocentric two-dimensional identity and sees the secular world as temporal, profane, and possessing no substantial value.

Hence, Orthodox theology ascribes no absolute value to the idea and the reality of secular pluralistic civil society but considers it as a temporal constellation of human relations, which must be transformed, ultimately, according to the ideal of the divine-human relationship. The ROC refuses to adjust itself to the world and pleads instead for the transformation of the world through the deification of the human being, as reflected in the concept of Godmanhood (*Bogochelovechestvo*).<sup>142</sup> That is the reason why the ROC does not address its message to the whole world but confines it only to those who want to belong to the divine-human organism of the Church and believe in the possibility of transforming this world through deification. With that, Orthodox theology establishes a theocentric model of society – the *Ekklesia*, and repudiates civil society as an erroneous model based on the secular principles of individualism and liberalism.

#### 6.3.4 The Orthodox Conception of Human Dignity and Human Rights

It was eight years later, in 2008, that the Bishops' Council of the ROC decided to complement *The Fundamentals of the Social Conception of the ROC* by a follow-up document, *The Russian Orthodox Church's Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom, and Rights* (henceforth: *Dignity*).<sup>143</sup> The adoption of this new ecclesiastical document testifies to the need for the ROC to deepen its understanding of the concerned issues. A legitimate question arose: Has anything principally changed in the attitude of the ROC? If I were to give a succinct answer to this question, I have to admit that all strategic standpoints of the previous conception remain the same; moreover, they are further substantiated within the tradition of Orthodox theocentric dualism.

The Orthodox teaching on human rights and dignity is characterized by the relentless conflict between the Christian substantiation of human dignity and human rights on the one hand, and the severe antiliberal critique of the modern secular concept of human rights on the other. This tension entails the distinction between the secular imperfect law and the divine perfect law.

<sup>142</sup> The Orthodox concept of Godmanhood was studied in § 4.3.2 and § 4.3.3, in the context of Russian religious philosophy.

<sup>143</sup> *Основы учения Русской Православной Церкви о достоинстве, свободе и правах человека* (2008). Insofar as this document is available only in Russian, the English translation is mine.

Consequently, when the Orthodox social doctrine considers human dignity and human rights within the framework of secular law, it ascribes no absolute value to these concepts. On the contrary, human dignity and human rights obtain their absolute value only when considered in the framework of Christian anthropology.

A single article where human rights seem to be accepted as inalienable affirms, “The idea of the inalienable rights of the individual has become one of the dominating principles in the contemporary sense of justice” (*Fundamentals* IV.6). The Orthodox substantiation of human rights as presented in the *Fundamentals* bears a close resemblance to the Roman-Catholic standpoint articulated in the *Compendium*. Both documents relate the idea of inalienable human rights to the biblical conception of human being as *imago Dei*. From an Orthodox perspective, the idea “is based on the biblical teaching on man as the image and likeness of God, as an ontologically free creature” (*Fundamentals* IV.6). Similarly, the *Compendium* identifies the ultimate source of human rights not “in the mere will of human beings, in the reality of the State, in public powers, but in man himself and in God his Creator” (*Compendium* § 153).

The point where the Orthodox and Roman-Catholic conceptions of human rights diverge pertains to the Church’s attitude towards the codification of human rights in secular law. The question at stake is whether the Church, besides the Christian substantiation of human rights, is open to (re)discovering anything valuable in the secular teaching on human dignity and human rights. The answers offered by the Orthodox and Roman-Catholic doctrines correspondingly are at odds. The *Compendium* maintains that “the movement towards the identification and proclamation of human rights is one of the most significant attempts to respond effectively to the inescapable demands of human dignity.” Therefore, the Roman-Catholic Church sees in the secular codification of human rights “the extraordinary opportunity that our modern times offer, through the affirmation of these rights, for more effectively recognizing human dignity and universally promoting it as characteristic inscribed by God the Creator in his creature” (*Compendium* § 152). The *Compendium* relies explicitly on the theological understanding of human nature provided by Thomas Aquinas, who claimed that human nature, irrespective of its fallen state, remains inherently open to the revelation of the truth in the world history. This explains the positive appraisal of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* adopted in 1948, which Pope John Paul II called “a true milestone on the path of humanity’s moral progress” (*Compendium* § 152). For its part, the ROC refers in the

*Fundamentals* to the *Universal Declaration* in the context of its explicit critique of the modern juridical notion of freedom of conscience (*Fundamentals* III.6).

In contrast to the Roman-Catholic Church, the ROC ascribes no positive value to the affirmation of human rights by secular law. The *Fundamentals* explain, "As secularism developed, the lofty principle of inalienable human rights turned into a notion of the rights of the individual outside of his relations with God." Thus, secularism has overlooked one of the pivotal theological postulates that "outside of God, however, there is only the fallen man" (*Fundamentals* IV.7). Secular law has a mere functional significance in the Orthodox teaching: Its primary function is to restore "the one divine law of the universe in social and political realms" (*Fundamentals* IV.2). Resembling the emergence of the state, the necessity of the law is also preconditioned by the fall. Nevertheless, because "the contemporary systematic understanding of civil human rights" does not take into account the fallen status of human nature, the ROC repudiates the modern notion of human rights. Whereas the *Compendium* regards the fallen humanity as the reference point for its affirmation of human rights, the *Fundamentals* deplore this thought as jeopardous. This is because "man is treated not as the image of God, but as a self-sufficient and self-sufficing subject," which means that "the freedom of the personality transforms into the protection of self-will" (*Fundamentals* IV.7).

The most striking difference between the Orthodox and Roman-Catholic social doctrines is obvious from the way in which the two doctrines conceptualize and legitimize the right to freedom of conscience. If the *Compendium* identifies this right with "the right to develop one's intelligence and *freedom* in seeking and knowing the *truth*" (*Compendium* § 155), the *Fundamentals* require, while recognizing the right to freedom of conscience, "that a certain autonomous sphere should be preserved for man, in which his conscience might remain the 'autocratic' master, for it is the free will that determines ultimately the salvation or death, the way to Christ or the way away from Christ." In view of this assumption, the rights to believe, to live, and to have a family are identified as "internal rights"; these rights are furthermore complemented by "external ones, such as the right to free movement, information, property, to its possession and disposition" (*Fundamentals* IV.6). What is most disturbing about the Orthodox standpoint is that the alleged autonomous sphere of individual conscience implies only the right to believe or not to believe, and not the right to freedom of conscience. With that, the choice of each individual's

conscience is already predetermined and thus articulated in prescriptive terms (either to follow Christ or reject Him). Insofar as the ROC systematically depicts the possibility of rejecting one's salvation in Christ as morally destructive, it struggles with the self-paralyzing mechanism that prohibits it to recognize the right to freedom of conscience as a morally neutral principle. That is the reason why the ROC still cannot reconcile with the fact that the principle of freedom of conscience is included in the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

Even more astonishingly, the *Fundamentals* interpret the adoption of the principle of freedom of conscience by the constitutions of most democratic states not as a triumph of this core Christian principle, but as a token of the moral malaise of modern secular society. Given such an overtly negative assessment of modern secularization, the ROC also sets off against the secular substantiation of the right to freedom of conscience and associates it with the general trend of secularization. As we remember from Taylor's account of secularization, there are two popular conceptions of secularization: (a) as signifying the decline of religious belief and practice, and (b) as signifying the retreat of religion from the public space (Taylor 2003: 78). The social doctrine of the ROC shares this basic notion of secularization in the sense that it censures the decline of personal faith and morality, linking the moral malaise to the structural marginalization of religion in Russian secular society. Accordingly, the *Fundamentals* maintain that the emergence of the principle of freedom of conscience "testifies that in the contemporary world, religion is turning from a 'social' into a 'private' affair of a person"; thereby, it also transforms the state, which was originally "an instrument of asserting divine law in society" into "an exclusively temporal institute with no religious commitments" (*Fundamentals* III.6).

At the same time, the constitutional enactment of the principle of freedom of conscience is interpreted by the *Fundamentals* in a utilitarian manner, as securing the undisturbed and legal existence of the ROC in the context of a secular state. This utilitarian interpretation is most overtly expressed in the following statement, "The adoption of freedom of conscience as legal principle points to the fact that society has lost religious goals and values and become massively apostate and actually indifferent to the task of the Church and to the overcoming of sin. However, this principle has proved to be one of the means of the Church's existence in the non-religious world, enabling her to enjoy a legal status in secular state and independence from those in society who believe differently or do not believe at all" (*Fundamentals* III.6).

Although Orthodox theology does not deny the absolute value of the human individual and consequently the individual right to freedom, it still unambiguously denounces the secular institute of human rights as “promoting ideas, which in essence radically disagree with Christian teaching” (*Dignity: Preamble*). The key to the Orthodox understanding of human dignity and human rights lies in a correct theological interpretation of freedom, and this is exactly the task that the ROC eagerly takes upon itself. As Metropolitan Kirill explains, the foundations of liberalism unite the ideas of pagan anthropocentrism, which emerged in Europe during the Enlightenment, of Protestant theology, and of Judaic philosophy. These liberal ideas criticize the ancient church tradition and provide wrong interpretations of the evangelical texts (Gundjaev 2000). Thus, relying on the Ecclesiastical Tradition and the letters of apostle Paul, the ROC asserts that the genuinely Christian understanding of freedom pertains not to freedom of the human being to act as one desires, but to freedom to attain the ultimate destination of the human being in one’s worldly life, i.e. to liberate oneself from sin in and through Christ. Since the very concept of sin is absent in the conceptual framework of liberalism, Metropolitan Kirill repudiates the liberal understanding of human freedom. In his view, liberalism calls for the emancipation of a sinful individual and, in this sense, supports an antichristian idea (Gundjaev 2000). However, as van der Zweerde correctly notices, the principle of free individualism should not be interpreted in its absolutized version. The Church can recognize the principle of individualism as a secular principle fundamental for the modern political, economic, and social life (Van der Zweerde 2006: 283).

Instead, the ROC conceives human dignity and human rights only as religious-moral categories, attaching thereby a moral component to the juridical and political-theoretical discussion. The Church is eager to endorse the legal principle of human rights only when it has a clear moral foundation, arguing that “in the Eastern Christian tradition the notion of ‘dignity’ has first of all a moral meaning, while the ideas of what is dignified and what is not are connected with the moral or amoral actions of a person and with the inner state of his soul” (*Dignity* I.2). The inalienable ontological dignity of each individual is derived from the image of God and that is the reason why “dignified life is related to the notion of God’s likeness achieved through God’s grace by efforts to overcome sin and seek moral purity and virtue. Therefore, the human being, while bearing the image of God, should not exult in this lofty dignity, for it is not his own achievement, but a gift of God” (*Dignity* I.2). On this view, Orthodox social ethics obviously links the

notion of dignity to morality. By acknowledging human dignity, it simultaneously asserts personal responsibility for one's morally impeccable life (*Dignity* I.5).

In contradistinction to God-related dignity of a morally impeccable individual, the document speaks about indignity of a sinful individual. Although the ROC acknowledges that "morally undignified life does not ruin God-given dignity ontologically but darkens it so much that dignity becomes hardly discernable" (*Dignity* I.4), it emphasizes the importance of repentance in restoring dignity of the human individual. Dignity is thus connected to "repentance, which is grounded in the awareness of one's sin and in the desire to change one's life. A repentant person admits that his thoughts, words, or actions are not consonant with God-given dignity and acknowledges his indignity before God and the Church [...]. For this very reason, the patristic thought and the liturgical tradition of the Church refer more often to human indignity caused by sin than to human dignity" (*Dignity* I.5).

In the light of this morally loaded conception, the Church elaborates its view on human freedom. Importantly, Orthodox theologians distinguish between two different meanings of freedom: freedom of choice and freedom from sin. Despite the fact that freedom of choice is meant to be "at the service of human well-being," it should be restricted because "exercising it, a person should not harm either himself or those around him" (*Dignity* II.1). Freedom of choice is established by God to achieve genuine goodness. However, insofar as no human effort is sufficient to achieve this genuine goodness, another freedom – freedom from sin – is needed for the realization of freedom of choice. This freedom from sin is impossible "without the mysterious unity of man with the transfigured nature of Christ that takes place in the Sacrament of Baptism" (*Dignity* II.1). It is only through the divine-human unification in the *Ekklesia*, i.e. through baptism and becoming a member of the Christian (or even more precisely, Orthodox) Church, that the human being becomes absolutely free. Since "God alone is the source of freedom," He alone "can maintain it in a human being." Obviously, this condition is not applicable to all inhabitants of the planet Earth. Instead, the universal, religiously neutral concept of human dignity, which underlies the secular institution of human rights, is considered by the ROC as "weak." This is due to the fact that the universal concept of human dignity, while defending freedom of choice, "ignores the moral dimension of life and freedom from sin." According to the Orthodox teaching, "the social system should be guided by both freedoms,

harmonizing their exercise in the public sphere.” This is obvious from the following formula, “Free adherence to goodness and the truth is impossible without freedom of choice, just as a free choice loses its value and meaning if it is made in favor of evil” (*Dignity* II.2).

Therefore, attaining genuine freedom is possible only through participating in the divine-human organism of the Church. The synergy of the divine and human actions underlies the Orthodox conception of individual freedom and human rights. This divine-human synthesis explains why the Orthodox Church ascribes such a great significance to collective rights in contrast to individual rights. The Church admits that “a Christian needs rights, so that in exercising them he may first of all fulfill [...] his lofty calling to be ‘the likeness of God’ and to be able to approach the ideal of perfection realized in Christ (*Fundamentals* IV.7). According to Orthodox ethics, individual freedom and human rights are directly connected to the idea of servicehood and collective rights. Human rights attain their value in a social order that is based on conciliar action (*sobornoje sluzhenije*). This is because “the acknowledgment of individual rights should be balanced with the assertion of people’s responsibility before one another [...]. However, as the spiritual experience of the Church has shown, the tension between private and public interests can be overcome only if human rights and freedoms are harmonized with moral values and, most importantly, only if the life of the individual and society is invigorated by love” (*Dignity* III.4). With this claim, the Orthodox teaching on human rights positions itself within a broader conceptual framework that involves typical Orthodox concepts of *Bogochelovechestvo* (Godmanhood) and *sobornost’* (conciliarity).

In addition to the possibility of grounding the conception of human rights in the Orthodox theological theory, there is also a possibility of politicizing the theological understanding of human rights. The politicized interpretation of the Orthodox view on human rights exists in the conservative theological circles, for instance, in the works of Vsevolod Chaplin. I consider it necessary to elucidate his political-theological position, for it provides evidence that a theological message can be radicalized.

Chaplin commences his contribution ‘An Orthodox View on Human Rights’<sup>144</sup> by acknowledging that Orthodox Christians “respect individual freedom, respect human dignity and rights – thus respect all these values, which are engraved into our [i.e. Russian Orthodox] heritage.” He qualifies

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<sup>144</sup> Всеволод Чаплин «Православный взгляд на права человека» // Александр Верховский (сост.) *Пределы светскости* (2005).

this claim by asserting that Orthodox Christians estimate other values “no less important, and maybe even more important. These values are faith, Fatherland, defense of the Fatherland and of our [i.e. Russian Orthodox] sacred places.” Accordingly, Chaplin proposes to structure values in a hierarchical order, “The private interest, that is individual interest, is for an Orthodox Christian usually not higher than the interest of society, that is the interest of a church community, the family, the nation, and the people” (Chaplin 2005b: 171). If the ROC unambiguously praises collective rights over individual rights, but does so relying on the ideal of *sobornost*’ and recognizing the significance of conciliar service and the primordial unity of all human beings, Chaplin rather opts for an explicit political connotation of collective rights. In his conception, concrete political and social constructions, such as the nation and the family, acquire categorical priority over the human individual.

Further, we are confronted with a terrifying implication of the proposed hierarchy of values. Chaplin argues that when collective and individual interests clash, the priority should be given to the collective interest. To corroborate this claim, Chaplin draws the example of Chechnja, “Yes, people are dying there, it is bad. It is bad that the military are dying, and it is bad that civilians are dying too [...]. When any human being is dying, it is bad. However, is it so bad that we can sacrifice the territorial integrity of Russia and renounce the value of unity of our country? As for me, it is still a question.” Relying on “the whole history of human kind, and not only of Russia,” Chaplin concludes, “If a society wants to preserve itself, it should recognize that there are higher values than human life and human freedom.” Accordingly, “it is only through harmonizing private interests with these higher values, such as society’s unity and survival, that the society can live normal life. If we show preference only to the value of the individual’s life, self-expression, and self-realization, the society will disband” (Chaplin 2005b: 172). Chaplin’s reference to “the whole history of human kind” calls into question the scientific soundness of his argument, especially, if we mention just two recent examples of world history – Nazi Germany and Stalin’s Terror – to remember the disastrous consequences of proclaiming other values higher than human life and dignity. Despite these facts, Chaplin’s political standpoint is obvious: The value of national unity secures society’s survival and hence supersedes the value of human freedom and human rights.

## 6.4 The Liberal-Reformative Trend in Russian Orthodoxy

In addition to the fundamentalist and conservative standpoints, there is also a liberal view on the relationship between Orthodox Christianity and civil society. The underlying question is whether liberal-reformative theologians have succeeded to develop an Orthodoxy-based alternative conception of civil society. Pursuing this question, I intend to reveal which traditional Orthodox concepts have been innovatively used by liberal theologians with a view to validating the model of democratic civil society. First, I shall investigate which Orthodox ideas inspired the Soviet dissidents to elaborate a moral model of society as an alternative to the Soviet one (§ 6.4.1). Secondly, I shall consider the dissidents' critical assessment of the politics of the ROC during the Soviet period as opposed to the genuine Christian understanding of the Church's mission (§ 6.4.2). Finally, I shall elucidate the attempts by liberal-reformative theologians at invoking an understanding of Orthodox Christianity that refutes Orthodoxy-inherent dualism and suggests a way of relating religious insights to the topic of civil society (§ 6.4.3). To conclude this short introduction, I want to emphasize that the authors whose texts and interviews I rely on tend to speak about Christianity and not specifically about (Russian) Orthodoxy. Indeed, although the majority of the liberally-oriented Orthodox intelligentsia have a background in Orthodox Christianity, they strive, nevertheless, to contribute to the universal, non-denominational Christian discussion.

### 6.4.1 Dissidents' Moral Alternative to the Soviet Model of Society

The activities and the writings of the Soviet dissidents can be considered, in my view, as the nascent elements of civil society, which emerged before Russia's transition to democracy in 1991. Although the term 'civil society' did not play a pivotal role in the dissident discourse, in contrast to public debate during the *perestrojka* period, dissidents' reliance on such concepts as individual, inner freedom, conscience, justice, and law-rule state testified to their advocacy of a free, open society, and their refusal of the closed Soviet society based on coercion and lies. Dissidents considered the spiritual and moral regeneration of Soviet society as the precondition for the emergence of open civil society. For that reason, they employed Orthodox theological concepts in their discourse. The ensuing question is how these theological ideas underpin the dissident apology of open civil society.

In the discussion of the Soviet dissident movement, I rely on Philip Boobbyer's extensive and scrupulous research, specifically, on his seminal book *Conscience, Dissent and Reform in Soviet Russia* (2005) and an earlier article 'Religious Experiences of the Soviet Dissidents' (1999). The Soviet dissident movement dates back to the late 1960s, when the movement emerged as "a response to the authoritarianism of the Brezhnev regime" (Boobbyer 2005: 2).<sup>145</sup> Notwithstanding this clear identification, Boobbyer admits that "the Soviet dissidents are not easy to define." Insofar as the term 'dissident' was coined by the Soviet authorities to label their opponents and critics, dissidents themselves generally disliked this term, preferring "to describe themselves as *'inakomysljashchie,'* literally, 'people who think differently' " (Boobbyer 2005: 75). Hence, we can understand under the Soviet dissidents a group of people who dared to think alternatively and proclaim their thoughts publicly.

Although Boobbyer concedes that "the aims of the dissidents were political in the sense that to expose Soviet injustices always means finally to challenge the legitimacy of the Soviet state," he underscores that dissident activists perceived their actions rather in moral than in political terms. Insofar as "the moral discourse, embracing terms such as 'guilt,' 'truth,' and 'evil,' was one of the defiling features of the dissident movement" (Boobbyer 1999: 373), the dissident movement can be regarded as "an alternative moral and spiritual culture that undermined the Soviet system and ideology" (Boobbyer 2005: 1). The powerful dissident rejection of the Soviet system as a morally despicable system was encouraged by the idea of conscience, which alone can differentiate between good and evil, truth and deceit, justice and discrimination. For that reason, the moral dimension of the movement was rooted in the fact that all potential dissidents "had to undergo a process of self-overcoming in order to participate in the movement; they had to conquer their fear" (Boobbyer 2005: 76). Indeed, the moment of conquering one's fear is central to the dissident writings, many of which contain prison memoirs or descriptions of certain techniques of overcoming fear in the face of a KGB interrogator. By overcoming fear, dissidents believed in the strength of conscience and in the commitment to truth and justice.

The dissident critique of the Soviet model of society had an overt moral dimension. Boobbyer agrees that "the Soviet project was from its inception

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<sup>145</sup> Leonid Brezhnev performed the function of General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1964 until his death in 1982.

a moral one; it sought to create a new society on the basis of a radical transformation of values” and thereby to propose “a superior moral alternative to Western capitalism and liberal democracy” (Boobbyer 2005: 3). This moral model of the Soviet system needed a moral critique, which was provided by the Soviet dissidents. Despite all deep ideological differences between the Soviet dissidents, their movement “gained much of its unity from its commitment to certain moral ideals,” such as the defense of human rights, of people’s right to speak against injustice, and of the principle of non-violence (Boobbyer 2005: 2). Accordingly, if the Soviet regime maintained itself by recognizing collective rather than individual rights, the Soviet dissidents developed an alternative conception of unalienable individual rights and human dignity.

