

A Few Reflections on the Border of the Concept of Social Value

Gabriel Ichim-Radu¹

Abstract: The concept of "value" has a central place in the field of Law, given the fact that Law is a normative science. A variety of definitions and interpretations have been given to this concept of "value". In the socio-human field "value" frequently means general and abstract principles, the goals of Law. A definition of "social values" and their dynamics in the contemporary world has been given at the end of the paper.

Keywords: value, social value, social value judgments, ideal and value, personality.

The activity of establishing legal rules assumes and imposes mainly, the research of the social values which the law field intends to deepen, to promote.

"Value" has been given a variety of definitions and interpretations, but in the socio-human studies, the most frequent sense is that of general and abstract principles, the purposes, the ways in which people must behave and judge the situations, the events, the persons, as well as the social subjects in terms of licit-illicit, lawful-unlawful, just-unjust terms ...

Such principles are: the good, the truth, the fairness, justice, the freedom of self-development etc. Such a definition has a guiding character, the analytical disclosure of the fundamental notes of the concept of value and the capture of the relation between related concepts being very important.

We are referring to both the social values (as main elements of the socio-cultural context) and their internalized version at the personality level.

¹ PhD in progress, Free International University of Moldova (ULIM), Republic of Moldova, Address: Vlaicu Pârcălab 52 Str., Chişinău MD-2012, Republic of Moldova, Corresponding author: preotgabriel@yahoo.com.

As a confirmation of the things presented about the human relationships with the world of values, the philosopher and the ideologist I. Craiovan mentions that this relationship is not just a simple “cultural exercise” more or less optional. The world of values is actually his world, the human is a being who chooses in an inherent way. He chooses not only because he prefers to choose, but also because he is permanently and effectively in all kinds of situations where he has to choose, he strongly feels the need of an appreciative guidance, of a valuable option.

The more or less systematic reflection on these issues gives rise to a series of questions says, Gh. Vladutescu, the author of many philosophical works, such as: if in fact “value” represents the criterion of choice or the result of the choice itself? Which is the relation between the value meaning and the value bearer? Which is the internal structure of the value, in general (simple, homogeneous, unidimensional, composed, heterogeneous, pluri-dimensional, rational or irrational)? Which is the ontic statute or the specific mode of the values’ existence (is this real or unreal, immanent or transcendental, reducible or irreducible, absolute or relative, objective or subjective)? How does the value appear, which is its genesis? Where do values take their validity from and how much do they expand? If the values are known and how they are known (emotional or intellectual-intuitive). How many kinds of values exist (or are possible)? Which are the relations between the value areas and how are these internally organized? and others.

To answer these questions, we should start with the etymology of the concept of “value”. The concept of “value” has three meanings in Latin “valere”: to have force, power, to be healthy, to be morally strong, to be a superior