The struggle for this alternative conception triggered, during the Brezhnev era, the inception of the so-called ‘human rights movement’. The movement comprised secular intellectuals, such as Vladimir Bukhovskij, Elena Bonner, and Pëtr Grogorenko, as well as religious thinkers, amongst whom Natal’ja Gorbanevskaja, Andrej Sakharov, and Aleksej Dobrovol’skij. Boobbyer considers the human rights movement partly as “a response to the succession of highly publicized show trials of intellectuals that took place from the middle of the 1960s onwards” (Boobbyer 2005: 77). Thus, the important milestones in the dissident activity were the trial of the poet and later the winner of the Nobel Prize (1987) Iosif Brodskij, who was arrested and tried in 1964; the trial of Andrej Sinjavskij and Julija Daniel in 1966, and the famous ‘trial of the four’ in 1967, in the course of which Aleksej Dobrovol’skij, Jurij Galanskov, Vera Lashkova, and Alexander Ginzburg were arrested for their involvement in the *samizdat* literature<sup>146</sup> and consequently, being diagnosed as ‘psychologically insane,’ were sentenced to specialized mental hospitals. The history of this trial gained publicity through the publication of the book *The Trial of the Four*, edited by Pavel Litvinov (Litvinov 1968). In April 1968, the movement started the *samizdat* publication of the first in the USSR bulletin devoted to the advocacy of human rights, *A Chronicle of Current Events*. Evaluating the effectiveness of the human rights movement, Boobbyer acknowledges that, on the one hand, the movement “clearly failed” because “by the end of the 1970s most of the activists were in prison or abroad” (Boobbyer 2005: 93). On the other hand, the dissidents have succeeded, according to the

<sup>146</sup> The term ‘samizdat’ is an abbreviation of Russian ‘publishing house on its own’; it indicates the uncensored publishing of the literature forbidden by the Soviet authorities.

dissident Alexander Daniel, to “play the game of civil society,” and thereby to awake and continuously stimulate the critical awareness of Soviet citizens with regard to the state regime. Indeed, if the aim of the human rights movement consisted in shaping public opinion and witnessing the possibility of free thought, then we can agree with Boobbyer’s assessment of the dissident project as “relatively successful.” This is because “human rights activists contributed greatly to the Soviet regime’s loss of moral legitimacy, and the formation of an alternative moral and civic tradition” (Boobbyer 2005: 93).

Having sketched the general portrait of the Soviet dissident movement, I intend now to clarify the difference between the conservative theological conception of society, elaborated within the tradition of the official ROC, and the conception of civil society developed by the Soviet dissidents who aimed to reach beyond both Soviet ideology and the tradition of the ROC. Both Orthodox conservative theologians and the Soviet dissidents conceive of society in moral-religious terms, juxtaposing it either to the secular democratic model or to the Soviet model of society. The major difference pertains, however, to the anthropological angle. If the Orthodox theological tradition conceives society in terms of the *Ekklesia* and grounds this conception in the idea of *sobornost*, or unity of all Orthodox Christians in the divine-human organism of the Church, the dissidents found their moral conception of society on the idea of individual conscience. Thus, although the dissident liberal discourse is genetically connected with the Orthodox theological tradition, it reserves certain freedom in interpreting the traditional religious-moral concepts.

This freedom of interpretation was noticed by Boobbyer when he traced the intellectual sources of the dissident moral discourse back to the two distinct pre-revolutionary traditions. On the one side, the dissident discourse extensively uses “the language of Orthodoxy, with its profound awareness of ‘good’ and ‘evil,’ and its strong monastic tradition and emphasis of the interior life.” On the other side, it also cherishes “the secular values of a Russian intelligentsia which drew much of its inspiration from the socialist tradition and laid the foundations for the rise of Russian Marxism” (Boobbyer 1999: 374). Boobbyer discovers the common ground between these two distinct traditions, one belonging to the Russian secular intelligentsia and another belonging to Russian Orthodox theology, in the fact that “both would declare allegiance to ‘conscience,’ ‘truth,’ ‘justice’ and ‘freedom,’ even if giving the words different meanings” (Boobbyer 1999: 385). Despite great differences between the socialist and Christian

traditions, the dissident moral discourse combines elements of both traditions. As a result, religious and secular arguments are so much intertwined in the dissident discourse that it would be, in Boobbyer's words, "absurd to try to separate them." Characteristically, this amalgamation of religious and secular arguments confirms that "some secular moral viewpoints have emerged from within a Christian culture and that this accounts for similarities of language" (Boobbyer 1999: 385). In my view, Boobbyer's assumption that the dissident ideas on morality and social order are deeply entrenched in the religious worldview bears a striking resemblance to Taylor's thesis that the ideas of individual freedom and society's independence from the state and from the Church have foundations in Christian ethics, ecclesiology, and anthropology (Taylor: 1995: 208-12). Therefore, the influence of the Orthodox theological legacy on the dissident moral discourse is undeniable.

What did the dissidents inherit from Orthodoxy? Above all, they took over the spiritual tradition of hesychasm. Hesychasm originated in the Byzantine monastic circles in the tenth century; it is frequently associated with the name of Simeon the New Theologian (949-1022). Later, Gregory Palamas systematized hesychasm as a theological doctrine and a mystical practice based on silent prayer (1296-1359). In Russia, hesychasm was introduced in the fourteenth century by St. Sergij Radonezhskij (1314-92) and was further developed by Nil Sorskij (1433-1508). The core of the hesychast practice consists in preserving one's inner spiritual discipline and purity of conscience, which will be crowned by "the possibility of establishing a direct relationship with God, and a sense of overall purpose of life" (Boobbyer 2005: 14). To attain this goal, hesychasts preferred to live in solitude rather than in community and focus on "personal piety and the possibility of direct access to God" by means of silent continuous repeating of Jesus prayer (Boobbyer 2005: 5). For their part, the Soviet dissidents eagerly embraced hesychast spirituality but situated it in a different hermeneutical context – the context of persecution by the Soviet state. In this sense, Boobbyer describes the dissident experience in religious-psychological terms as 'desert spirituality.' Referring to numerous prison memoirs of the Soviet dissidents, he argues that dissident desert spirituality entails pertinent inner conflict, as it involves permanent hostility on the part of the Soviet system (Boobbyer 1999: 374, 386). Desert spirituality is a result of constant inner struggle to preserve one's inner freedom and integrity in the face of the system's pressure to conform.

In this connection, Boobbyer's remark concerning the 'ecumenical' character of dissident spirituality is especially revealing. Although the majority of the dissidents locked up in the Soviet prisons or labor camps were baptized Orthodox Christians, some of them had a Jewish, Roman-Catholic, or secular background. The versatility of their religious backgrounds did not preclude the dissidents from a shared religious experience.<sup>147</sup> Boobbyer comments, "In these years, spirituality was sometimes universalized and secularized to the extent that it was not linked with to particular traditions at all" (Boobbyer 2005: 106). The unifying element of dissident spirituality was their inner struggle against fear; accordingly, it was this individual inner experience that induced the dissidents to discover their religious faith. Indeed, the dissident struggle to preserve one's individual integrity in the face of a KGB interrogator and follow one's conscience required an enormous inner discipline, strength, and concentration, which are precisely the virtues central to the spiritual-ascetic tradition of hesychasm.

#### 6.4.2 The Orthodox Dissidents and the ROC: The Ecclesiastical Crisis

A significant group of the Soviet dissident intelligentsia went further than rediscovering the tradition of hesychasm. They received baptism by the ROC and became conscious and believing Orthodox Christians.<sup>148</sup> Pertaining to this specific group, we can speak about the establishment of the Orthodox dissident movement. In general, the Orthodox dissidents intended to invoke an individualistic religious understanding of secular politics, society, and ethics by means of self-analysis. Given this intention, it is interesting to investigate what kind of relations emerged between the Orthodox dissident intelligentsia and the institute of the ROC. As I have indicated in the historical overview (§ 6.1.1), Orthodox believers, as well as many alternatively thinking Soviet citizens, were persecuted by the Soviet authorities in the decades preceding World War II. The whole body of the ROC, embracing the clergy, monks, and parishioners, suffered great losses until September 1943 when Stalin's religious policy abruptly changed. Stalin

<sup>147</sup> The evidence of such a shared religious experience of desert spirituality can be found in the dissident memoirs, thoroughly studied by Boobbyer: such as Tat'jana Goricheva's *Talking about God is Dangerous* (1984), the memoirs of Zoja Krakhmal'nikova and Grigorij Pomeranst.

<sup>148</sup> This group of consciously baptized Orthodox dissidents of the Soviet epoch is to be distinguished from the group of nominal self-identified Orthodox Christians that emerged during the period of post-Soviet religious renaissance.

promised to stop the persecution of religious believers but required institutional and ideological control over the ROC. The question of the Church's loyalty to the Soviet state became then crucial for the majority of the Orthodox dissidents. Criticizing the conformist position of the ROC, the Orthodox dissidents refused to comply with the Soviet state. As Boobbyer clarifies, insofar as "the compromises that the Church made with the regime were exactly the ones which the dissidents would not approve of," their "refusal to conform and the price paid as a result made it difficult for dissidents to come to terms with the Russian Orthodox establishment. The Moscow Patriarchate never accepted or defended the dissident movement, and it was very difficult for there to be a real dialog" (Boobbyer 1999: 387).

Disagreeing with the official position of the ROC, the Orthodox dissidents elaborated their own position with regard to the questions related to social ethics, individual morality, and citizenship. Until now, the official ecclesiastical conservatism and the dissident religious liberalism continue to collide, as they have obviously different cultural-intellectual orientations. Despite the fact that both conservative theologians and dissident intellectuals ground their worldviews in the concept of Godmanhood, they diverge as far as the application of this concept is concerned. If conservatives insist on the Church's exclusive function as a "divine-human organism" (*Fundamentals* I.2) and refute modernization associating it with the process of unrelenting secularization, the Orthodox dissidents, on the contrary, emphasize the human aspect in the teaching of Godmanhood and confirm their beliefs with the examples from Russian literature. Even after the collapse of the Soviet system, the divergence between the conservative-conformist standpoint of the official Church and the profoundly moral non-conformist dissident discourse manifests itself, as Boobbyer argues, in that the ROC still remains "divided from a community which had much to offer at a spiritual level" (Boobbyer 1999: 387).

During the Soviet post-war period, the parish of father Alexander Men' (1935-90) became one of the centers of the Orthodox dissident intelligentsia.<sup>149</sup> Men' was a reformative priest of the ROC and an influential spiritual counselor. Although I cannot reckon his contributions scholarly in a strict sense, I consider his writings, sermons, and activity as the sprouts of

<sup>149</sup> Although Men' was brought up with Orthodox faith, actively participating in a local parish, he nevertheless pursued a secular career by studying biology at a state institute. Because of his religious views, he was expelled from the institute and decided to be ordained as an Orthodox priest in 1960, exactly during the period of fierce psychological terror aimed against the ROC.

civil society in late Soviet Russia. Men' attempted at revising Orthodox theology from a humanistic perspective. He believed that the individual's calling consists in the discovering and realizing one's individual uniqueness.<sup>150</sup> Being an Orthodox priest and father confessor, Men' was confronted with the unrelenting dilemma: How to combine his belief in freedom of individual conscience with the required obedience to church authorities? How to preserve such values as individual freedom and human dignity in the face of the imposed priority of collective rights and the importance of the so-called common good of the Soviet people? Copying with this dilemma, Men' explicitly exalted in his essays and sermons, especially in the volume *A Difficult Path to the Dialog*,<sup>151</sup> the values of democracy, mutual respect, and tolerance as the highest achievements of Christian civilization. At the same time, he criticized the alliance between political dictatorship and undifferentiated mass.

The well-known Orthodox priest and intellectual Vsevolod Shpillar (1902-84) undertook a comparable attempt at rediscovering, in Orthodox Christianity, spiritual sources for the dissident resistance against the totalitarian Soviet system. During the 1950s, he managed to build up a strong, dedicated parish community, which comprised the contemporary reformatory intelligentsia. Consequently, Shpillar remained the spiritual counselor at the parish of the Church of St. Nikolaj in Kuznetsy until his death in 1984. Boobbyer astutely notices, "Shpillar sowed reform from within, and was anxious to avoid any possibility of schism within the Church" (Boobbyer 2005: 110). Being a moderate reformer, Shpillar proclaimed the ideals of "long-suffering and patience" as the cardinal virtues appropriate for the difficult situation, in which Orthodox believers had to survive under the anti-religious Soviet regime, and considered compromise with the regime necessary "to ensure the survival of the Church." Insofar as Shpillar embraced the ascetic ideal of "a sacramental withdrawal" from the world, his "approach to some extent reflected the prevailing survival strategy of the Orthodox Church; in the context of Soviet oppression otherworldliness was the only option" (Boobbyer 111-12).

If Men' and Shpillar remained primarily reformatory theologians and pastors, some Orthodox priests were determined to oppose the Soviet

<sup>150</sup> This belief underlies his eminent book *The Son of Man* where Men' interprets Jesus' life story from a humanistic-liberal perspective.

<sup>151</sup> Александр Мень, *Трудный путь к диалогу. Сборник* (1992).

regime more directly. Thus, the priest Gleb Jakunin (b. 1934) uttered his protest by writing, together with Nikolaj Eshliman, an open letter to Patriarch Aleksij I (Simanskij) on 13 December 1965. The authors of the letter criticized the ROC for allowing the Soviet state to subjugate the rights of religious believers and demanded the cessation of state control over religious life. Despite being persecuted by the Moscow Patriarchate and the Soviet authorities, Jakunin managed to publish, during the 1960-70s, a great deal of material that provided evidence of the widespread suppression of religious freedom in the USSR. Besides, Jakunin was one of the spiritual inspirers and participants of the abovementioned 'human rights movement.' Amongst others, he baptized the dissident Aleksej Dodrovol'skij, who was tried in 1967. Finally, after continuous arrests and banishment in the 1980s, Jakunin was rehabilitated; he functioned, between 1993 and 1995, as a State Duma deputy. In contrast to his political image, Jakunin's ecclesiastical carrier was not as easy to be rehabilitated. The Moscow Patriarchate deprived him of priesthood in 1993 and excommunicated him from the ROC four years later. Since then, Jakunin joined the Independent Ukrainian Church, which was established after the collapse of the USSR under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Patriarchate of Constantinople. Nowadays, he is still active as a human rights advocate and a reformative theologian. Much of Jakunin's revealing critique is summarized in the eloquently titled book *The Genuine Face of the Moscow Patriarchate*, published in 2000.<sup>152</sup> The central point of his critique concerns the history of the ROC in the twentieth century. Jakunin criticizes Patriarch Sergij (Stragorodskij) for his allegedly non-canonical usurpation of the Patriarch's title in 1927 and denounces the cooperation of the hierarchs of the ROC with the KGB structures after Stalin's 'rehabilitation' of the Church in 1943 (Jakunin 2000).

In addition to engaging in politics and criticizing church policy, Orthodox dissident intellectuals expressed their protest against Soviet suppression of religious freedom by publicizing critical essays. A collection of such critical accounts is presented in the famous volume *From under the Rubble*, edited by Alexander Solzhenitsyn. The first original exemplar appeared in Russian in Paris in 1974, followed by an English translation in 1975. With this publication, Solzhenitsyn intended to reestablish the pre-revolutionary tradition of *Landmarks* (*Vekhi*), instigated in 1909 by the eminent Russian religious philosophers Nikolaj Berdjaev, Sergej Bulgakov,

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<sup>152</sup> Глеб Якунин, *Подлинный лик Московской Патриархии* (2000). Internet publication, last visited on 28 July 2010.

and Semën Frank.<sup>153</sup> In the introduction to the dissidents' volume *From under the Rubble*, Mac Hayward correctly argues, "By modeling their collection of essays on *Landmarks*, Solzhenitsyn and his associates demonstrate their conviction that in order to talk meaningfully about present-day Russia it is essential to cross back over the intellectual void of the last sixty years and resume a tradition in Russia though which is antithetical to the predominant one of the old revolutionary intelligentsia, particularly as it developed in the second half of the nineteenth century" (Solzhenitsyn 1975: vii).

Evgenij Barabanov's contribution 'The Schism between the Church and the World' analyzes the relationship that emerged between the Orthodox dissident intelligentsia and the institute of the ROC. Analyzing the ecclesiastical crisis of the ROC during the Soviet period, Barabanov regrets the actual reduction of the Church to a kind of "liturgical department" of the Soviet administration system and criticizes "all the participants of the 'rite,' the hierarchs, the priests depending of them, and laymen" for being "reconciled to their dependence." Being reduced to a "place for the performance of the rite of a religious community," the Church betrays its universality, otherworldliness, and spirituality (Barabanov 1975: 173).

Searching for the causes of "this "manifest and indubitable submissiveness of the Church to the state," Barabanov wonders why the ROC considers either joining the system or going underground as the only possibilities to survive the totalitarian regime. By choosing between these alternatives, it avoids "what would seem to be fully lawful and natural path – a legal and open demand of the rights, which are indispensable for the normal existence of the Church" (Barabanov 1975: 173, 177). Amongst other explanations, the scholar relates the institutional malaise of the ROC to the pervasive influence of the *symphonia* doctrine on ecclesiastical life in Orthodox Christianity. In the context of the Byzantine Empire, the borders of the Empire coincided with the borders of the Byzantine Church; hence, the ecclesiastical community, the divine-human organism of the Church, was substituted by the political community embracing the citizens of the Empire.<sup>154</sup> However, in contradistinction to the amiable attitude of the Byzantine Empire, the Soviet state assumed a hostile position with regard to the ROC and wanted to suppress the Church.

<sup>153</sup> *Landmarks* had only one sequel. A second volume under the title *De Profundis* appeared in 1918, after having passed the strict Bolshevik censorship. The nascent tradition of critical essays was thus interrupted by the philosophers' dispersion in emigration.

<sup>154</sup> The *symphonia* doctrine was addressed in § 4.2.1 and in § 6.3.2.

For his part, Barabanov rightly considers the historicist critique of the treacherous unity between the Byzantine state and the Orthodox Church insufficient to explain the ecclesiastical crisis of the ROC during the Soviet period. With that, he identifies the underlying cause of the diagnosed crisis in the “conformist inertia” of his contemporary ecclesiastical intelligentsia (Barabanov 1975: 177). Barabanov explains, “People who know ecclesiastical life well are usually less optimistic”: Scarred by the dilemmas of the state-church compromise, they are “inclined to think that the Church will only be able to have an impact on society if society itself grows sufficiently free and democratic to liberate the Church from the political fetters imposed by the state” (Barabanov 1975: 173-74). Employing typical dissident concepts, Barabanov defines the critical situation in which the ROC functions in the Soviet system as the crisis of “ecclesiastical conscience.” He argues that the conformist inertia of the Orthodox intelligentsia and clergy has much to do with the distinctively Orthodox attitude to the world in general and to the Soviet system in particular (Barabanov 1975: 179). Presumably, Barabanov refers to the dualism of the Orthodox worldview.

It is in the Orthodox rejection of the world that Barabanov finds “the origins of the radical division of Christian life into two independent spheres, the ecclesiastical and the sociohistorical,” asserting that “the Christian world has lived in this duality not so much in terms of its dogma as psychologically.” As a result of the schism between the Church and the world, there emerged a great temptation of ‘simplifying’ Christianity, i.e. of “reducing it from being a teaching about the new *life* to a mere caring for the salvation of one’s own soul.” Insofar as Christian salvation was often conceived in terms of flight from the world into the sphere of mystical reunion with God, “this gave rise to contempt of the flesh, the belittling of man’s creative nature and, consequently, a special religious individualism.” Indeed, as we have concluded from the analysis of the social doctrine of the ROC, Orthodox theology tends to overemphasize individual pursuit of salvation, devaluating at the same time the importance of working in the world and transforming the world. To the extent that the Church becomes increasingly preoccupied with its soteriological self-identification, it tends to devalue “the earthly aspect of life” and consider the whole structure of social relations as “empty and immune to the influence of the truth” (Barabanov 1975: 181-82).

In contrast to this traditional view, Barabanov argues that the withdrawal of the ROC from worldly problems is not what Orthodox Christianity

actually propagates. Acknowledging that Christianity constantly struggles to reconcile two opposite tendencies, namely active participation in the world's transformation and renunciation of its temptations, Barabanov undertakes to reinvolve the significance of Christians' active participation. He reminds that Orthodoxy has found the solution to the schism separating the Church and the world in "its spiritual breakthrough to the eternal Divine Light, the contemplation of that Light and the union with it of the whole human being" (Barabanov 1975: 182). Obviously, Barabanov's conception of the Light as a penetrating and reinvigorating force in the process of world's transformation testifies to his affinity with the monastic tradition of hesychasm, which was for many Soviet dissidents a vital source of inspiration. The ascetic practice of hesychasm is rewarded by the Eucharistic mystery, when "God and man meet in the most intimate and unsunderable way." During the Eucharist, "in the incomparable joy of man's union with the absolute Reality, the God-man Jesus Christ, everything is filled with unutterable light and exultation" (Barabanov 1975: 183).

At the same time, Barabanov is aware that this mystical reunion with God entails a danger of total withdrawal from the world. He comments, "In the contemplation of the Light it is very easy to forget the world and its eternal movement" (Barabanov 1975: 184). Consequently, "contemplating the divine energies, which permeate the created world, he (i.e. an Orthodox Christian) lives in tune with the one and indivisible all-embracing cosmic mystery, in which there is no room for transformations and personal initiative" (Barabanov 1975: 184-86). That is the reason, the scholar concludes, why the Orthodox attitude to the world is so much determined by the distinction between the cosmos and history, between the mystique of the Heavenly Kingdom and the profanity of the earthly political-social order. On this view, Barabanov asserts that the sense of a tragic schism between the Church and the world permeates Christian conscience in general and Orthodox Christianity in particular. This dualism also underlies the spiritual crisis of Soviet citizens. In the context of Soviet suppression of religious freedom, "the most surprising fact in modern spiritual life must be considered our indifference" toward the thirst for the true Light (Barabanov 1975: 187).

Criticizing "stagnant Christianity" of Soviet citizens, Barabanov insists that true Christianity is not about keeping everything sacralized, "unshakable and incontrovertible till the end of time," but rather about "spiritual initiative and daring" (Barabanov 1975: 186). For that reason, he denounces the traditional Christian rejection of the world and encourages

Christians' creative participation in the world, relying on the Evangelical plea "not to judge, but to save the world." Once Barabanov has established the necessity of individual Christian activity, the question arises how the Church responds to these "creative rhythms" (Barabanov 1975: 189). It is in the answer to this question that the ROC and of the Orthodox dissidents most radically diverge.

Barabanov provides an interesting insight that the Church's hostile attitude to modernization, as well as to "all the 'modernism,' all the 'adaptation' introduced by the Church, is in reality nothing other than manifestations of its *profound bondage to secular culture*" (Barabanov 1975: 189). The scholar recognizes that the Church does not adapt to Soviet militant secularism voluntarily; this adaptation occurs after a long siege of scientific rationalism, state atheism, totalitarian regimes, or the establishment of general material prosperity and comfort. As "the Church turns to be defenseless against hostile pressures," it eventually "closes up in itself, hoping to wait out the siege, then suddenly revolts and hurls anathemas, but ends up by trying to speak in that alien language imposed from outside," i.e. the secular language of secular modernity (Barabanov 1975: 190). In result, the Church tries to find a balance between its traditional theological semantics and the language of modernity. Indeed, as we have seen, an attempt at such a balance has been undertaken in the social doctrine of the ROC.

Nonetheless, Barabanov considers the dilemma between ecclesiastical conservatism and secular modernism not as important as the task of all Christians to contribute to the world's transformation. For that reason, the scholar calls upon his contemporary readers to exert the religious will within themselves and "begin by prophesying inside the Church about the genuine foundations for hope offered by Christianity, and not by restoring nor modernizing things that amount merely to historical or cultural incrustations." In essence, Christians should speak "about what is beyond modernism and conservatism alike, of what is eternally living and absolute in this world of the relative, of what is simultaneously both eternally old and eternally young" (Barabanov 1975: 192). Being an assembly (*sobor*) of such openly speaking and actively engaged Christians, the ROC can become in its struggle with the spiritless and antihuman Soviet system "an effective force that is capable of opposing mendacious ideological bureaucratism with genuine spiritual values" (Barabanov 1975: 173). In the end, Barabanov is deeply convinced that Christianity is the "affirmation of an absolute truth about man and human society." Insofar as Christianity warrants "the

exceptional value of man, the value of his life and what he creates,” it should be also an indispensable element in any attempt at construing an ideal social-political order (Barabanov 1975: 174).

#### 6.4.3 Christian Politics and the Spiritual Economy of Civil Society

The liberal-reformative trend in Russian Orthodoxy is versatile. It unites a wide range of intellectuals over a considerable span of time. I chose to analyze this trend by addressing the ideas of three outstanding Orthodox thinkers: the priest Mikhail Chel'tsov (1870-1931), the contemporary theologian and father-superior Veniamin Novik (1946-2010), and the contemporary Orthodox historian and philosopher Evgenij Rashkovskij (born 1940). Despite the fact that these intellectuals belong to different generations, they share a common goal, namely the goal to revise, from a liberal humanistic perspective, the relationship between Christian politics and civil society. Thereby, they aim to overcome theocentric dualism of conservative Orthodox theology. In this regard, they also agree with the Soviet religious dissidents in emphasizing the significance of individual conscience in building up an open, human, and just society.

Chel'tsov's life path is noteworthy. He was persecuted by the Soviet regime during the 1920s and was executed in 1931. Chel'tsov described his memories in the impressive *A Dead Man's Memoirs about the Past*. Before these turbulent years, he was an active liberal priest in pre-revolutionary Russia. In 1906, when public life was recovering from the tragic event of the Bloody Sunday of 9 (22) January 1905, Chel'tsov published the essay 'Christianity and Politics,' where he criticized the withdrawal of the ROC from the sphere of politics.<sup>155</sup> This theological essay was extremely needed at the time when, with the establishment of the State Duma, the sprouts of constitutional monarchy began to rise. At the same time, the essay coincided with the time when the tsar government discredited itself by suppressing the civil demonstration on the Bloody Sunday and by Russia's defeat in the war with Japan in 1904-5. These developments invigorated public debate, and encouraged the ROC to articulate its view. Vladimir Fëdorov rightly observes in his historical study *The Russian Orthodox Church and the State*. *The*

<sup>155</sup> Михаил Чельцов, «Христианство и политика», переиздание // *Журнал Московской Патриархии*. Interestingly, Chel'tsov's essay was republished in 1994, in the Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate.

*Synodal Period (1700-1917)*<sup>156</sup> that, in contrast to the Soviet period, the theological discussion in pre-revolutionary Russia was intense. The Orthodox clergy, represented in the State Duma, exerted influence on legal and moral aspects of Russian politics, the intelligentsia assembled in famous religious-philosophical associations, and the ROC was preparing the Local Church Council of 1917-18 (Fëdorov 2003: 248-73).<sup>157</sup>

Chel'tsov engaged in the contemporary political debate arguing that progressive and humane politics needs to have foundations in Christian principles. To substantiate his argument, Chel'tsov distinguishes between two conceptions of politics: a normative conception of politics as "a universal, progressive endeavor" and a conception of politics as "a party business based on self-interest" (Chel'tsov 1994: 54). In his view, only normative politics treats citizens according to the principles of Christian anthropology because it treats human individual as "a spiritual person," imbued with morality and immortal soul, and thus as a free autonomous citizen, imbued with inalienable human rights. On the other hand, interest-based politics regards citizens as mere instruments for achieving its party interests, ensuing from a de-spiritualized understanding of human individual. Interest-based politics sees human individual as "a temporary and contingent phenomenon," fully belonging to the earthly world. Given this difference between the two conceptions of politics, Chel'tsov concludes that political endeavor is not at all alien to Christianity, and, even stronger, Christianity is called to christianize politics (Chel'tsov 1994: 55). Later, in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, this claim would be shared by many Orthodox liberal intellectuals who agree with Chel'tsov that the genuine task of Christianity consists exactly in christianization of politics, and not in politicization of Christianity.<sup>158</sup>

The claim that christianization of politics constitutes the primary task of the Church requires a correct understanding of the essence of Christianity. Similar to the dissidents, Chel'tsov refutes intrinsic dualism that underlies the Orthodox attitude to politics, because the "macabre, falsely ascetic worldview" renders Christianity not "a religion of life and men, but a religion of death and some human shadows," existent "beyond life and

<sup>156</sup> Владимир Фёдоров, *Русская Православная Церковь и Государство. Синодальный период (1700-1917)* (2003).

<sup>157</sup> The reinvigoration of public and ecclesiastical life in late imperial Russia was discussed in § 4.2.3.

<sup>158</sup> The consequences of politicization of Russian Orthodoxy were depicted in relation to the phenomenon of Orthodox fundamentalism (6.2).

consequently beyond politics” (Chel’tsov 1994: 56). Interestingly enough, Chel’tsov noticed that in the pre-revolutionary theological renaissance, this falsely ascetic trend in Russian Orthodoxy was losing its firm ground and adherents. On the contrary, to the extent that this trend was diminishing, a fresh view on the essence of Christianity was engaging the minds of his contemporaries. Obviously, Chel’tsov pointed at the renaissance of religious philosophy in pre-revolutionary Russia and later in the circles of the émigré Diaspora. These pre-revolutionary intellectuals, who were also closely affiliated with the ROC, perceived the ascetic and world-fleeing tendency in Russian Orthodoxy as the upshot of the Synodal period. Pointing at the two-century-long subjugation of the Church by the state, Chel’tsov clarifies to his contemporaries that “the penetration of politics by Christianity seems to some of us strange because we grew unfamiliar with a truly Christian life. For us, Christianity and life are two separate entities: Christianity is usually conceived as certain comfort, as something superfluous for us, needed only by clergy and monks, as well as by very few lay men and only during church services.” The gap between ecclesiastical and political life during the Synodal period affected also the sphere of politics. Politics started to need Christianity “only in the capacity of a kind, obliging, meek, but helpful in difficult minutes of life maidservant. Doubtlessly, releasing Christianity from such obligations is, in the eyes of political rulers, both inconvenient and undesirable” (Chel’tsov 1994: 61).

However, Chel’tsov maintains that the liberation of the Church from its ritualistic role is required by the logic of Christian faith because the essence of Christianity consists in the propagation and realization of the Kingdom of God in the earthy life. Conceived in this way, Christianity becomes closely involved into socio-political life, directing interhuman relations towards the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth (Chel’tsov 1994: 59). Accordingly, Chel’tsov is convinced that “a Christian state needs Christian politics” because Christianity should enlighten politics by guiding politicians in fulfilling their tasks and by reminding them of the inalienable value of human being (Chel’tsov 1994: 61). As a genuine theologian, Chel’tsov describes the relationship between politics and Christianity employing elegant terms of apothatic theology:

Christianity is above all things on earth, but not beyond them. It does not intervene with anything but does not allow anything to be non-Christian either; it does not politicize but presumes Christian politics; it does not engage in politics but guides, enlightens, and evaluates politics; it does not divide into parties but strives to unite all parties in view of common service

to the good of the people and the state. Hence, it does not become secular but imbues the secular with the Divine, assisting and guiding each individual, as well as the whole nation to grow in perfection (Chel'tsov 1994: 62).

The inner interconnectedness of Christianity and humane politics continues to inspire contemporary Russian theologians and ecclesiastical intellectuals today. Thus, Veniamin Novik in his seminal book *Orthodoxy, Christianity, Democracy*<sup>159</sup> demonstrates that Christianity is compatible with the democratic values of brotherhood, liberty, and equality. In his view, the merit of Christianity consists in emphasizing not only the value of vertical hierarchical subordination of men to the structure of the state, but also the value of men's brotherly communication. In this sense, Christianity "revealed for the first time in history the importance of human relations on a horizontal scale" (Novik 1999: 266). Extolling the triumph of inner truth over any external establishment, Christianity protested against the socio-political hierarchies that had been traditionally legitimated by ancient pagan religions. Insofar as Christianity combined in itself the two natures of Christ, the divine and the human, it was able to overcome the stagnant monophysitism of ancient pagan religions and break through with the established trend of depersonalization, i.e. systematic devaluation of the principle of human individuality, prevalent in pre-Christian societies (Novik 1999: 263-64). Concisely, Christianity asserted the value of human being as absolute and the value of social-political establishments and institutions as temporal and thus subordinate to the value of human being.

As far as democratic politics in contemporary Russia is concerned, Novik insists on the separation between state and Church. This is because the state is authorized to use violence, whereas the Church is essentially a non-violent organization. Nonetheless, he believes that in contemporary Russia the democratic state and society can contribute substantially from the religious and spiritual experience of the Church. Specifically, Novik suggests to see democracy "as a secular-social projection" of the Orthodox ideal of *sobornost'*, which entails a minimalist democratic state and a free horizontally structured civil society (Novik 1999: 277). Novik denounces the sacralization and absolutization of the state because no single individual, or a group of individuals, should be given unrestricted authority, as nobody can claim one's moral perfection after the fall. The primary function of the state consists in "controlling that people fulfill not the ethical maximum,

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<sup>159</sup> Веніамін Новік, *Православие, Христианство, Демократия* (1999).

rather the ethical minimum” (Novik 1999: 299). Employing theological terminology, Novik speaks of “the social apothatism essential to democracy” when he depicts democracy as constituted by “conscious self-restriction of powerful functions of the state for the sake of individual freedom given to us by God” (Novik 1999: 294). Consequently, in contradistinction to totalitarianism, democracy “does not aspire to merge with the entire fullness of life. However, it is also inseparable from society, which is unable to exist without a system at all” (Novik 1999: 297). Hence, the relationship between the state and civil society in a Christian democracy should resemble the relationship between the three Persons of the Holy Trinity: Their relationship should be guided by the theological principle of ‘non-unification and non-separation’ (*nesliannost’ i nerazdel’nost’*).

Another remarkable attempt at invoking a religious understanding of the idea and the reality of civil society has been undertaken by Evgenij Rashkovskij. In his insightful article ‘Civil Society: A Religious Assessment of the Problem,’ the scholar seeks to provide “an interpretation of the immutable and elusive presence of spiritual reality in what appears to be an especially earthbound problem, that of civil society” (Rashkovskij 2004: 113). Thereby, Rashkovskij unambiguously asserts the interconnectedness of the “spiritual” with the “earthbound” in civil society discourse. He claims that the modern idea of civil society has three religious sources: the Catholic, Protestant, and secular liberal-emancipatory tradition. In his opinion, the three religious sources “reflect and also partly share three fundamental ideas,” which cannot be founded empirically or scientifically, but “are accepted primarily by intuition, or on faith” and thus are “objects of faith.” Among these “axiomatic presumptions,” Rashkovskij stipulates the presence of an immanent mind in the world, the presence of an immanent solidarity in society, and the presence of an immanent autonomy in man (Rashkovskij 2004: 114-15). If people lose faith in these axiomatic presumptions, their life will be distorted by a lack of communication, alienation from each other, and aggressive non-acceptance. On this view, Rashkovskij retains the thesis that “a moment of faith is inalienably present in the spiritual economy of civil society” (Rashkovskij 2004: 116).

Founded on the three axiomatic presumptions – the immanent mind, solidarity, and individual autonomy – civil society is able to resolve “within itself the conflict between the social-cultural trends of individualization and collectivism, which are immanent to any developed society.” With that, Rashkovskij recognizes that a peaceful resolution of the conflict requires, nonetheless, “a certain schooling of soul” (Rashkovskij 2004: 126).

Rashkovskij's concept of schooling of soul bears a resemblance to Weber's inner-worldly asceticism, which is characterized by the superior feeling of responsibility and self-discipline. On Rashkovskij's account, the establishment of civil society requires not only clarification, institutionalization, and optimization of individual-collective interests and antagonisms, but also, even more importantly, the unrestricted and conscious enhancement of one's spiritual experience, and maturation in one's religious freedom. On this view, Orthodox liberal intellectuals share one core assumption: They consider individual activism, inspired by individual conscience and spirituality, as one of the crucial preconditions for the establishment and further development of civil society.

The spiritual economy of civil society, as proposed by Rashkovskij, warrants individual right to spiritual freedom. Applied to civil society theory, spiritual freedom can be interpreted as freedom from danger of spiritual alienation of individuals. In this sense, Rashkovskij provokingly rejects the traditional liberal foundation of the normative idea of civil society on the principle of individual rights and individual freedom. He claims, on the contrary, that civil society is ultimately aimed at overcoming socio-cultural estrangement and alienation, since the "development of society means absorption of the person in a multitude of inalienable or chosen socio-cultural connections." Thus, civil society theory should take into account "the human need for socio-cultural and spiritual self-determination." Ideally, civil society provides "an external guarantee for the positive freedom of the person's spiritual self-realization in communication with others" (Rashkovskij 2004: 116-17).

### ***Conclusion***

The present chapter revealed the significance of the factor 'Orthodoxy' for the establishment of civil society in Russia. It dealt with the question whether Orthodox Christianity is able to provide a substantive alternative conception of civil society and thereby contribute to Russia's democratic project. This question was addressed from two distinct perspectives. The sociological, or functionalistic, perspective yielded a revised portrait of the ROC by discussing the context in which the ROC functions nowadays, namely the context of secular democracy. The theological, or essentialistic, perspective provided insight into internal discourse of the Russian Orthodox tradition by showing how Russian Orthodoxy accommodates the concept and the established reality of secular democracy and civil society.

The factor 'Orthodoxy' became relevant for public life in post-Soviet Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the retreat of the Communist Party from the ideological pedestal. It was during the *perestrojka* period that religion was finally granted more freedom by the Gorbachëv administration. At the same time, Russian society was confronted with an urgent quest for a new national-cultural identity, a new ideology, and a new set of values. Insofar as the ROC provided a powerful and coherent answer to this quest, it assumed a pronounced civil position in public life. As we can conclude from the above analysis, such a quick transition of the ROC was largely determined by three important factors: the traumatic experience of the Soviet regime, the Church's influence on religious policy of the emergent democratic state, and the growing number of self-identified Russian Orthodox Christians.

The experience of Soviet persecution enhanced the image of the Church as a martyr because believing citizens courageously defended their right to religious freedom. Consequently, during the religious renaissance of the early 1990s, the ROC reemerged, mostly in the eyes of the newly converted Orthodox Russians, as an institution to be trusted and obeyed. A high moral appeal of the national Church stimulated a new trend of mass 'in-churching' (*votserkovlenije*) attracting young, intelligent, and motivated Christians. It was the 'in-churching' of the nascent middle class that changed the social constitution of the ROC. Importantly, different social-economic, professional, and political-ideological backgrounds of the young Orthodox neophytes contributed to the internal heterogeneity within the ROC and to a plurality of social doctrines within the Orthodox tradition. Thus, the sociological portrait of the ROC of the post-Soviet period can be characterized by a plurality of ideological standpoints existing within the ROC itself. Accordingly, when analyzing the civil significance of Orthodox Christianity in post-Soviet Russia, we should distinguish the official position of the Moscow Patriarchate from the fundamentalist trend, as well as from the liberal stance defended by nonconformist clergy and alternatively thinking laity.

At the same time, while playing a pivotal role in the cultural, moral, and religious renaissance of Russian society, the ROC managed to acquire a significant political weight and exert influence on relevant issues in the field of religious policy and legislation. As a result, the ROC gained a privileged status in the *Constitution of the Russian Federation* (1993) and subsequent laws concerning religious organizations; it became thus one of the influential

participants in the evolving relations between political, corporate, and civil interests.

Subsequently, the moral and ideological influence of the ROC on the public opinion was wisely used by the Putin administration. Certain Orthodoxy-based ideas of political conservatism corresponded to Putin's politics of stability, centralization, and national security. The Orthodoxy-draped image of the new president also served as a bonus in the struggle for the electorate. Thus, in the early 2000s, one could speak of a reemerging *symphonia* between state and Church. However, such an alliance was short-lived: After the state's ideological support of the ROC reached its summit in 2002, the symphonic cooperation between state and Church has been cooling down ever since.

Most importantly, the alliance between political and ecclesiastical powers, which both proclaimed society's consolidation and the restoration of conservative values as their priorities, revealed the following characteristic tendencies in their strategic relationship. As for the Russian state, its union with the ROC can be profitable because the state obtains legitimation by religious authority and acquires more ideological control over society and citizens. For the ROC, the state's support means more possibilities for the Church's intervention in election campaigns, education, public morality, and the matters of legislation and property. However, the Church's active engagement in politics obviously contradicts the principle of ecclesiastical political neutrality, which requires churches to abstain from supporting candidates for public office or pressing laws that would restrict religious or other basic liberties (Audi 2000: 41-42). At the same time, the ROC has learnt from its experience during the Synodal and Soviet periods that the state's support does not always provide a guarantee for preserving the Church's autonomy. That is why the ROC assumes nowadays a rather cautious position with regard to the state's interference in its internal ecclesiastical matters. In its relations with the state, the Church tries to safeguard its borders by insisting on the principle of non-interference, which does not prevent it, but at the same time, from requiring a privileged position that is appropriate for the traditional religion of Russia.

At the background of the depicted socio-political context, a substantive question arose how the ROC reacts to the emergence of secular and independent civil society. Tentative answers to this question revealed different approaches whereby the ROC relates to surrounding political and social realities. I distinguished three major trends within Russian Orthodoxy today: (1) the fundamentalist trend embracing the politicized version of

Russian Orthodoxy, (2) the midway conservative trend based on the official theological teaching of the ROC, and (3) the liberal-reformative trend reflecting a tolerant view on liberal values and an overall openness to modernization.

Orthodox fundamentalists are convinced that Christianity is radically incompatible with the theory and practice of democracy because the latter is grounded in the non-hierarchical structure and in the principles of liberalism and individual freedom. Instead, fundamentalism proposes a clear political alternative to democracy and civil society, namely theocratization instead of modernization. In the theocratic model, political authority of a secular leader is not recognized unless it is legitimized by sacral authority of a spiritual leader. According to Orthodox fundamentalists, the amalgamation of these authorities finds place in the figure of an anointed tsar. Fundamentalists' clear-cut political choice is motivated by their total rejection of the secular world. That is why they see the side-effects of modernization, such as globalization, democratization, and societal differentiation, as threats to the pre-established divine world order and as obvious signs of the approaching Anti-Christ age. Logical outcomes of the fundamentalist political vision are xenophobia, mythologization of national history, and the appraisal of ancient theocracy as the ideal model for modern monarchy, whereby political and sacral authorities remain closely connected.

In contrast to radicalizing fundamentalism, a much more qualified approach to the problem of modernization is elaborated by the official teaching of the ROC, presented in its social doctrine. I refer to this midway approach as the conservative trend because it endorses the conservative interpretation of Orthodox social ethics.

The conceptualization of civil society is a great challenge for the ROC, as it requires the Church to renounce its traditional dualistic attitude to the secular world. To embrace secular ethics of a pluralistic civil society is to accept the principle of individualism, and this constitutes a serious obstacle for the Orthodox theological logic. Consequently, ambiguity and ambition are the terms that best characterize the official position of the ROC with regard to democracy and civil society. Although the considered ecclesiastical documents provide doctrinal answers to how the ROC views the problems of a secularizing society, they do not suggest a nuanced and creative way to deal with these problems. In result, the ROC does not propose a sufficient theological substantiation to the concept of civil society but rather offers a theological alternative to this concept.

Difficulties in accommodating the idea of civil society stem from the strong dualistic tendency inherent in the Orthodox theological tradition. The Orthodox conception of the world is continuously divided between two opposite realms: the realm of the divine and the realm of the secular. Insofar as the Orthodox theological thought is oriented towards an eschatological vision of the world – i.e. views the world in its transfigured perfect state – the secular world and the earthly existence of the human individual are constantly underestimated in Orthodox social ethics. By formulating its social doctrine, the ROC indeed took an important step in the direction of embracing modernization, but at the same time, it redefined, in the *Fundamentals*, its identity as a divine-human institution distinct from the secular world. Instead of adapting the idea of independent civil society, the Church is preoccupied with the search for its self-identity, constantly juxtaposing itself to secular society. Hence, the very process of conceptualization of secular civil society reinforces the traditional Orthodox dualism.

The Orthodox social doctrine proposes to conceive society as an ecclesiastical community: the *Ekklesia*. Accordingly, it establishes a theocentric model of society and repudiates civil society as an erroneous model based on the secular principles of individualism, liberalism, and pluralism. Insofar as Orthodox theology ascribes no substantial value to the idea and the reality of secular civil society, it considers civil society as a temporal constellation of human relations that must be ultimately transformed through the deification and attain the unity of the divine and the human in the ideal of Godmanhood (*Bogochelovechestvo*). Consequently, the Orthodox conception of civil society emphasizes the discrepancy between the traditional theocentrism of *Ekklesia* and the liberal anthropocentrism of civil society. In essence, the Orthodox social doctrine remains theocentric, since it upholds a hierarchical vision of social order, with God at the top, the human individual on the bottom and the Church (*Ekklesia*) in between as the mediator between God and human individuals. This theocentric model does not leave much space for autonomous self-reliant civil society. Society is dissolved either in the concept of the Church, meaning then the ecclesiastical community, or in the concept of the state, where it becomes identical with the political community.

The dualistic tendency manifests itself also in the Orthodox conception of political power. Defining its relationship to the secular democratic state, the ROC advocates, on the one hand, the model of Byzantine *symphonia* but realizes, on the other hand, the impossibility of the proposed symbiosis of

politics and religion under the conditions of secular democracy. Although the Church makes certain concessions by adjusting itself to the secular state, it safeguards its institutional and ideological autonomy by requiring mutual non-interference into each other's affairs.

Similarly, the Orthodox conception of human rights is characterized by the discrepancy between a positive understanding of human dignity in the framework of Christian anthropology on the one side, and an antiliberal critique of the secular concept of human rights on the other. The Orthodox social doctrine unambiguously denounced the secular institute of human rights as grounded in "the notion of the rights of the individual outside of his relations with God." Consequently, the ROC has difficulties to recognize the right to freedom of conscience as a morally neutral principle. The adoption of the principle of freedom of conscience as a legal principle is perceived not as an ultimate triumph of the Christian plea for free and unrestrained belief, but as a token of the moral malaise of modern apostate society. With that, the ROC clearly links the notion of human rights and dignity to public ethics and individual morality. The human individual obtains his true dignity and realizes the image of God through taking personal responsibility for his own morally impeccable life and social responsibility for other human beings. In that way, Orthodox ethics connects the idea of individual freedom and rights to the distinctively Orthodox principles of conciliar service and collective rights; thereby, it attempts to balance individual interests by communal values and social responsibility.

Concisely, the social doctrine of the ROC did not succeed to elaborate a positive understanding of civil society and secular democracy. The lacking conception of society as an independent, self-regulatory, and self-reliant factor impoverishes the Church's contribution to the emerging civil society in present-day Russia. Instead of participating in public debate and seeking for alternative sources to legitimate the existence of autonomous civil society, the ROC insists on viewing civil society and democracy as inevitable and temporal realities, against which the Church needs to defend its God-reliant ideality as a divine-human organism. Following its dualistic vision of the world, the Church reinforces its autonomy. This is obvious from the fact that the ROC systematically avoids recognizing its place *within* secular social order and situates itself *above* it. However, in order to become a true and equal participant in the dialog with the secular world, the ROC should participate in secular public debate. In order to make her voice legitimate and heard in the public arena, the ROC should refrain from assuming an

exclusive normative perspective on social issues and accept the logic of a pluralized liberal society; this process should start from recognizing the principle of freedom of conscience.

Obviously, new theological sources should be discovered for a conception of civil society that is consonant with Orthodox Christian teaching. This attempt has been undertaken by the liberally-oriented Orthodox intelligentsia, whose versatile writings represent the liberal-reformative trend. This trend unites those Soviet dissidents and Orthodox theologians who innovatively use traditional Orthodox concepts to accommodate the idea of civil society.

Juxtaposing the moral model of open and humane society to the Soviet model of coordinated and artificial society, the Soviet dissidents took inspiration from the Christian concepts of conscience, dignity, honesty, inner freedom, and justice. However, they aimed to reach not only beyond communist ideology, but also beyond the conservative standpoint of the ROC. Although both the ROC and the Orthodox dissidents elaborate their conception of society in terms of a moral-religious category, their anthropological views diverge significantly. If conservative theologians identify society with the ecclesiastical community (*Ekklesia*) and ground this conception on the idea of togetherness (*sobornost'*), dissidents found their conception of society on the idea of individual conscience. It is the human individual in his inner struggle against fear and injustice that is central to dissident spiritual discourse.

Although the Orthodox dissidents did preserve an organic link with the Orthodox Christian tradition, they assumed an alternative approach to this tradition. This is especially obvious from the way they used the concept of Godmanhood (*Bogochelovechestvo*). If conservative theologians employ this concept to legitimize the Church's exclusive identity as a "divine-human organism" and refute modernization associating it with the process of unrelenting secularization, the Orthodox dissidents try to discover a divine element in the fallen human nature. Therefore, they call for a revision of Christian theology from the humanistic perspective and consider such 'anti-Soviet' values as mutual respect, tolerance, individual freedom, and dignity as the highest achievements of Christian civilization.

The Orthodox dissidents advise the ROC to change two things. First, the Church should renounce its obsession with self-identification. The tension between traditional ecclesiastical conservatism and modern secularism is less relevant for contemporary Christians than the authentic Christian message about spiritual initiative and daring. Instead of flight from

the world, i.e. from the hostile Soviet state and atheistic ideology, the Orthodox Church can better emphasize the importance of working *in* the world with a view to transforming it.

As we have seen, the Orthodox dissidents agree with liberal-reformative theologians that religious insights can support democracy politics and civil society. Similar to the dissidents, liberal theologians advocate active participation of Christians in the secular world because the core of Christianity consists, as they believe, in transforming the world toward the ideal of the Heavenly Kingdom. For that reason, liberal theologians also deny ascetic flight from public politics and civil society. Instead, like the Orthodox dissidents, they propose to christianize politics, i.e. to transform interest-based politics toward progressive and humane politics, which treats the individual as a spiritual person imbued with conscience, morality, autonomy, and inalienable rights. This plea for christianization of politics should be distinguished from the fundamentalist plea for politicization of Christianity.

According to the liberal Orthodox view, Christianity is compatible with the democratic values of brotherhood, liberty, and equality. Moreover, Christianity places the human individual above social-political establishments, considering these establishments as temporal and therefore subordinate to the human individual. Christianity reveals the value of men's brotherly communication and the value of non-hierarchical relations in a social community. That is why liberal theologians see democracy as a secular projection of the Orthodox ideal of *sobornost'* and propose the model with a minimalist democratic state and a free horizontally structured civil society.

The communal element is essential to the Orthodoxy-inspired conception of civil society. It is not only immanent autonomy of man, but also immanent solidarity of society that substantiates the presence of spiritual reality in civil society. Civil society is ultimately aimed at overcoming socio-cultural estrangement and alienation of autonomous human beings, thereby providing "an external guarantee for the positive freedom of the person's spiritual self-realization in communication with others" (Rashkovskij 2004: 117).

As we can conclude from the above, the Orthodox tradition is multivocal and diverse, as it comprises different views on how Orthodox Christianity should interact with secular civil society. The politicized version of Orthodoxy (fundamentalism) rejects modernity and secular civil society. Instead, it proposes theocracy and legitimizes the interference of religion in various spheres of public life. The official teaching of the ROC (Orthodox

conservatism) provides a more qualified alternative: It advocates eschatologization instead of modernization. Representing a midway position, the ROC tolerates the secular democratic state and civil society as inevitable but temporal realities, and limits its relationship to the secular world by establishing the condition of mutual non-interference. Finally, the liberal-reformative trend embodies the tolerant position, as it sees the opportunity of a spiritual and moral liberalization of society within the logic of modernization.



## Conclusion

The present study was concerned with the rise and subsequent development of civil society in post-Soviet Russia. With that, the focus was on examining civil society both as an idea and as a socially tangible reality. Methodologically, the research incorporated normative as well as descriptive theories on civil society. Theoretical insights were involved to explain social phenomena, while empirical facts were used to substantiate or criticize certain theories. Thus, civil society was studied as a normative concept on the one hand, and as an indispensable element of a democratic polity on the other.

We have set out in this analysis to achieve greater clarity on the encompassing question as how we can evaluate the democratic transformations that occurred in Russian society in the span of the last twenty years. The answers obtained through the research provide a complex picture of how Russian society, liberated from the restraints of the Soviet system, has been struggling for civility. We have seen that although civil society and democracy can exist without each other, only the existence of both accounts for a strong and sustainable system. As civil society is an essential prerequisite for a flourishing democracy, reciprocally, the democratic system creates the necessary preconditions for an effective and vibrant civil society. Without democratic government, civil society might reinforce an opposition between society and politics, whereas democracy without civil society can be reckoned merely as a nominal democracy. The present study has yielded a revised picture of the establishment of civil society in post-Soviet Russia. A robust civil society does not emerge quickly, as a result of adopting a democratic constitution; instead, it requires a

complex preparatory process, which involves profound transformations at the level of institutions and public ethics.

This concluding chapter systematizes the main conclusions of the research. It starts with summarizing the study and answering the research questions as they have evolved in the process of the analysis (7.1). Next follow the findings of the study, articulated in the form of fifteen propositions (7.2). As a final point, the contemporary political climate in Russia is depicted, and possible trajectories of the development of civil society are spelled out (7.3).

## 7.1 Summary

In preparation for answering the central research question, a range of political, philosophical, and sociological theories have been examined with a view to defining a set of tentative criteria for the evaluation of Russian civil society. In the introduction, an analytical framework has been suggested to conceive of a concept as versatile and contested as civil society. Concisely, civil society can be defined in two different ways: (a) as an empirical reality, which signifies the realm of voluntary association among citizens of democratic polities, and (b) as a normative vision of communal life, which involves the ideals of social cohesion, engaged citizenship, individual freedom, tolerance, and pluralism. In civil society literature, these two distinct definitions frequently overlap. The evidence of that can be found in chapter two, which focused on the empirical study of civil society and beyond.

In that chapter, I have been concerned with the question as what civil society theory clarifies about contemporary social and moral problems. The posed question proved relevant not only with regard to the transforming Russian society, but also with regard to the established Western democracies. Empirical studies deepened our understanding of the place and function of civil society within the framework of a modern democratic polity. As we have seen, civil society denotes the area of voluntary associational activity of democratic citizens. In this sense, civic activity aims at controlling and communicating with democratic government, producing political alternatives, making public concerns to be heard and replied by politicians and policy-makers. Civil society also enables citizens to realize their rights to free speech, undertake commercial projects, establish various interest organizations, and, if necessary, appeal to the court. On this account, we have argued that civil society constitutes one of the

fundamental elements of the *Rechtsstaat*, i.e. the state founded on the rule of law.

On the other hand, civil society discourse revealed certain problems relating to the democratic system. A pertinent question arose whether civil society *is* a good society, and why. I addressed this question by looking at the way it is approached by two leading schools in the field of civil society studies: the liberal theory and the theory of deliberative democracy. Evidently, theorists from both schools agree that civil society can be conceived as a self-reflexive and self-organizing community of citizens who are bound by highly generalized universal moral values. According to this normative understanding, the model of civil society provides optimal conditions for the realization of individual freedom. However, both theories still struggle to define a legitimate degree of state intervention in civil society. This issue remains complex because it touches upon potential risks that are latently present in the liberal-individualistic principles civil society is based on. Thus, civil society discourse copes with the moral dilemma as how to reconcile individual interests and public concerns in the liberal democratic system. This dilemma continues to invigorate the debate on whether civil society constitutes a playground for egoistic disintegrative tendencies or a common space for civic virtues.

Consequently, chapter three addressed the problem of social and political pluralism from the perspective of sociological theory. The sociological embedding of civil society theory proved relevant, as it allowed us to sketch the structural profile of society that corresponds to the normative theory of democracy. We have concluded that the key concept in the sociological rendering of civil society is differentiation. Differentiation depicts the process of division of society into autonomous function-specific subsystems and thereby reflects the increasing complexity of society's institutional makeup. Accordingly, the theory of differentiation provides the clue for understanding society as an encompassing system constituted by differentiated subsystems. It is this understanding that unities the classical sociological theories of modern society produced by Max Weber, Talcott Parsons, and Niklas Luhmann.

Underpinning my choice in selecting these particular theories was an aspiration to reveal the main landmarks in the evolution of sociological conceptions of civil society. In the beginning, Weber claimed that rationalization instigated the process of societal differentiation in the modern West. He regarded the "disenchantment of the world" as an important consequence of rationalization that determined the development

of modern Western societies toward an increasingly secularized, bureaucratized, and instrumentally-rational model. Thereby, Weber connected the concept and the reality of civil society to the ineradicable conflict between formal and substantive rationalities (*Zweckrationalität* versus *Wertrationalität*), which he believed to constitute the paradox of Western civilization. Parsons, for his part, disagreed with Weber when asserting that modern differentiated society upholds collectively shared norms and attains cohesion through the normative concept of societal community. In Parsons's theory, civil society designates the subsystem of society that performs this integrative function.

Building upon these theoretical insights, Luhmann extended the original Parsonian paradigm to a sophisticated theory of functional differentiation. Luhmann's new perspective on functional differentiation allowed relating democratic theory to the model of a highly differentiated civil society. Departing from Luhmann's theory, I argued that it would be wrong to see civil society as confined to any particular subsystem of society. Instead, we can better choose for a value-free conception of civil society in terms of modern differentiated *Gesellschaft* and oppose it to premodern stratified *Gemeinschaft*. This conception renders the key principles of civil society, such as plurality, publicity, individual freedom, and autonomy, sociologically feasible. Accordingly, civil society conceived as a functionally differentiated society can be claimed to be "a society of equals" (Luhmann 1982: 236) and "a society without a top and without a center" (Luhmann 1990: 16). It is horizontally structured and therefore inclusive and egalitarian. It is equally accessible for all citizens, and that is why it provides the space for voluntary participation, association, and mobility. On this account, the model of differentiated society creates the adequate structural preconditions for the realization of political and social rights of democratic citizens.

Thus, chapters two and three elucidated the concepts of civil society theory that can be employed for resolving the core tension of civil society, namely the tension between the public and the private. If political and social ethics tries to resolve this tension through the concepts of pluralism, egalitarianism, individual rights, and social responsibility, sociological theory provides a solution through the concept of societal differentiation.

Next, chapter four addressed an intriguing question of how the tension between the private and the public can be addressed from a religious perspective. Focusing on the relationship between civil society and Christian religion, we have seen that these two do not have to form rival positions in the modern secular world. Civil society, which generally reflects a secular

idea and form of society, and Christianity, which upholds a religious vision of social order, are involved not in a relationship of continuous opposition, but rather in one of dynamic reciprocal influence. Such kind of relationship emerged in Western Europe as a result of the historical process whereby Christianity imbued Western society with principles that later became the instruments for legitimizing the co-existence of religious and secular orders, namely, freedom of religious choice, freedom of conscience, and separation of the Church from a political community of the state. These principles allowed the Church to find a new identity and function during the process of societal differentiation, whereby the secular spheres of modern society claimed their autonomy from the sphere of religion. Consequently, the previous dualist division of society into the realms of the sacred and the secular gradually disappeared, and religion transformed from once an all-encompassing system to a mere subsystem of society.

Against this historical background, the relationship between religion and secular society in Russia became an interesting pole of comparison. Whereas in the West, the idea of pluralistic and tolerant civil society challenged the Christian Church to adapt to the process of secularization, in Russia, the dominant self-positioning of the state significantly inhibited the structural differentiation and thus 'protected' the Russian Orthodox Church (henceforth: the ROC) from the process of secularization. Accordingly, if secularization occurred in the West as a natural spin-off of society's emancipation from the surveillance of the Church, in the Russian Empire, by contrast, secularization was delayed by the Church's traditional subordination to the state. As a result, the Church in Russia started to lose its vital bond with the secularizing society, which became especially noticeable during the Synodal period. Following the tradition of Orthodox dualism, the ROC developed its self-conception in overtly essentialistic terms, positioning itself as an ultimately otherworldly community, ontologically independent from the secular power of the state and disengaged from the problems of the modernizing society. This crucial difference remains perceptible even today: For Western Christianity, the problem of secularization pertains primarily to the troubled relationship between secularizing society and the Church, whereas for the ROC, secularization raises questions such as how to position itself in the political arena, and how to safeguard the boundaries between political and ecclesiastical authorities.

It is fair to say that a new page in the history of the diverging Eastern and Western Christian traditions was written, about a century ago, by

Russian religious philosophers, who succeeded to substantiate the idea of secular civil society on the grounds of Orthodox Christian theology. Remarkably, their theological arguments in favor of freedom of conscience match the arguments set forth by contemporary civil society theorists, namely that secularity is an indispensable regulative principle for a multicultural and polyconfessional society. Vladimir Solov'ëv's views are closest to the theory of liberal democracy. His Christian humanism recognizes the highest authority of individual conscience and thereby defends the principle most sacred for those contemporary Western scholars who seek to define a legitimate place for religion in the context of secular civil society (Keane, Taylor, Casanova, and Audi). This principle is "the inviolable right to privacy and the sanctity of the principle of freedom of conscience" (Casanova 1994: 57). Although liberal theory of civil society and Russian religious philosophy are grounded in different anthropological and philosophical traditions, they pursue a similar goal. They attempt to construct the ideal of an inclusive, open, tolerant, and non-violent society where religious citizens can uphold their divergent convictions in a legitimate and respectful manner. Thereby, religious citizens can express their faith publicly, but without infringing on freedom of conscience of their alternatively-believing or secular co-citizens.

By revising the relationship between civil society and religion, I accomplished the theoretical part of the study; consequently, I moved on to examining pertinent problems that accompany Russia's democratic project today.

Chapter five addressed the urgent problem of institutional weakness of contemporary Russian civil society by providing an ethical assessment of the problem. The analysis revealed that the creation of formal preconditions required by a democratic system (to name the most important, democratic constitution, rule of law, market economy, private property, citizens' rights, openness and accountability of the political bodies to the public) is not sufficient for successful democratization and a vibrant civil society. Institutional transformations need broad public support and trust; without citizens' participation, these new institutions remain formalities. By contrast, present-day Russian society is characterized by an essential dualism: There is ample public support of the normative idea of democracy on the one hand, but also persistent public distrust of democratic institutions and procedures on the other. Hence, it is plausible to assume that democratic institutions do not function properly not because they are unreliable, but rather because Russians do not trust these new institutions in the first place and

consequently avoid participating in them in a legal, transparent, and formal way.

Partially, we can explain the institutional weakness and insufficient efficacy of Russian civil society by Russians' subjective experiences of democracy. The transition to a democratic *Rechtsstaat* and a market economy did not erase the seventy-year long legacy of communism. This legacy is still traceable in citizens' wide-scale alienation from political activity, avoidance of participation in public organizations, and passive acceptance of a homogeneous political landscape. Furthermore, the liberal reforms of the 1990s aggravated the latent socio-economic conflict. The majority of ordinary Russians suffered economic degradation as a consequence of the hasty and nontransparent transition to a market economy. The autonomy of the public sphere, despite new constitutionally guaranteed freedoms, remained restricted by the centralizing strategy of the new political elite. If during the El'tsyn epoch, the authoritarian structure of political power reestablished itself in the form of oligarchy, Putin extended presidential control over the sectors of mass media, security services, the Federation Council, and the Duma. A special forum for monitoring civil activity was created – the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation. Thereby, political power again managed to reinforce its old character as indivisible, irremovable, and autonomous from society.

In newly democratized regimes, such as Russia, the tactic of 'imitation democracy,' the inadequacies of economic policies, and persistent public distrust of new democratic institutions are liable to provoke a crisis of political legitimacy and public trust. It is exactly at this moment that civil society can intervene by halting the loss of legitimacy of the democratic system. Civil society can provide both an adequate institutional model, which would facilitate a vital bond of society with the political center and with corporate life, and a reliable ethical model of society, which would be flexible enough to comprise divergent public orientations and integer enough to define the moral borders of civil activity. As far as Russian civil society is concerned, the Orthodox Christian tradition serves as an evident source of inspiration for construing such a model. For this reason, the discussion of the factor 'Orthodoxy' in relation to civil society theory became the subsequent focus of the study.

In the first place, chapter six considered the relationship between Orthodox Christianity and civil society from a functionalistic perspective. Describing the current socio-political context in which the ROC functions, we have seen that the ROC obtained a visible civic role during the transition

period, as it contributed to the rise of a new national-cultural identity of many post-Soviet Russians. In this sense, the Orthodox tradition suggested a comprehensive alternative to the collapsing communist system. Obviously, the moral disorientation of many post-communist citizens, as well as the ensuing ideological vacuum significantly contributed to the religious renaissance.

Next, we examined the reaction of the ROC to the emergence of an independent secular public space in the form of civil society. The question arose whether Orthodox Christianity is able and willing to discover, within its theological and philosophical tradition, adequate concepts with a view to accommodating the idea of a secular pluralistic civil society. Tangible answers to this question crystallized into three main positions. First, a radical position of powerful rejection of civil society and secular political power (Orthodox fundamentalism); second, a midway position that partially accepts the secular state and civil society as an inevitable evil under the condition of mutual non-interference (Orthodox conservatism); and third, a tolerant position that approves values of liberal democracy: freedom of conscience, human dignity and rights (the liberal-reformative trend).

Nowadays, the ROC opts to remain conservative through defending its independence from the state, but at the same time, tries to retain a privileged position in the public arena. The consequences of this binary self-positioning are controversial. On the one hand, the ROC repudiates the moral malaise of increasingly secularizing Russian society. On the other hand, it confirms its neutrality in relation to the contemporary democratic state, considering it as temporal, transitory, and thus lacking any binding values. In contradistinction to this official dualist standpoint, Orthodox reformative intellectuals continue to emphasize that Christian morality is not in conflict with human rights and democracy. Even stronger, regarding democracy as the ultimate social form wherein the principle of free conscience can be fully realized, they offer an alternative religious conception of civil society, which is consonant with this core Christian value.

## 7.2 Propositions

The following fifteen propositions articulate the key results of the research.

- I. Civil society is both an idea and a reality, as it denotes simultaneously a normative concept and a social reality.

The simultaneous presence of normative and descriptive methods in worldwide studies on civil society demonstrates that civil society can be analyzed as a theoretical idea founded on a normative vision of society and, at the same time, as a concrete social phenomenon reflecting social reality. The two methods are inextricably connected. When we construe the idea of civil society, we inevitably build on certain descriptions of the social reality; accordingly, when we examine the social reality, we do so by employing certain ideas and concepts.

As an idea, civil society embodies the vision of an open, inclusive, pluralistic, and liberal society; it establishes voluntary association as its organizing principle. Civil society suggests regulating the relations between the individual, the state, and society on the basis of three core values: individual freedom, equality, and tolerance. For this purpose, it requires a vibrant and independent public sphere constituted by engaged, active, and conscious citizens and functions as an intermediate sector between the state, the market, and private initiatives.

As a reality, civil society signifies a complex web of public organizations that provide a platform for voluntary association among citizens of democratic states. An institutional component is pivotal for such an understanding because civil society denotes the institutional framework within which public organizations communicate with governmental and business structures.

- II. The concept of civil society corresponds to the sociological description in terms of a functionally differentiated society.

Analysis of civil society from the perspective of the theory of societal differentiation confirms that civil society corresponds to the model of a functionally differentiated society (*Gesellschaft*), and that this model of society is adequate for a liberal democratic polity. Such a sociological embedding provides civil society theory with a compelling empirical referent, as it substantiates normative principles of civil society theory: autonomy,

plurality, equality, voluntary association and dissociation, publicity, and legality.

Insofar as functional differentiation indicates the process of subdivision of social systems into new interconnected autonomous subsystems, we can render the structure of a functionally differentiated society as complex, pluralized, and multi-contextual. Moreover, the model of functionally differentiated society rejects particularistic criteria of participation in civil society, exhibiting civil society, instead, as essentially inclusive. In contrast to a homogeneous social community, i.e. *Gemeinschaft*, functionally differentiated *Gesellschaft* incorporates a complex web of processes and connections, and thus accommodates a plurality of various identities and visions.

Accordingly, the conception of civil society in terms of modern differentiated *Gesellschaft* releases civil society from the confinement to one particular social sphere and allows envisaging it as a society constituted by a complex fabric of intersystemic communications. Civil society creates a free-floating matrix of communication; therefore, it can be understood as a kind of qualification of the way citizens and institutions communicate.

- III. Post-Soviet Russian society is characterized by an essential dualism, as it is divided between ample public support of a normative idea of democracy and, at the same time, widespread public distrust of democratic institutions and procedures.

After the cessation of the communist rule, contemporary Russians tend to endorse the general idea of democracy, but retain a much more critical standpoint regarding the consequences of the democratic transition. Since the transition, the idea and the reality of civil society have significantly drifted apart after their initial reunion, which was achieved during the late-*perestrojka* period and the early 1990s. By contrast, the post-transition period came to be associated, in the eyes of many ordinary Russians, with growing anxieties and unmet expectations caused by the economic liberalization and the granted political rights. In the span of the last two decades, Russian citizens have become painfully aware of the discrepancy between the ideal of an open democratic society and the practices of democracy established in post-Soviet Russia. As a result, the gap between expectations of democracy and inadequately democratized institutions forms a serious obstacle to the optimal functioning of civil society organizations. In this sense, Russian

society today rather bears resemblance to developing democracies than to consolidated liberal democracies.

The observed antagonistic attitudes typical of contemporary Russians confirm that the ultimate meaning of democratic transformations consists not only in changing political, constitutional, and economic structures of a post-communist society, but also in overcoming the schism between nominal and real law. This can be achieved through substituting hierarchical relations between the state, society, and the individual by the principles of egalitarianism and participation in civil society.

- IV. Creating objective conditions prescribed by constitutional democracy is not sufficient for a successful democratization. An adequately functioning institutional framework and civic ethos are required for the rise and development of civil society in newly democratized regimes.

The following presumption is central to the present study: The more organized civil society is at the institutional level, the more receptive society is to democratic transformations, including the rule of law, the market economy, the constitutional-legislative system, private property, and a vibrant and independent public sphere. This presumption makes possible to distinguish two interrelated problems that nascent Russian civil society is confronted with. On the one hand, Russian civil society copes with the problem of institutional weakness; on the other hand, it also suffers from a lack of moral resources among the post-communist public, which, in turn, hinders implementing the intended institutional reforms. These problems form a serious internal obstacle for the democratic project. The present study shows that in Russia, despite the fact that the objective preconditions for a successful transition to a democratic polity and a market economy have been formally established, democratic consolidation remains largely impeded by the institutional and civic immaturity of post-communist society.

The research also confirms the necessity to reconsider the causal relationship between the institutional weakness and the deficient development of civil society. If previously the focus was put on the creation of civil society, as well as on its subsequent positive impact on the democratization process in post-communist regimes, nowadays, scholars tend to agree that radical institutional transformations create the preconditions for a properly functioning civil society. However, the

establishment of new democratic institutions is difficult due to the deficient civic ethos. This remains a typical setback for the majority of post-communist citizens.

- V. The problem of institutional weakness should be considered within the context of civic ethics because social trust provides the basis for a functioning democratic system.

An ethical evaluation of the democratic project in post-Soviet Russia reveals that the institutional weakness of Russian civil society resides in the moral attitudes that many contemporary Russian citizens retain with regard to the state, the economy, and civil society. Insofar as a flourishing civil society is premised not only on the establishment, but also on broad public support of new democratic institutions, we can assert that institutional weakness is essentially a moral problem.

The study sketches a number of moral resources that are necessary for the establishment of democratic institutions and for the implementation of democratizing reforms in transforming societies. Among these, the most important are social trust and civic maturity. If social trust is grounded in the principles of law-regulated society and respect for individual dignity, civic maturity implies a developed self-perception of members of society as citizens, imbued with mutual responsibility, autonomy, and political efficacy. Taking social trust and civic maturity as the criteria for an assessment of Russian civil society, I have related the pertinent problems of Russian civil society to the citizens' alienation from various public activities, their pervasive apathy, and permanent stifled dissatisfaction with the actual outcomes of the transition. At the structural-institutional level, deficient social trust and civic immaturity lead to the atomization of civil society and its stagnation in the form of microstructures. Consequently, civil society organizations are unable to establish efficient communication with the sectors of public administration and business.

- VI. The state's tendency towards monopolizing political power confines the emancipation of the public sphere in post-Soviet Russia.

Russia's transition to democracy raised important questions concerning a new role of the public and a new balance between state and society. The question of how society is to be integrated into the post-communist political

order became especially urgent during the Putin era. Then, at the turn of the millennium, the restoration of state authority prompted a more rigid regulation of public life in general and of civic activity in particular. Civil society in Putin's Russia assumed a hybrid model. This model comprises, on the one hand, the characteristics of public openness and independent judgment, and, on the other hand, the characteristics of managed public activity resembling Soviet citizens' involvement in the artificially created public sphere. With that, the decrease of independent public organizations was 'compensated' by an intensive growth of bureaucracy.

Presumably, the current strategy of the state aimed at monopolizing political power ensues from the long-term tradition of *derzhavnichestvo* (autocracy). The state's primacy over society reinforces the incompetence of political power to establish new institutional channels of communication with society beyond the traditional hierarchical channels of communication. In result, the characteristic features of Russian political power, such as indivisibility, irremovability, and autonomy from society, are reproduced in the democratic system of contemporary Russia.

What is even more alarming is that democratic consolidation in (post-)Putin's Russia is seriously hampered by the state's misconception of the normative value and function of civil society in the system of democratic government. The state sees civil society rather as a threat to its monopolistic power than as an essential element of democratic government. The restored paternalistic relationship between state and society reinforces monopolization of political power by the presidential administration and thereby diminishes the significance of civil society for public politics. The more the state tends to monopolize political power and equalize the political landscape, the lesser freedom civil society retains. Accordingly, mutual distrust between the state and civil society is growing.

- VII. The development of civil society in post-Soviet Russia is impeded by the unfair redistribution of major economic resources and by the consequent socio-economic polarization of society.

Although radical reforms in the early 1990s instigated the development of the market economy through privatization of the former state property, they also provoked the polarization between the new financial elite and the large number of disappointed and disoriented citizens. This schism was consequently reinforced by other unintended upshots of economic liberalization, such as a growing crime rate, inflation, unemployment, and

corruption. Therefore, when Putin proclaimed public order, economic security, social justice, and stricter governmental control over the corporate sector to be his priorities, Russians eagerly supported this new political course.

As noted in preposition III, Russian citizens tend to develop the dualistic attitude towards democracy, as they adjust their conception of democracy to the actual experience of the transition. The present study confirms a direct correlation between Russians' general endorsement of democracy in abstract normative terms and their unrealized expectations concerning the actual profits of democratization. In all probability, the dualism between broad passive support of the normative idea of democracy and equally broad but active disapproval of the concrete socio-economic upshots of democratization is the main reason why Russian citizens support nowadays the state's involvement with the sectors of business and civil society. This confirms that Russians are inclined to regard the state as the ultimate warrant of the economic order and the final linking point between the distressing practice and the normative ideal of democracy.

As for the emergent civil society, the socio-economic polarization of Russian society forms a second major obstacle. Enduring poverty and anxiety significantly inhibit the formation of a middle class, which is the social basis of civil society. Insofar as economic prosperity is one of the prerequisites for civic engagement and public initiative, Russian civil society obviously suffers from the underdeveloped middle class.

VIII. The communist legacies of public distrust, avoidance of public organizations, and adaptation to the system continue to constitute serious obstacles for the democratization project in post-Soviet Russia.

A lack of public trust is a third external hindrance to democratic consolidation and the proper functioning of civil society organizations. This handicap makes political efficacy of public institutions restricted and damages their reputation. Consequently, the development of democracy in contemporary Russia is also aggravated by citizens' political passivity and reluctance to participate in distrusted organizations.

Avoidance of civic engagement is a clear example of passive, adaptive behavior. It became a widespread technique that post-communist citizens employ to compensate for their distrust of democratic institutions and cope with the declining state legitimacy. Adaptation means reluctance to take

control over the situation; in this sense, it promulgates evasion of autonomous action and individual responsibility. Hence, adaptive behavior does not lead to radical change of certain institutions and practices if they do not comply with the criteria of transparency, predictability, and accountability. Instead, adaptation is a pragmatic strategy of survival and is used by those citizens who still perceive themselves as dependent on the centralized state and the unchangeable social order. The worrying fact is that two thirds up to three quarters of Russians still perceive themselves as essentially vulnerable, unprotected by law, abandoned by social programs and organizations, silent, and submissive citizens. This feeling of vulnerability amplifies the behavior of adaptation.

The revealed pattern of social behavior (distrust – alienation/passivity – adaptation) testifies to the pervasive legacy of the communist experience. The putative sources of current public distrust and avoidance of public organizations can be related to the psychological trauma of Soviet citizens, caused by the mandatory character of civil participation and the state's invasion into the private sphere. The gap between the distrusted public realm and the secure private realm resulted in the dualism between public acquiescence to the communist system and private rejection of it. Nowadays, this communist legacy manifests itself in general cynicism and contempt with regard to public activity.

- IX. Pro-active trust, as opposed to passive adaptation, is a crucial factor for the democratic system in general and for civil society in particular.

As it became clear from the above, successful democracy requires pro-active trust in contrast to passive adaptation. The model of self-organizing and self-regulating civil society is based on the presumption that citizens trust themselves, trust each other, and trust the system as a whole. According to such an understanding, it is confidence in yourself, as well as in your co-citizens' competence and integrity that necessarily complements voluntary association. Moreover, voluntary association is premised not only on citizens' mutual trust, but also on the legality of the system within which citizens undertake various civic activities and in which they need to have sufficient confidence.

In Russia, however, trust has acquired a different connotation. Russian citizens tend to trust those institutions that are predictable and contributive to social order, stability, and national unity, namely the president, the

Russian Orthodox Church, and, to a lesser degree, the army and security structures. The source of wide public trust in those institutions partially resides in the fact that most Russians can collectively identify themselves with the values and goals of the mentioned institutions. In this case, the images and figures of collective trust release citizens from their individual responsibility for civic engagement. Conversely, most Russians distrust and depreciate institutions that presume individual participation and responsibility, namely democratic government, court of law, trade unions, local authorities, and political parties.

Plausibly, trust in the institutions that embody superior authority and do not require individual responsibility or civic engagement testifies to society's institutional weakness, non-differentiation, and socio-cultural poverty. This largely-endorsed belief in political authority as the final warrant of social order appears problematic, since the democratic system is premised on the exact opposite of exaggerated trust in political authority. It is premised on citizens' independent judgment and civil activity expressed in their generalized trust in the democratic system on the whole and not in specific institutions of power (such as the state, the army, and the president) that are only part of this system.

- X. Enduring societal differentiation is one of the optimal remedies facilitating Russia's democratic project.

Enduring societal differentiation is inversely proportional to the insufficient diversity of the political landscape. The latter constitutes one of the most serious deficiencies of Russian democracy today. The homogeneous political landscape is an upshot of the lacking middle class because it is the diversity of political parties that reflects the diversity of socio-economic interests and needs of democratic citizens. The insufficient social representation of the middle class in present-day Russia explains the underdevelopment of the multi-party system, as well as the general perplexity of existing political parties. It is also the reason why political parties are frequently forced to speak on behalf of an abstract public. Consequently, Russian political parties may be blamed for being incompetent to appeal to the citizens, let alone to represent and advocate the citizens' needs.

Societal differentiation offers a sustainable solution for the development of civil society in Russia. Insofar as societal differentiation reflects the degree of society's heterogeneity and self-management, it creates the necessary preconditions for the emergence of civil society in the form of a

network of self-regulating organizations. In this sense, the continuance of societal differentiation in the spheres of public, economic, and social life is an advantage for Russian society. To the extent that society becomes able to articulate and resolve various problems without resorting to the state, it becomes increasingly heterogeneous and thus incompatible with a monopolistic and homogeneous political landscape. In result, a differentiated and pluralistic society prompts the political landscape to diversify itself and create more channels of communication with society. Instead of juxtaposing society and the political system, societal differentiation provides the conditions for their coexistence and thereby guarantees the legitimacy of the democratic system.

XI. Citizens' autonomous and rational judgment offers another optimal solution for facilitating Russia's democratic project.

To provide effective communication between society and the political system, a domain of free public reasoning is required. Within this domain, citizens can articulate and exchange their autonomous and rational judgments. However, as the present study shows, Russia still forms an obvious pole of comparison to this normative proposition. In present-day Russia, the forced centralization of society around the political center and the directly coordinative role of political power restrain the emergence of a forum for citizens' free-floating communication. By restoring its tutelage over the exchange of citizens' judgments, the Russian state threatens to deprive civil society of its spontaneity, autonomy, and responsibility.

To stop this tendency, two major conceptual shifts should be realized. Firstly, in agreement with Luhmann's theory, the Russian state can approach modern democratic regimes by accepting a functionalistic understanding of politics, which means that the system of politics would lose its former substantive foundation and regulative function (Luhmann 1982: 158). The public plays a decisive role in democratic politics because the political system cannot generate and preserve legitimacy without public opinion articulated in the form of public consensus or resistance. It is the public that provides the bureaucratic state with the necessary feedback and thereby maintains the main function of the political system, which consists in producing collectively binding decisions. On this view, Russian democracy would immensely contribute not only from the rising public sphere, but also from the new generations of citizens, who are willing and able to formulate, defend, and implement their judgments on crucial political decisions.

Secondly, with a view to facilitating democratization of post-communist society, the democratic state should assume a secondary status in relation to society. This is because the state is just one of the functions generated by society itself and thus has a serving role, which consists in creating and guaranteeing the legal conditions for a democratic polity. Such a conception of democratic polity builds upon citizens' participation in vibrant civil society and therefore refutes the very idea of constructing civil society with the help of artificial methods.

XII. The third optimal remedy for Russian democracy consists in effective institutionalization of spontaneous civic initiative.

An important precondition for articulating citizens' autonomous and rational judgment is effective institutionalization of spontaneous civic initiative. Insofar as Russian civil society currently exhibits a lack of institutional channels of communication with the state, this precondition can be considered crucial for the future of Russia's democratic project. A better transference of civic initiative into institutionalized forms would contravene widespread distrust of public organizations. It would also beneficially restore the sources of democratic legitimacy by contributing to the efficacy of public debate, the production of binding decisions and the accountability of democratic government.

Intuition channels that transfer the information about citizens' preferences and interests provide a sustainable basis for communicating public discontent. However, when these institutional channels are underrepresented or underdeveloped, as in Russian society today, public discontent might assume aggressive and spontaneous forms of protest. Accordingly, a considerable segment of contemporary Russian civil society threatens to degrade into a network of informal, unsanctioned, and unregistered actors and organizations.

In Russia, despite the existing democratic institutions and representative bodies, such as the Referendum, the Parliament, and the Court, many civil society organizations do not succeed to transfer their information input into policy preferences. Consequently, the democratic deficit expands because a significant number of civic initiatives do not assume an institutionalized form and remain neither articulated nor heard. At the same time, unable to receive the alarming signals from civil society, political power loses its vital bond with society.

It should be noted that there is evidence of constructive civic initiative and solidarity in Russia, which is most vividly expressed in citizens' increasing attention to various charity initiatives, quick self-organization of volunteers when urgently needed (such as the civic initiative of extinguishing fires in the summer of 2010), and rendering help to the victims of recurring terror attacks. However, these spontaneous civic initiatives are undertaken by individual citizens who prefer to trust their contributions to other individual participants of these initiatives (for instance, concrete hospitals, orphanages, parishes, victims, etc.) instead of the institutions that represent those in need (for instance, fund for cancer research, child rights organizations, etc.). An exceptional position in this expanding trend of private civic initiative belongs to the Russian Orthodox Church. In the field of charity and volunteer projects, the ROC receives nowadays more public credit than governmental organizations. In this sense, we should take into account the contribution of the ROC to the democratic development in Russia.

- XIII. The factor 'Orthodoxy' is significant for civil life in Russia, as the Orthodox Christian tradition provides an alternative conception of civil society.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the factor 'Orthodoxy' gained a special place in the public arena of Russian society. Then, the transforming society lost its foundation in communist ideology and faced the challenge of finding a new identity. Taking inspiration from the Orthodox theological tradition, a palette of alternative conceptions of civil society has been suggested to provide a counterpoint to the conception of civil society engraved in the tradition of modern liberalism and individualism. Within this palette, my preference goes to the conception of civil society that is consonant with the liberal-reformative trend in Orthodox theology. This conception also embraces insights of the Russian religious-philosophical renaissance.

In general, Orthodox theology is much more preoccupied with the communal ideal of social life, than with the individual and his rights. It sees no opposition between individual and society and treats them as correlative terms. The human individual needs a social environment because he can accomplish his social nature only through the relations with other individuals. It is in accordance with this teaching that Vladimir Solov'ev

developed his famous concept of All-unity, which denotes an individual-social reality, a free union of all in perfect freedom.

In view of that, Orthodox theologians resolve the tension between the individual and society by employing the distinctively Orthodox concept of *sobornost'* (conciliarity, togetherness). *Sobornost'* means an ontological unity of all human beings that can be attained through communion with God in the sacrament of Eucharist. What distinguishes *sobornost'* from secular civil society is that *sobornost'* does not imply a social contract between individual human beings but expresses a mystical sense of individuals' unanimity achieved through their radical spiritual transformation according to the ideal of Godmanhood. Hence, the Orthodox understanding of civil society advocates communion and reciprocal service, in contrast to individual autonomy and rights. Semën Frank revealed the spiritual foundation of secular society through the religious-philosophical concept of dual-unity between *sobornost'*, i.e. the primordial unity of all human beings, and *obshchestvennost'* (the public), i.e. the empirical manifestation of this primordial unity in the form of civil society. By contrast, from a sociological perspective, the spiritual conception of society in terms of *sobornost'* relates rather to a *Gemeinschaft*-concept, as it denotes one of the numerous worldviews that exist within all-encompassing differentiated *Gesellschaft*.

Thus, Orthodox theology grounds civil society theory in Christian theological concepts, but preserves, at the same time, the cardinal distinction between the spiritual and the secular. In this sense, Orthodox thinkers refuse to substitute the Orthodox *Ekklesia*-based principle of *sobornost'* by the democratic secular principle of sovereignty of the people, even despite a seeming similarity of these principles (Sergej Bulgakov). If the Church represents the highest ideal of communal life, democracy suggests ways of finding consensus among members of the natural, i.e. fallen, humanity. Hence, according to the Orthodox teaching, attaining unity and overcoming dualism between the spiritual and the secular should be achieved by elevating the earthly, secular society to the spiritual, eternal ideal of togetherness, and not the other way around.

- XIV. Institutional separation between political and religious spheres is an indispensable precondition for a peaceful integration of religion in the public sphere.

A religious conception of civil society also entails certain limitations and conditions if it is to be adequately implemented in religious policy. The

cardinal distinction between the secular and the spiritual corresponds to the institutional separation between the spheres of politics and religion. This separation is necessary, as it would alleviate potential problems resulting from the fusion of these spheres.

The present study maintains that religion can attain a legitimate role in the public domain of a functionally differentiated society. An open, tolerant, and pluralistic civil society does not contradict the principle of religious freedom; however, it does prescribe the conditions under which religion can assume a legitimate public place in the liberal democratic order. These conditions include the institutional separation between Church and state, the principle of ecclesiastical political neutrality, and the Church's acceptance of the state's secularity. At the same time, if secularity optimally serves as the regulative principle for a multicultural and polyconfessional state, it may have destructive consequences when interpreted as a coherent ideology, i.e. when it becomes the doctrine of secularism. In this case, secularism is likely to provoke a radicalized reaction on the part of religious believers, known as the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism. That is why it is advisable to distinguish between secularity and secularism.

Moreover, religion can take a legitimate place in the public arena of a secular pluralistic civil society under the condition that it recognizes itself as one of the participants of this arena. For the Christian Church, this option means retaining the double dimension in its self-perception. As a secular institution, the Church belongs to and participates in civil society, but as a divine-human organism, it cannot be restricted to the secular sphere. The possibility of the Church becoming a locus for civic engagement depends, firstly, on the institutional protection of civil rights through civil society organizations and, secondly, on the Church's readiness to form part of civil society.

#### XV. Contemporary Russia is struggling for civility.

The multi-level evaluation of the democratic project in post-Soviet Russia confirmed that two different dimensions are necessarily involved in the analysis of civil society: the empirical-descriptive dimension, wherein civil society is a social reality, and the philosophical-conceptual dimension, wherein civil society represents a normative idea.

With regard to the problematic rise of civil society in post-communist regimes, the main challenge consists in the proximity of the normative ethical ideal to the social-political reality. In contemporary Russia, civil

society has become, since recently, a reality manifested in the form of an existing network of public organizations that operate at the border of the political society, the corporate sector, and the private sphere. At the same time, civil society remains for Russia yet a new and unfamiliar reality. As the experience of the speeded democratic reforms in Eastern and Central Europe has revealed, civil society does not emerge out of a historical vacuum; instead, it needs adequately entrenched traditions and conceptions.

A particular problem of Russian civil society relates to the lack of a strong public sphere and, accordingly, of a developed self-conception of society as an independent, full-pledged body entitled to participate in the political process on the par with the state. For this reason, contemporary political power tends to acquire an authoritarian character, while the sphere of politics becomes increasingly bureaucratized and alienated from society. The same is valid for the sphere of the economy where economic relations became permeated by an ethic of individualism. It is between economic individualism and political authoritarianism that Russian civil society is continuously grudging, trying to struggle for a legitimate place between the forces of the state and of the market.

On this view, the expression 'struggling for civility' vividly describes the thorny path that Russian society has been following since the transition to democracy. After a decade of El'tsyn's oligarchic liberalization, followed by a decade of Putin's consolidating bureaucratization, there is much confusion among contemporary Russian citizens concerning the future course of the country. Some oppose the principle of separation of powers, believing that the president should control the Duma, the government, and the Court; whereas a growing part of the population starts to realize that control over political authorities and maintenance of social order are rather the tasks of society. No less confusing are public assessments of the established market economy. A significant number of citizens depreciate the socio-economic consequences of the desired economic freedom; accordingly, they are intimidated by the commercialization of civil society. Others, on the contrary, see potential in the emerging corporate sector and its intersections with civil society, which are manifested, for instance, in supporting corporate citizenship and various civic initiatives.

One of the ways to manage this perplexity consists in the correct understanding of the role of civil society as an intermediate sphere between the state and the market. Functioning as a force that restrains technocratic bureaucratization and marketization, civil society provides sufficient room for citizens who are driven by the entrepreneurial spirit, or who wish to

implement their knowledge in democratic government, or who are inspired by the ideals of charity, solidarity, and altruism. In a nutshell, civil society creates the virtual space where the ideas become the reality and where the reality facilitates the genesis of new ideas.

### **7.3 Perspective: Where is Russian Civil Society Heading Today?**

To put the present study in a relevant perspective, I want to address recent developments in the field of Russian politics and provide a critical evaluation of the current state of Russian civil society. In this diagnosis, the findings of the study insinuate certain traps and, at the same time, suggest solutions to the indicated problems.

What are the implications of Putin's system of governance, which is frequently labeled as 'imitation' or '(over)managed' democracy, for civil society? Putin's rule pursued primarily such goals as stabilization, restoration of the political order, and consolidation of society. These achievements came at the cost of an immense growth of bureaucracy, of a top-down approach in governance, and of an overall technocratic vision of society. With its focus on the present moment, Putin's system lacked both future vision and reflection on the past; it was thus non-reflexive and non-visionary. Although the current president Medvedev, working in tandem with the premier Putin, continuously emphasizes the priority of modernization for the future of Russia, his conception of modernization implies a technological progress, stimulated by the establishment of the so-called hyper-modern research centers. Medvedev's conception is based on external factors and therefore is opposite to a conception of modernization as induced by the change of spiritual and cultural values. However, it is this change that constitutes, as I believe, the internal source of societal transformation.

Obviously, neither Putin's nor Medvedev's system entails recognition and accommodation of a plurality of social interests and civic initiatives. Managed democratization, as well as managed modernization, resists the process of societal differentiation. It also precludes the emergence of new public institutions; thereby, it inhibits building up a horizontal communication network between government, civil society, and the corporate sector.

At the present moment, Russian civil society continues to experience the consequences of Putin's politics of stabilization and consolidation. One of these consequences consists in mutual distrust between the state and civil

society. The state reinforces its distrust of civil society by creating moderated forums for a dialog with civil society (such as the Public Chamber) and suppressing the 'disloyal' sector of civil society. Recent studies confirm that the tendency of the state to implement this double approach in its policy towards civil society is strengthening. Thus, political power patronages 'good' civil society organizations by distributing grants and privileges to various public chambers and councils, while it also squeezes out 'bad' ones by publicly discrediting them and exercising rigid administrative control. This gives ground to Lipman and Petrov to speak about an emerging phenomenon in present-day Russia, namely the phenomenon of pseudo non-commercial organizations, or so-called GONGO's, i.e. Government Organized Non-Governmental Organizations (Lipman & Petrov 2010: 7). As a result, the interactions between civil society and the state take place in two separate areas: the secure area reserved for state-controlled and sanctioned civil society organizations, and the marginalized, discredited area comprised of diverse protest movements and other uncontrolled organizations that are out of favor with the authorities.

Evidently, the state's patronage of the loyal sector of civil society causes rather competition and opposition among civil society organizations, instead of their cooperation and communication. Preferring to remain a neutral and invisible player, the state administration frequently uses the controlled NGO's to fight against the disliked non-commercial organizations "by means of marionette structures, from within civil society itself"; in that way, the administration "muffles some critical notes by creating an artificial polyphony" (Lipman and Petrov 2010: 24). Moreover, it is necessary to notice that the shift of some registered NGO's towards unregistered illegal protest movements is also enhanced by the current conditions of socio-economic inequality and the global crisis. In extreme cases, underground civil society initiatives express civic disobedience, which results in unsanctioned rallies such as, for instance, ethnic violence in December 2010. However, these outbursts of civic resentment remain short-lived, unorganized, and easily suppressed.

Accordingly, newly formed civil society organizations and social movements have difficulties to integrate in the established network of communication between the state and the third sector. Lacking competence and experience in formulating and transferring their messages, these new organizations achieve only marginal positions or even degrade into unsanctioned protest movements. Hence, they lose their position as active

participants capable of influencing policy making. This marginalized position in the public sphere is also amplified by the media. However, newly formed civil society groups need recognition not only by official civil society organizations, but also by the community.

Most regretfully, the internal schism between civil society organizations forms a serious obstacle to democratic consolidation in Russia, as it weakens the public appeal and efficacy of civil society. Insofar as mutual distrust among civil society organizations impedes cooperation in serving various public concerns, the main challenge consists in promulgating the partnership spirit among civil society organizations.

Given the above, we can conclude that the internal discrimination among NGO's, a lack of financial resources, and increasing control by state authorities form the main issues on the agenda of Russian civil society nowadays and in the near future. Although the aim of the present study has not been to offer an antidote for overcoming the revealed problems, my hope is that the initiated discussion can contribute to the realization that civil society is vitally important for the future of Russia's democratic project. Civil society is an indispensable condition for a thriving democracy not only because it creates a network of public organizations, but also because it provides the democratic system with legitimacy and public trust. That is why our understanding of civil society should not be confined exclusively to an empirical dimension. Civil society is more embracing than a social reality, as it also embodies a comprehensive ethical vision of social order. Thus, civil society creates both *normative* and *real* possibilities for citizens' engagement with their government and with the corporate sector. It allows citizens to express their opinions on issues of public concern, realize their rights to freedom of thought and belief, and construe a society according to their understanding of the right balance between solidarity and individual autonomy. At the structural level, civil society accommodates diverse civic initiatives by institutionalizing the processes of pluralization and differentiation of social interests. Thereby, civil society is also able to propose a qualified and tolerant way to integrate religion in the public sphere.

To cut a long story short, the establishment of civil society implies for new democratic regimes the society's struggle for the ideal of an open, tolerant, and *civil* society. It involves an inevitable struggle for civility.



## Note on Technical Matters

In the present study, I have used an extensive body of material that is available in Russian only. The exclusively Russian sources are indicated in the footnotes, in their original Russian transcript. To make these sources available to an international public, I have included numerous citations and paraphrases. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations from Russian are mine.

When translating specific Russian concepts, I have continuously encountered the problem of semantic qualification. With a view to providing a more precise translation of some key concepts, I have included the original Russian words between brackets. Russian words have been transliterated in accordance with the popular transcription system, except for some elements that I have borrowed from the scientific transcription system. These alternative transliterations display, in my view, greater affinity with the sounds of the Russian language. Amongst others, the chosen method of transliteration allow reproducing the ending “нй” as “ij” while avoiding confusing and numerous combinations such as “y,” “yi” or “iy” (like in Dostojevskij). However, in case of some most customary names, traditional English spelling has been preferred over Russian transliteration: for instance, ‘Tsar Nicolas instead of ‘Tsar’ Nikolaj, ‘Tsar Peter instead of ‘Tsar’ Pëtr, Alexander instead of Aleksandr and intelligentsia instead of intelligentsija. I have systematized my transcription system in the following table.

|        |       |          |
|--------|-------|----------|
| а – a  | к – k | х – kh   |
| б – b  | л – l | ц – ts   |
| в – v  | м – m | ч – ch   |
| г – g  | н – n | ш – sh   |
| д – d  | о – o | щ – shch |
| е – e  | п – p | ъ – ”    |
| ё – ë  | р – r | ы – y    |
| ж – zh | с – s | ь – ’    |
| з – z  | т – t | э – é    |
| и – i  | у – u | ю – ju   |
| й – j  | ф – f | я – ja   |



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# Index

- accountability, 42, 45, 48, 136, 236, 241, 396
- adaptation, 280, 282, 392, 393
- Alexander II, 190, 192
- alienation, 241, 281, 288, 296, 385, 390
- apathy, 58, 101, 274, 289, 296, 390
- asceticism, 89, 105, 188, 189, 203, 320, 362
- associations, 13, 18, 20, 26, 44, 47, 48, 49, 53, 55, 58, 81, 98, 104, 112, 155, 234, 380
- autonomy, 208, 340
- autopoietic system, 116, 118, 122, 140
- binary code, 118, 121, 122, 143
- Bogochelovechestvo* (Godmanhood), 180, 214, 216, 343, 349, 375
- Bolshevik revolution, 28, 173, 195, 198, 290, 303
- bureaucracy, 22, 82, 84, 93, 234, 235, 250, 400
- Calvinism. *See* Protestant ethics
- capitalism, 32, 52, 64, 85, 89, 90, 103, 353
- Christianity, 149, 152, 154, 156, 172, 175, 178, 215, 218, 226, 299, 316, 335, 358, 362, 365, 376, 383
- citizens, 42, 47, 49, 200, 235, 266, 281, 365, 380, 382
- civic engagement, 59, 141, 259, 273, 282, 294, 392, 394
- civic maturity, 264, 268, 390
- civic virtue, 48, 50, 56, 273
- civil society, 1, 19, 22, 24, 39, 48, 238, 245, 263, 292, 379, 391, 403
  - and Orthodoxy, 197, 201, 204, 209, 212, 300, 311, 316, 338, 341, 368, 372, 384, 385
  - bad civil society, 50, 54, 66, 71, 109
  - controlled civil society, 228, 234, 291, 385
  - normative ideal, 1, 16, 39, 100, 107, 145, 212, 218, 222, 268, 379, 387
  - social reality, 12, 19, 24, 98, 107, 138, 230, 234, 285, 379, 387, 400
- civility, 35, 44, 45, 49, 53, 55, 153, 379, 399, 403
- cohesion, 55, 72, 77, 143, 380
- collectively binding decisions, 34, 133, 137, 395
- communication, 18, 47, 60, 61, 64, 108, 120, 137, 141, 142, 148, 367, 395, 402
- communism, 66, 225, 242, 274, 277, 385
- Communist Party, 27, 301, 318, 323
- communitarianism, 32, 55, 62, 70
- community, 17, 31, 35, 53, 56, 71, 139, 142, 171, 175, 177, 189, 218, 316, 336, 341, 360, 373, 376, 383
- complexity, 117, 119, 122, 125, 129, 134, 141, 146, 269, 272
- conflict, 37, 40, 44, 46, 53, 101, 134, 338, 339
- consensus, 100, 108, 137, 229, 291, 395
- conservatism, 310, 316, 327, 336, 349, 386
- contingency, 118, 120, 123, 145, 162, 270
- corporate sector, 6, 23, 236, 247, 255, 258, 260, 263, 293
- democracy, 16, 18, 22, 42, 43, 44, 48, 49, 54, 59, 60, 65, 132, 134, 141, 155, 219, 244, 255, 257, 279, 294, 326, 381, 388, 392
  - and Orthodoxy, 195, 312, 367
  - deliberative democracy, 30, 56, 67, 381

- democratic consolidation, 4, 20, 21, 22, 243, 256, 267, 273, 292, 389, 391, 403  
 democratic constitution, 231, 308, 309, 334, 379  
 democratic transformations, 226, 246, 389  
 imitation democracy, 228, 234, 235  
 liberal democracy, 13, 26, 29, 71, 162, 169, 338  
 transition to, 6, 226, 229, 293  
 democratization, 23, 58, 258, 297, 384, 389  
*derzhavnichestvo* (autocracy), 231, 240, 391  
 de-sacralization, 90, 91  
 differentiated society, 59, 71, 76, 78, 97, 109, 140, 147, 160, 168, 190, 206, 239, 246, 269, 272, 285, 295, 322, 328, 387, 399  
 differentiation, 37, 41, 101, 108, 111, 116, 118, 119, 124, 125, 132, 138, 143, 146, 156, 170, 206, 213, 219, 286, 320, 381, 394  
 dignity, 92, 200, 203, 204, 339, 343, 348, 353, 374  
 discourse ethics, 62, 108, 124  
 disenchantment of the world, 86, 87, 91  
 distrust, 234, 255, 259, 271, 276, 284, 393  
 dualism, 157, 178, 215, 223, 331, 333, 364, 365  
  
 Eastern Europe, 25, 49, 72, 73, 231, 266  
 economy, 30, 33, 52, 63, 103, 107, 145, 261, 263, 271, 294, 321, 400  
 egalitarianism, 47, 50, 53, 58, 105, 127, 163, 220, 285, 310, 382, 389  
*Ekkelesia*, 340, 341, 342, 373  
 El'tsyn, 5, 230, 232, 307  
 empirical analysis of civil society, 16, 19, 67  
 equality, 126, 127, 155, 162, 205, 220, 224, 250, 285, 309, 367, 388  
 eschatology, 200, 215, 223, 332, 373, 377  
 ethicization, 111, 160, 166  
 ethics, 89, 104, 111, 158, 200, 214, 215, 266, 272, 328, 330, 339, 355, 372  
 extrapolitical, 29, 154  
  
 freedom, 48, 70, 92, 96, 163, 200, 205, 211, 216, 269, 347, 348, 350, 355, 369  
 freedom of conscience, 201, 222, 308, 309, 334, 345, 346, 374, 384  
 fundamentalism, 165, 170, 220, 317, 319, 327, 372, 399  
  
*Gemeinschaft* vs. *Gesellschaft*, 17, 81, 139, 147, 169, 244, 285, 289, 330, 382, 398  
*Gesinnungsethik*, 86, 159, 161, 219  
*glasnost*' (publicity), 191, 246  
 good life, 51, 54, 71, 95  
 good society, 40, 43, 55  
  
 Habermas, 57, 62, 124, 136  
 Hegel, 36, 138  
 hesychasm, 355, 362  
 hierarchical structure, 125, 126, 127, 156, 161, 201, 288, 289, 321, 339, 340, 350, 367, 373, 389  
 Holy Synod, 181, 182, 195  
*homo post-Sovieticus*, 241, 273, 280  
 human rights, 30, 203, 216, 339, 343, 348, 353, 374  
  
 inclusivity, 52, 58, 113, 127, 337  
 individual, 35, 38, 61, 202, 339, 340, 397  
 individual vs. community, 36, 70, 208, 350  
 individualism, 31, 70, 155, 161, 171, 315, 319, 330, 347, 397  
 inequality, 50, 65, 66, 67, 125, 127, 163, 220, 402  
 institutional weakness, 49, 227, 245, 264, 279, 289, 384, 389  
 integration, 98, 99, 106, 109, 110, 112, 119, 162  
  
 justice, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, 63, 66, 70, 255, 323, 344, 352, 354, 375, 392  
  
 Kant, 36, 113  
 Kievan Rus', 179, 180, 222  
  
 law, 105, 106, 108, 133, 309, 334, 345  
 legitimacy, 22, 76, 82, 93, 100, 136, 137, 231, 245, 257, 279, 292, 396, 403  
 liberal democratic reforms, 5, 249, 251, 256, 293, 323  
 liberalism, 29, 31, 50, 62, 63, 70, 91, 216, 219, 319, 357, 397  
 Local Church Council of 1917-18, 191, 195, 197, 365

- Locke, 29, 33, 138
- market economy, 103, 105, 112, 139,  
226, 232, 242, 248, 249, 251, 260, 293,  
385, 391
- Marx, 36, 37, 52, 138
- Medvedev, 401
- middle class, 247, 253, 294, 314, 392
- modernity, 86, 88, 89, 95, 112, 115, 122,  
123, 127, 145, 153, 166, 168, 170, 218,  
320, 321, 330, 363
- modernization, 326, 357, 373, 401
- monarchy, 28, 183, 185, 186, 188, 318,  
322, 327, 334
- monasticism, 179, 188, 354
- Mongol invasion, 28, 180
- Montesquieu, 29, 30
- moral values, 92, 159
- morality, 134, 161, 168, 169, 171, 200,  
202, 203, 266, 348, 355
- Muscovite Tsardom, 180, 185
- natural law doctrine, 33, 185
- Nicolas II, 194, 195
- non-violence, 41, 45, 152, 205, 218, 353,  
367
- normative analysis of civil society, 16, 41
- normative vs. descriptive approach, 8,  
39, 60, 98, 106, 145
- obshchestvennost'* (the public), 199, 208,  
211, 213, 398
- oligarchism, 101, 234, 250, 291, 325, 400
- Orthodox theology, 178, 200, 223, 306,  
330, 332, 333, 343, 354, 358, 384
- participation, 51, 58, 70, 76, 98, 136, 140,  
274, 275, 278, 281, 296, 385, 388
- perestrojka*, 5, 228, 247, 254, 291, 310, 370
- Peter the Great, 27, 28, 173, 181, 187,  
221
- pluralism, 41, 51, 96, 113, 142, 143, 147,  
153, 202, 218
- plurality, 41, 59, 65, 71, 124, 144, 208
- pluralization, 101, 123, 169, 321, 403
- Pobedonostsev, 192, 193
- political culture, 4, 29, 73, 238, 263, 277
- politics, 20, 43, 79, 105, 133, 134, 135,  
136, 137, 234, 274, 292, 365, 367, 395
- poverty, 67, 253, 294, 392
- privatization, 236, 249, 266, 294
- property, 244, 249, 262, 264, 293, 312,  
371
- protest, 142, 256, 279, 396, 402
- Protestant ethics, 30, 35, 89
- Protestantism, 104, 112
- Public Chamber of the Russian  
Federation, 5, 234, 258, 262, 292, 385
- public ethics, 9, 32, 36, 41, 108, 201, 374,  
380
- public reasoning, 18, 47, 57, 108, 395
- public sphere, 30, 33, 36, 50, 57, 60, 154,  
156, 161, 222, 391, 395, 400
- public vs. private, 18, 32, 36, 47, 62, 267,  
276, 382, 393
- Putin, 232, 233, 254, 263, 292, 309, 401
- rationalism, 93, 112, 159, 166
- rationality, 17, 34, 35, 64, 70, 83, 84, 85,  
86, 88, 113, 133, 145, 160, 203, 289,  
336, 382
- rationalization, 79, 82, 86, 88, 90, 110,  
123, 144, 157, 170, 289, 381
- Reformation, 113, 152, 183, 186
- religion  
and civil society, 150, 157  
and democracy, 162, 201  
essentialistic approach, 150, 300  
functionalistic approach, 150, 369  
public religion, 162, 329
- renewal movement (obnovlentsy)*, 303
- responsibility, 55, 282, 315, 369, 393, 394
- rights, 70, 112, 165, 204, 376, 382, 397
- rule of law, 22, 30, 133, 199, 232, 381
- Russian Orthodox Church, 27, 164, 173,  
182, 185, 188, 194, 223, 299, 307, 314,  
354, 383
- salvation, 90, 155, 361
- Scottish Enlightenment, 35
- secularism, 154, 163, 165, 172, 218, 220,  
331
- secularity, 152, 155, 218, 330, 373, 383,  
399
- secularization, 91, 157, 160, 166, 219,  
329, 346  
in Russia, 181, 187, 189, 221, 383
- self-reflexivity, 40, 42, 62, 65, 71
- service, 211, 214, 216
- Silver Age of Russian philosophy, 193,  
198
- simplification, 129, 135, 271, 287, 290

- sobornost'* (conciliarity), 192, 194, 196, 211, 212, 224, 320, 349, 367, 398  
 social action theory, 80, 119, 144  
 social order, 83, 114, 159, 214, 231, 270, 339, 349, 355, 373, 383, 393, 400  
 socialism, 38, 104, 210, 228, 239, 242, 250, 323, 354  
 societal community, 98, 99, 104, 109, 110, 114, 145, 147  
 solidarity, 56, 67, 70, 96, 100, 109, 115, 204, 209, 376  
 Soviet repression, 301, 302, 305, 355  
 Soviet system, 241, 274, 310, 352  
 stability, 134, 231, 257, 283, 288, 310  
 state, 37, 40, 45, 136, 185, 210, 333, 345  
     and civil society, 23, 42, 53, 54, 69, 72, 210, 238, 241, 390, 395, 402  
     state control of civil society, 7, 263  
     state-church relations, 28, 163, 164, 166, 172, 176, 180, 185, 306, 308, 311, 335, 337, 360, 371  
 strategic analysis of civil society, 15, 20  
*symphonia*, 27, 173, 174, 175, 185, 188, 221, 312, 313, 333, 334, 335, 360, 371  
 systems theory, 119, 131, 144, 146  
  
 theocracy, 175, 334  
 theonomy, 166, 170, 342  
 tolerance, 153, 156, 163, 167, 191, 200, 218, 220, 322, 358, 375, 403  
  
 totalitarianism, 185, 244, 264, 274, 312, 313, 360  
 transcendence, 150, 156, 159, 197, 338, 342  
 tripartite relationship between state, market, and civil society, 14, 20, 63, 102, 148, 261  
 trust, 72, 141, 148, 235, 259, 261, 267, 268, 274, 283, 292, 295, 384, 390, 392, 393, 403  
     government as trust, 30, 34  
  
 uncertainty, 46, 158, 168, 169  
 uncivility, 43, 46, 51  
 unity, 206, 207, 213, 214, 283, 286, 288, 350  
  
 value spheres, 82, 86  
 value-free, 46, 122, 132, 135, 146  
*Verantwortungsethik*, 86  
*Vergemeinschaftung*, 81, 236  
*Vergesellschaftung*, 81  
 violence, 44, 45, 50, 71, 319, 322, 367, 402  
 voluntarism, 62, 114, 266  
*votserkovlenije* (in-churching), 313, 370  
  
*Wertrationalität*, 80, 85, 382  
*Zweckrationalität*, 80, 85, 382

# Samenvatting

Deze interdisciplinaire studie belicht de opkomst en ontwikkeling van de burgerlijke maatschappij in post-sovjet Rusland. De auteur behandelt politieke, sociologische en religieusfilosofische theorieën over de burgerlijke maatschappij en legt verbanden met de praktijk. Centraal in de studie staat de vergelijking tussen het concept en de realiteit van de burgerlijke maatschappij in zowel het Westen als in Rusland. Een historisch perfectief legt de dieperliggende oorzaken van hedendaagse ontwikkelingen in Rusland bloot.

De discussie rond het begrip ‘burgerlijke maatschappij’ is de laatste jaren herleefd, onder andere door de democratische revoluties in Oost- en Centraal-Europa in de periode van 1989 tot 1991. Aangezien de burgerlijke maatschappij een authentiek product van de Westerse democratie is, twijfelde men tijdens de *perestrojka* in Rusland of de burgerlijke maatschappij wel een adequaat instrument zou zijn voor het realiseren van de noodzakelijke hervormingen. Hoewel de Russische burger over het algemeen positief is over het nieuwe democratische regime in Rusland, is de laatste jaren de vraag gerezen of de burgerlijke maatschappij en de liberale democratie überhaupt deel uitmaken van de genetische code van de Russische politieke cultuur. Het doel van deze studie is een evaluatie te geven van deze complexe vraagstukken.

De auteur benadert het begrip ‘burgerlijke maatschappij’ als een idee en als een maatschappelijk fenomeen omdat dit begrip zowel het normatieve concept als de sociale realiteit aanduidt. Deze tweedeling loopt als een rode draad door het onderzoek. In de inleiding wordt een theoretisch kader geschetst dat onderscheid maakt tussen deze twee analytische componenten. In hoofdstuk twee bestudeert de auteur de burgerlijke maatschappij als een sociaalmoreel concept en als een onmisbaar element van het democratische systeem. Als idee belichaamt de burgerlijke maatschappij de visie op een open, pluralistische en liberale samenleving, waarbij vrijwillige en spontane

associatie centraal staat. Als maatschappelijk fenomeen fungeert de burgerlijke maatschappij als een netwerk van publieke organisaties die onafhankelijk zijn van de staat en die invloed kunnen uitoefenen op politieke beslissingen. Fundamentele waarden van de burgerlijke maatschappij zijn vrijwillige associatie en dissociatie tussen burgers, individuele autonomie en rechten, pluraliteit, legaliteit, gelijkheid, openbaarheid en publieke verantwoording. Daarmee vormt de burgerlijke maatschappij een randvoorwaarde voor de totstandkoming van een gezonde en goedfunctionerende liberale democratie. Omgekeerd voorziet een democratisch systeem in de noodzakelijke voorwaarden voor het bestaan van de burgerlijke maatschappij, zoals de rechtsstaat en de constitutionele erkenning van politieke-, sociale- en mensenrechten.

De democratische transformaties in Oost- en Midden-Europa hebben bevestigd dat een robuuste burgerlijke maatschappij niet spontaan kan ontstaan. Integendeel, het vereist een grondige voorbereiding op institutioneel niveau en in de sfeer van publieke ethiek. Dit heeft Westerse wetenschappers geïnspireerd om de vraag te onderzoeken of de burgerlijke maatschappij een 'goede maatschappij' is en waarom. De auteur bestudeert de morele dilemma's die inherent zijn aan een normatieve fundering voor de burgerlijke maatschappij. Het kerndilemma van het discours is hoe men individuele vrijheid kan verzoenen met het gemeenschappelijke belang. De auteur heeft diverse oplossingen van dit dilemma in twee theoretische stromingen verdeeld, namelijk de liberale theorie van de burgerlijke maatschappij en de theorie van deliberatieve democratie. De liberale theorie is niet één theorie maar omvat diverse concepties die verenigd zijn in de onderstelling dat de hedendaagse burgerlijke maatschappij een polycentrisch en pluralistisch karakter heeft. De aanhangers van de theorie van deliberatieve democratie erkennen dat de gemeenschappelijke visie in de moderne gedifferentieerde maatschappij samengesteld is uit verschillende conflictueuze opvattingen van haar burgers. Ze wijzen naar publieke redenering en rationele consensus als de oplossing voor de potentiële conflicten tussen uiteenlopende maatschappelijke visies.

Hoofdstuk drie werpt een sociologische blik op het probleem van pluralisme en suggereert daarmee een sociologische inbedding in de theorie van de burgerlijke maatschappij. Vanuit dit bredere sociaalwetenschappelijke kader analyseert de auteur de structuur en de dynamiek van de moderne samenleving. Het sleutelbegrip in het sociologische exposé van de moderne maatschappij is differentiatie, een begrip dat verschillende interpretaties kent binnen de sociologie. Max Weber ontwikkelde de theorie van differentiatie

van waardesferen. Talcott Parsons benadrukte het structurele aspect in het proces van maatschappelijke differentiatie. Daarbij conceptualiseerde hij de burgerlijke maatschappij als een subsysteem van “*societal community*” die een integratieve functie uitvoert. Niklas Luhmann weigerde om de burgerlijke maatschappij tot één bepaald subsysteem van de gedifferentieerde maatschappij te reduceren en pleitte voor een waarde vrije conceptie van de burgerlijke maatschappij in termen van *Gesellschaft*.

De theorie van functionele differentiatie beschrijft het proces van onttakeling van de premoderne hiërarchische sociale orde en het ontstaan van een complexe pluralistische en zelfsturende moderne maatschappij. Het concept van de burgerlijke maatschappij is gebaseerd op de visie van een liberale, pluralistische en tolerante maatschappij en stemt daarom overeen met het model van een functioneel gedifferentieerde maatschappij (*Gesellschaft*). De theorie van functionele differentiatie completeert het politiek-filosofisch debat over de burgerlijke maatschappij omdat deze een empirische referent biedt voor de normatieve principes die ten grondslag liggen aan de burgerlijke maatschappij, zoals autonomie, pluraliteit, gelijkheid, vrijwillige associatie en dissociatie, publiekelijkheid en legaliteit.

In hoofdstuk vier wordt een religieuze perspectief geïntroduceerd. Aangezien het concept van de burgerlijke maatschappij een liberale en seculiere wereldvisie veronderstelt, lijkt dit in strijd te zijn met de religieuze wereldvisie. Deze problematische verhouding wordt benaderd vanuit een historisch en intercultureel perspectief. Ten eerste bestudeert de auteur de verhoudingen tussen religie en secularisme binnen het Westerse christendom. Zij toont aan dat religie en secularisme niet elkaars antagonist zijn, maar eerder verweven zijn in een relatie van wederzijdse beïnvloeding. Vervolgens wendt de auteur zich tot de Russische geschiedenis en onderzoekt de verhoudingen tussen het Orthodoxe christendom en de seculiere maatschappij in Rusland. Dit historische onderzoek laat zien hoe de Russische staat door de nationalisatie van de Russische Orthodoxe Kerk de dualistische tendens binnen de Orthodoxie versterkte. Ten slotte wordt een religieuze conceptie van de burgerlijke maatschappij voorgesteld op basis van de theorieën van Semën Frank en Vladimir Solov’ëv.

Deze filosofen funderen een liberale christelijke visie van een pluralistische en tolerante burgerlijke maatschappij op concepten uit de Orthodoxe theologische traditie. Het concept *sobornost* kan uitgelegd worden als de ontologische eenheid van alle individuen in een gemeenschap zonder dat deze hun unieke persoonlijkheid verliezen. Deze spirituele

eenheid van *sobornost*' wordt in empirische vorm uitgedrukt als *obshchestvennost*', oftewel de publieke sfeer. Het morele streven naar de spirituele eenheid wordt gemotiveerd door het ideaal van *Bogochelovechestvo*, of Godmensdom.

Met deze discussie wordt het theoretische deel van het onderzoek afgesloten. Vanuit de verworven theoretische inzichten analyseert de auteur het specifieke karakter van de burgerlijke maatschappij in post-sovjet Rusland.

Hoofdstuk vijf onderzoekt het probleem van institutionele zwakte van de Russische burgerlijke maatschappij in de context van de publieke moraal. Het accepteren van de democratische constitutie is niet voldoende voor een succesvolle transitie naar een democratisch model. Een adequaat functionerend institutioneel netwerk en burgerethos zijn noodzakelijk voor het ontstaan en de ontwikkeling van de burgerlijke maatschappij in een nieuw democratisch regime. Deze veronderstelling laat de twee verbonden problemen zien waarmee de jonge burgerlijke maatschappij in Rusland geconfronteerd wordt. Aan de ene kant worstelt de burgerlijke maatschappij met het probleem van institutionele zwakte, aan de andere kant lijdt zij aan een gebrek aan moreel bewustzijn van haar postcommunistische burgers. Door het probleem van institutionele zwakte in verband te brengen met publieke ethiek toont de auteur aan dat het institutioneel deficit een gevolg is van sociaal wantrouwen en vervreemding van participatie in publieke organisaties.

De samenleving in post-sovjet Rusland wordt gekenmerkt door een diepgaand dualisme dat evident is op het niveau van de politiek, de economie en de publieke ethiek. Met betrekking tot de politiek stagneert de emancipatie van de publieke sfeer doordat de staat de politieke macht monopoliseert. De regeerperiode van Putin wordt gekenmerkt door een hybride bestuursmodel. Aan de ene kant erkent de staat burgerrechten, zoals een publieke opinie en verkiezingsrechten. Aan de andere kant probeert de staat het publieke leven meer te controleren, onder andere door diverse artificiële fora voor burgerparticipatie op te richten zoals de Openbare Kamer van de Russische Federatie. Dit hybride bestuursmodel van Putin wordt om deze reden ook wel een 'imitatie democratie' genoemd. De staat onderschat de normatieve waarde van de burgerlijke maatschappij en ziet deze eerder als een dreiging voor haar monopolistische macht dan als een noodzakelijk element en partner in het democratische bestuur. Hoe meer de staat probeert het politieke landschap te egaliseren, hoe minder vrijheid de

burgerlijke maatschappij geniet. Zodoende groeit het wederzijdse wantrouwen tussen de staat en de burgerlijke maatschappij.

Op sociaaleconomisch niveau is de Russische samenleving duidelijk gepolariseerd. Hoewel de hervormingen in de vroege jaren negentig de markteconomie in gang hebben gezet, hebben ze ook geleid tot een onrechtvaardige verdeling van economische middelen. Hiermee is een kloof geschapen tussen de nieuwe financiële elite en een meerderheid van teleurgestelde en gedesoriënteerde burgers. Vermoedelijk daarom hebben veel Russen het politieke programma van Putin toegejuicht, waarin publieke orde, economische stabiliteit, sociale rechtvaardigheid en strenge overheidscontrole over de corporatieve sector als politieke speerpunten werden gepresenteerd.

Op het niveau van de publieke ethiek is het dualisme nog duidelijker te onderscheiden. De gemiddelde post-sovjet burger ondersteunt het idee van de democratie in abstracte termen, maar weigert in democratische instituties te participeren. De economische liberalisatie en de gegeven politieke vrijheden hebben aan de gemiddelde Russische burger niet de verwachte voordelen gebracht. Russen zijn teleurgesteld in de democratische hervormingen en vertrouwen liever instituties die voorspelbaarheid en stabiliteit garanderen zoals de president, de Russische Orthodoxe Kerk, het leger en de nationale veiligheidsdienst. Aan de andere kant wantrouwen Russische burgers de instituties die individuele participatie en verantwoordelijkheid veronderstellen zoals het parlement, de rechtbank, vakbonden, lokale autoriteiten en politieke partijen.

De auteur stelt drie maatregelen voor om het democratische project in Rusland te faciliteren: (1) het bevorderen van sociale differentiatie, (2) ruimte geven aan de autonome en rationele opinie van de burgers en (3) het effectief institutionaliseren van spontane burgerlijke initiatieven. Deze maatregelen dienen ertoe om een effectieve dialoog tussen de maatschappij en het politieke systeem te bevorderen.

Ten eerste leidt sociale differentiatie tot een gediversifieerd politiek landschap omdat er in een gedifferentieerde zelfsturende maatschappij meer kanalen bestaan voor een open communicatie tussen de politiek en de maatschappij. Ten tweede hebben burgers een legitieme ruimte nodig voor vrij publiek debat, waarin zij een autonome en rationele opinie kunnen uiten. De Russische staat dient zich bewust te zijn van haar dienende rol, zij is immers één van de functies die de maatschappij zelf in het leven heeft geroepen. Het is het publiek dat de democratische staat van de noodzakelijke feedback voorziet in de vorm van consensus en hierbij de

kernfunctie van het politieke systeem ondersteunt. Ten derde vereist het uiten van een autonome en rationele opinie een effectieve institutionalisering van spontane burgerlijke initiatieven. Omdat de Russische burgerlijke maatschappij een tekort heeft aan institutionele communicatiekanalen met de staat, kunnen de burgers hun voorkeuren en belangen moeilijk overbrengen aan de politieke macht. Publieke ontevredenheid uit zich daarom vooral in (agressieve) vormen van protest. Een aanzienlijk deel van de burgerlijke maatschappij in Rusland komt hierdoor terecht in een netwerk van informele, ongesanctioneerde en niet-geregistreerde organisaties.

De auteur concludeert dat de uiteindelijke betekenis van de democratische transformaties niet alleen bestaat uit het veranderen van de politieke, economische en constitutionele structuren van een postcommunistische maatschappij, maar ook uit het overbruggen van de kloof tussen de nominale democratie en de feitelijke goedfunctionerende democratie. Dit kan bereikt worden door de hiërarchische relaties tussen de staat, de maatschappij en het individu te vervangen door een cultuur van zelforganisatie en zelfbestuur. Deze verandering vereist echter dat burgers vertrouwen hebben in zichzelf, elkaar en het systeem van de democratie. Sociaal vertrouwen en burgerethos zijn daarom de belangrijkste voorwaarden voor participatie in de burgerlijke maatschappij.

Hoewel de Russische politieke cultuur en geschiedenis beide kunnen worden opgevat als een struikelblok voor de zich ontwikkelende burgerlijke maatschappij, bevatten ze ook onaangeboorde bronnen die een constructieve invloed kunnen hebben op de democratische hervormingen. Daarom ligt de focus van hoofdstuk zes op de factor 'Orthodoxie' binnen de opkomst van de burgerlijke maatschappij in hedendaags Rusland.

In de eerste plaats onderzoekt de auteur, vanuit een sociologisch perspectief, de civiele rol van de Russische Orthodoxe Kerk (ROK) in de context van een seculiere democratie. Sinds de ineenstorting van de Sovjet Unie en de maatschappelijke liberalisatie tijdens de *perestrojka* kan men duidelijk het toenemende belang zien van de ROK in het maatschappelijke debat. Na zeventig jaar van onderdrukking heeft de ROK een prominente en geprivilegieerde plaats ingenomen in de publieke arena, omdat zij een nieuwe nationale identiteit biedt ter vervanging van de communistische ideologie.

In de tweede plaats onderzoekt de auteur of de Orthodoxe denktraditie een alternatieve en goedbeargumenteerde conceptie van de burgerlijke maatschappij kan bieden. Vanuit een essentialistisch perspectief wordt

bekeken hoe de ROK reageert op het proces van modernisatie en zich aanpast aan de seculiere burgerlijke maatschappij. De auteur presenteert drie benaderingen om de verhouding te beschrijven van de Orthodoxe traditie tot de burgerlijke maatschappij: (1) een gepolitiseerde versie van de Russische Orthodoxie die zich voordoet in de beweging van fundamentalisme, (2) een conservatieve positie van de ROK die uitgesproken is in haar officiële sociale doctrine en (3) een liberale hervormende trend die probeert de conservatieve sociale leer van de ROK te herzien naar een humanistisch en meer democratisch perspectief.

Orthodox fundamentalisme schrijft geen positieve waarde toe aan de seculiere politieke macht en de zelfstandige en zelfbesturende burgerlijke maatschappij. Fundamentalisme bemoeit zich met politieke zaken en stelt een theocratie voor in de plaats van een democratie. De officiële leer van de ROK (Orthodox conservatisme) kiest voor een middenweg en levert een genuanceerder antwoord. De ROK tolereert de seculiere democratische staat en de burgerlijke maatschappij als onvermijdelijke, maar tijdelijke realiteiten, waarin wederzijdse bemoeienis is uitgesloten. De ROK wil de verhoudingen tussen staat en kerk zien zoals is voorgeschreven in het normatieve model van de Byzantijnse *symfonija*. Hierbij wordt de spirituele gemeenschap van de christelijke Kerk (de *Ekklesia*) geïdentificeerd met de politieke gemeenschap van het Byzantijnse Rijk. Tegelijkertijd erkent de Kerk dat dit model onrealiseerbaar is binnen de Russische staat die zichzelf niet als Orthodox begrijpt. De ROK spreekt haar voorkeur uit noch voor het bestaande democratische systeem noch voor andere politieke systemen. Deze onverschilligheid is een gevolg van de dualistische tendens in de Orthodoxe denktraditie die een duidelijk onderscheid maakt tussen ‘spiritueel’ en ‘seculier.’ Door het verdedigen van het ideaal van *Ekklesia* als de ultieme vorm van menselijke gemeenschap, pleiten conservatieve theologen voor eschatologisering in plaats van modernisatie. In tegenstelling tot deze conservatieve positie van de ROK beweren liberale theologen dat christendom niet in tegenspraak is met het democratische principe van gewetensvrijheid. Ze staan positief ten opzichte van modernisatie en omarmen de seculiere burgerlijke maatschappij als een forum waarbinnen de ROK, net zo als andere religieuze organisaties, haar geloof publiek en legaal kan uiten en praktiseren, zonder dat de seculiere staat zich hiermee bemoeit.

Niettemin blijft de Orthodoxe denktraditie haar opvatting van de burgerlijke maatschappij funderen op het ideaal van eenheid (*sobornost*). Anders dan de seculiere burgerlijke maatschappij, impliceert *sobornost* niet het sociale contract tussen individuele mensen, maar belichaamt een

mysterieus gevoel van consensus tussen individuen, dat bereikt wordt middels een radicale transformatie volgens het ideaal van *Bogochelovechestvo*. Het Orthodoxe concept van de burgerlijke maatschappij verdedigt gemeenschap en wederzijdse dienstbaarheid, in contrast tot individuele autonomie en rechten. In deze zin onderscheidt de Orthodoxe sociale leer zich van de sociale denktraditie van de Westerse Kerken: Orthodoxie is meer begaan met het gemeenschappelijke ideaal van het sociale leven dan met het individu en zijn rechten.

De belangrijkste conclusies van deze studie kunnen als volgt worden samengevat. De evaluatie van het democratische project in post-sovjet Rusland heeft aangetoond dat er twee dimensies betrokken zijn in de analyse van de burgerlijke maatschappij: de empirisch-descriptieve dimensie waarin de burgerlijke maatschappij beschreven kan worden als een maatschappelijk fenomeen, en de filosofisch-conceptuele dimensie waarin de burgerlijke maatschappij een normatief idee vertegenwoordigt.

De problematische opkomst van de burgerlijke maatschappij in postcommunistische regimes maakte het tot een uitdaging om het normatief-ethische ideaal en de sociaal-politieke realiteit bij elkaar te brengen. In hedendaags Rusland is de burgerlijke maatschappij sinds ruim twintig jaar een realiteit: er bestaat feitelijk een netwerk van publieke organisaties die functioneren op de grens van de politiek, de corporatieve sector en de privé sfeer. Tegelijkertijd blijft de burgerlijke maatschappij voor Rusland een vrij nieuwe en onbekende realiteit. Zoals de versnelde democratische transformatie in Oost- en Centraal-Europa laat zien, ontstaat de burgerlijke maatschappij niet vanuit een historisch vacuüm, maar is deze afhankelijk van diepgewortelde tradities en concepties.

Een bijzonder probleem van de Russische burgerlijke maatschappij is het ontbreken van een ontwikkelde publieke sfeer en van een ontwikkelde zelfconceptie van de maatschappij als een onafhankelijke, erkende entiteit die gerechtigd is om in het politieke proces te participeren op één lijn met de staat. De politieke macht in hedendaags Rusland neigt naar een autoritair karakter terwijl de politieke sfeer steeds meer gebureaucratiseerd raakt en vervreemd van de samenleving. Dezelfde tendens doet zich voor in de sfeer van de economie, omdat de economische verhoudingen zijn doordrongen van een ethiek van individualisme terwijl het gemeenschappelijke ideaal verdwijnt. De Russische burgerlijke maatschappij wordt continu verdrukt tussen het economische individualisme en het politieke autoritarisme en moet vechten voor een legitieme plaats tussen de staat en de markt.

De titel *Struggling for Civility* slaat op het doornachtige pad dat de Russische maatschappij sinds de transitie heeft bewandeld. De opkomst van de burgerlijke maatschappij impliceert voor democratische regimes een maatschappelijke strijd voor het ideaal van een open, tolerante en *beschaafde* maatschappij.



# Обзор исследования

Настоящая диссертация «В борьбе за гражданственность. Идея и реальность гражданского общества» является результатом мультидисциплинарного исследования, освещающего возникновение и развитие гражданского общества в постсоветской России. Автор исследует политические, социологические и религиозно-философские теории касательно гражданского общества и проводит связи с практикой. Ядром диссертации является сравнение идеи и реальности гражданского общества как на Западе, так и в России, между тем как историческая перспектива проясняет глуболежащие причины явлений в современной России.

За последние двадцать лет дискуссия вокруг понятия гражданского общества вновь ожила благодаря демократическим трансформациям в Восточной и Центральной Европе. Вследствие того, что гражданское общество часто ассоциируется с продуктом западно-европейской цивилизации, ученые и политики стали сомневаться, сможет ли «гражданское общество» действительно стать адекватным инструментом в проведении демократических реформ в постсоветской России. Несмотря на то, что россияне в целом позитивно оценивают новый демократический режим, в последние годы все чаще стал возникать вопрос, содержатся ли такие понятия как гражданское общество и либеральная демократия в генетическом коде русской политической культуры. Цель настоящего исследования – внести ясность в эти сложные вопросы.

Автор воспринимает понятие «гражданское общество» одновременно как нормативную идею и как социальный феномен, поскольку данное понятие обозначает и концепт, и общественную реальность. Такое двухчастное понимание гражданского общества является основополагающим в настоящем исследовании. Во вступлении автор создает теоретический кадр, в котором проводится аналитическое разделение между дескриптивным и нормативным

компонентами понятия гражданского общества. Во второй главе «Гражданское общество как общественно-нравственный концепт» раскрывается понимание гражданского общества в рамках демократической системы. В качестве идеи гражданское общество воплощает видение открытого, плюралистического и либерального общества, основанного на непринужденной и непосредственной ассоциации, то есть общении, между гражданами. С другой стороны, гражданское общество понятое как социальный феномен функционирует в качестве сети общественных организаций, независимых от государства и оказывающих влияние на решения политиков. Из предложенной двухчастной концепции следует, что волонтерское участие в объединениях граждан или уход из них, независимость и права индивида, плюрализм, легальность, равенство, гласность и общественная ответственность составляют коренные ценности гражданского общества. Воплощая данные принципы в реальность, гражданское общество создает необходимые условия для здоровой и оптимально функционирующей демократии. В свою очередь, демократическая система как через создание правового государства, так и через конституционное признание политических, социальных и человеческих прав граждан является гарантом для успешного существования гражданского общества.

Демократические трансформации в Восточной и Центральной Европе показали, что гражданское общество не может развиваться внезапно, без создания необходимых условий на институциональном уровне и в сфере общественной этики. Эти выводы побудили западных ученых задуматься над вопросом, является ли гражданское общество «хорошим», правильным и нравственным обществом, и почему. Автор диссертации исследует нравственные дилеммы, неминуемо возникающие при попытке создать нормативное обоснование гражданского общества. Главная дилемма заключается в вопросе, как совместить свободу индивидуальных граждан с общественным благом. Разнообразные ответы на данный вопрос автор разделяет на два основных направления, а именно на либеральную теорию гражданского общества и теорию делиберативной демократии. Либеральная теория не является единой теорией, а скорее состоит из различных концепций, объединенных одним важным предположением о том, что гражданское общество имеет полицентричный и плюралистический характер. Последователи теории делиберативной демократии придерживаются мнения, что в

современном дифференцированном обществе общественное согласие состоит из множества конфликтующих между собой убеждений граждан. Для разрешения возможных конфликтов предлагаются рациональная дискуссия, рассуждение и компромисс.

Третья глава «Социологическое обоснование теории гражданского общества» подходит к проблеме плюрализма с социологической стороны, исследуя структуру и динамику современного общества. Ключевым концептом в социологической дескрипции современного типа общества является дифференциация. Этот концепт прошел значительную эволюцию в социологической науке двадцатого века. Макс Вебер развил теорию дифференциации ценностных сфер. Впоследствии Тэлкотт Парсонс исследовал структурный аспект в процессе социетальной дифференциации. При этом он предложил понимать гражданское общество как подсистему «социетальной общины», выполняющей интегративную функцию. Подобная редукция гражданского общества в одну из подсистем дифференцированного общества была в дальнейшем опровергнута Никласом Луманном. На основе теории Луманна автор предлагает свободную от ценностных суждений концепцию гражданского общества, понимаемого в терминах общества как всеобъемлющей системы (*Gesellschaft*), а не как коллектива или общины (*Gemeinschaft*).

Теория функциональной дифференциации описывает процесс разветвления и распада премодерного иерархического общественного строя и возникновения сложной системы общества модерна, характеризующегося плюрализмом и культурой самоуправления. Поскольку концепт гражданского общества воплощает идею либерального, плюралистического и толерантного общества, его можно конкретизировать в рамках модели функционально дифференцированного общества (*Gesellschaft*). Таким образом, социологическая теория функциональной дифференциации дополняет политико-философское понимание гражданского общества, ибо она эмпирически подтверждает принципы, на которых основано гражданское общество.

Четвертая глава «Гражданское общество и религия. Взгляд со стороны Запада и Востока» рассматривает взаимоотношения гражданского общества и религии. Поскольку гражданское общество предполагает либеральное и секулярное мировоззрение, оно часто противопоставляется религии. Однако данная гипотеза оспаривается автором и переоценивается с исторической и межкультурной

перспективы. Обращаясь к истории Западного Христианства, автор показывает, что взаимоотношения религии и секулярного общества развивались в условиях их взаимного динамичного влияния. Однако в России процесс секуляризации принял иной характер. Заметное вмешательство государства в сферу религиозной жизни не только придало стимул к национализации Русской Православной Церкви, но и усугубило дуалистическую тенденцию, присущую православному мировоззрению в целом. Последнее обстоятельство позволило Православной Церкви сконцентрироваться на своей внутренней динамике и самопонимании как Богочеловеческого института и отгородиться от насущных проблем секулярного общества.

Отдельное внимание уделяется религиозной концепции гражданского общества, развитой на основе теорий Владимира Соловьева и Семена Франка. Заимствуя концепты из православной теологической традиции, философы убедительно обосновывают либерально-христианское понимание гражданского общества. Соборность, обозначая онтологическое единство индивидов в духовном общении, проявляется в эмпирическом измерении в качестве общественности; иными словами, соборность является духовной основой секулярного гражданского общества. В то время как нравственное стремление отдельных членов общества к достижению соборности мотивируется идеалом Богочеловечества.

Данная дискуссия завершает теоретическую часть исследования. Приобретенные теоретические взгляды используются в последующих главах для анализа специфики гражданского общества в России.

В пятой главе «Гражданское общество в постсоветской России. Институциональная слабость в контексте общественной нравственности» исследуется проблема институционального дефицита с позиции публичной этики. Очевидно, что принятие демократической конституции оказалось недостаточным условием для успешного преобразования российской политико-экономической системы по примеру западных либеральных демократий. Причиной подобной кризисной трансформации послужило отсутствие адекватно функционирующей сети демократических институтов, то есть отсутствие гражданского общества. Это утверждение позволяет выделить две взаимосвязанные проблемы: с одной стороны, становление российского гражданского общества затрудняется институциональным дефицитом, с другой стороны, оно также затрудняется отсутствием нравственного этоса гражданственности,

которое характерно для многих посткоммунистических обществ, являясь последствием укорененного общественного недоверия и отчуждения граждан от участия в общественных организациях.

Общество постсоветской России проникнуто глубоким дуализмом, различным на уровне политики, экономики и общественной этики. Стратегия государства, нацеленная на монополизацию политической власти, задерживает эмансипацию публичной сферы, чему также способствует гибридная система управления, созданная в эпоху Путина. С одной стороны, государственная власть признает гражданские права, такие как право на свободу общественного мнения и право выборов. С другой стороны, государство стремится как можно жестче контролировать общественную жизнь посредством создания искусственных форумов для гражданского участия. Неслучайно данную модель ученые называют «имитационной демократией». Государство недооценивает нормативную роль гражданского общества, расценивая его скорее как угрозу своей монополистической власти, чем как партнера в системе демократического управления. Чем усерднее государство пытается выровнять политический ландшафт, тем меньше свободы действия остается для гражданского общества. В результате, взаимное недоверие государства и гражданского общества возрастает.

На социально-экономическом уровне дуализм проявляется в поляризации современного российского общества. Несмотря на то, что либеральные реформы были направлены на переход к рыночной экономике и создание условий для преуспевания всех граждан, фактически они привели к несправедливому и неравному перераспределению экономических ресурсов. Возникло расщепление общества на тонкую прослойку новой финансовой элиты и на большинство разочарованных и дезориентированных обедневших граждан. Вероятно, разочарование в последствиях перехода к рыночной экономике обусловило массовое одобрение путинской программы, в которой общественный порядок, экономическая стабильность, социальная справедливость и жесткий государственный контроль над корпоративным сектором заняли центральное место.

В сфере общественной этики дуализм проявился еще с большей интенсивностью. Большинство постсоветских граждан поддерживают идею демократии в абстрактных терминах, но в то же время отказываются участвовать в демократических институтах. Поскольку либерализация рынка и политические свободы не принесли

ожидаемых успехов, россияне преимущественно оказывают предпочтение тем институтам, которые гарантируют стабильность и предсказуемость (как, например, фигура президента, Русская Православная Церковь, армия и служба безопасности). Вместе с тем, россияне не доверяют тем институтам, которые требуют индивидуального участия и ответственности, таким как парламент, суд, профсоюзы, местные власти и политические партии.

В диссертационной работе автор предлагает возможные способы содействия демократическому развитию России: (1) предоставить пространство для дальнейшей социальной дифференциации общества, (2) стимулировать автономное и рациональное мнение граждан и (3) проводить эффективную институализацию добровольных гражданских инициатив.

Во-первых, социальная дифференциация способствует разнообразному и многогранному политическому ландшафту, потому что дифференцированное самоуправляющееся общество содержит большее количество каналов общения между сферой политики и общественностью. Во-вторых, в рамках демократии граждане нуждаются в законном пространстве для свободной общественной дискуссии, где они могли бы высказывать свое автономное и рациональное мнение. Для создания этого условия российское государство должно переоценить свою функцию как служебную по отношению к обществу. Ведь легитимность демократической системы основана на центральной роли общественности, которая обеспечивает связь политики с обществом посредством общественного согласия или протеста. Наконец, выражение автономного и рационального мнения граждан требует эффективной институализации добровольных гражданских инициатив. По причине того, что российское гражданское общество страдает от недостатка институциональных каналов для общения с государственной властью, граждане не в состоянии донести свои интересы и предпочтения до сферы политики. В результате, общественное недовольство часто принимает агрессивные формы протеста, а все большая часть организаций гражданского общества оказывается за рамками легального существования, превращаясь в сеть неформальных, несанкционированных и незарегистрированных организаций.

Из вышестоящего автор делает вывод, что значение демократических трансформаций заключается не только в изменении политических, экономических и конституциональных структур, но

также в преодолении разрыва между номинальной и оптимально функционирующей демократией. Данная цель может быть достигнута путем замены иерархических отношений между государством, обществом и гражданами культурой самоуправления и самоорганизации. Такое изменение требует, чтобы граждане имели уверенность в себе, доверяли друг другу и доверяли системе демократии. Общественное доверие и гражданский этос являются, таким образом, главными условиями для развития гражданского общества.

В шестой главе «Гражданское общество и Православное Христианство в России» автор вновь обращается к проблеме религии и рассматривает фактор православия в демократизации российского общества. В первую очередь исследуется общественная роль Русской Православной Церкви (РПЦ) в контексте секулярной демократии. Распад Советского Союза и либерализация общества в эпоху перестройки позволили РПЦ активно участвовать в общественной дискуссии. Сформулировав новую идеологическую позицию в замену разрушившегося социалистического идеала, РПЦ заняла видное и привилегированное место на публичной арене посткоммунистического общества.

Далее с точки зрения теологического дискурса освещается вопрос, смогла ли традиция православной мысли предложить альтернативную, хорошо обоснованную концепцию гражданского общества. Данная дискуссия позволяет прояснить реакцию РПЦ на процесс модернизации и показать, в какой мере РПЦ смогла принять идею секулярного гражданского общества. Автор выделяет три основные позиции во взаимоотношениях РПЦ и гражданского общества: (1) политизированную позицию, выражающуюся в течении фундаментализма, (2) консервативную позицию РПЦ, сформулированную в «Основах Социальной Концепции РПЦ» и (3) либерально-преобразовательное течение, стремящееся пересмотреть консервативную позицию РПЦ с гуманистической перспективы.

С точки зрения православного фундаментализма, ни секулярная политическая власть, ни автономное самоуправляющееся гражданское общество не имеют позитивной ценности. Активно вмешиваясь в сферу политики, фундаментализм предпочитает теократию всесто демократии. Официальная социальная доктрина РПЦ выбирает умеренную консервативную позицию, терпящую секулярное демократическое государство и гражданское общество как неминуемые,

но преходящие реальности мирского существования, не требующие особого внимания и участия. В идеале, РПЦ желала бы строить свои отношения с государством по принципу византийской симфонии, где духовная община Церкви (*Ekklesia*) совпадала с политической общиной Византийской Империи. В то же время, РПЦ признает, что данная модель не осуществима в условиях современного российского демократического государства, которое, согласно конституции, не является православным. Таким образом, РПЦ не высказывает предпочтения ни настоящей либерально-демократической системе, ни другим политическим режимам. По-видимому, такое безразличие является последствием общей дуалистической тенденции православного миропонимания, проводящего четкое разделение между миром духовным и светским. Преследуя идеал Экклесии как высшей формы человеческого сообщества, консервативные богословы призывают к эсхатологизации взамен модернизации. В отличие от консервативной позиции РПЦ, либеральные богословы убеждены, что христианство не противоречит демократическому принципу свободы совести. Соответственно, они приветствуют модернизацию и принимают секулярное гражданское общество в качестве форума, в рамках которого РПЦ, наравне с другими религиозными организациями, может беспрепятственно и легально исповедовать свою веру без вмешательства секулярного государства.

В вопросах социальной этики традиция православной теологической мысли остается верна идеалу соборности. Так, на основе идеала соборности она строит свое понимание гражданского общества несмотря на то, что секулярное гражданское общество предполагает социальный контракт, в то время как соборность воплощает мистическое чувство духовного согласия или общения. Соответственно, в центре православной концепции гражданского общества стоит идеал общины и взаимного служения, а не свободы и прав индивида. В этом отношении православная социальная доктрина отличается от социального учения Западных Церквей. Православие сосредоточено скорее на вопросе, как сохранить идеал соборного общения в условиях современного общества, чем на вопросе об обосновании и защите индивидуальных человеческих прав.

Главные выводы из диссертационного исследования заключаются в следующем. Критически оценивая демократический проект в России за два последних десятилетия, автор выделила два измерения в анализе

гражданского общества: эмпирико-дескриптивное измерение, в котором гражданское общество выступает как социальный феномен, отражая реальность общественной жизни, и философско-концептуальное измерение, в котором гражданское общество представляет нормативную идею.

Становление гражданского общества в посткоммунистических режимах продемонстрировало, насколько трудно приблизить общественно-политическую реальность к нормативно-этическому идеалу. В современной России гражданское общество уже как двадцать лет стало реальностью: оно состоит из сети общественных организаций, часто пересекающихся со сферой политики, корпоративным сектором и приватной сферой. В то же время, гражданское общество остается для России достаточно новой и неизведанной реальностью. Как показали ускоренные демократические трансформации в Восточной и Центральной Европе, гражданское общество не может возникнуть из исторического вакуума, ибо оно нуждается в глубоко укоренившихся традициях и концепциях.

Специфическая проблема российского гражданского общества заключается в недостатке развитой публичной сферы и развитого самопонимания общества как независимого, признанного и законного участника политического процесса наряду с государством. Политическая власть в современной России приобретает авторитарный характер, в то время как политическая сфера все более бюрократизируется и становится отчужденной от общества. Подобная тенденция прослеживается и в сфере экономики, где экономические отношения все более проникаются этикой индивидуализма, тогда как идеал солидарности и взаимопомощи исчезает. В итоге, российское гражданское общество оказывается замкнутым между экономическим индивидуализмом и политическим авторитаризмом, будучи вынужденным отстаивать свое легитимное место в отношениях как с государством, так и с рынком.

Титул настоящей диссертационной работы «В борьбе за гражданственность» призван подчеркнуть тернистый путь, пройденный российским обществом со времен перехода к демократии. Становление гражданского общества подразумевает прежде всего общественную борьбу за идеал открытого, толерантного и цивилизованного общества.



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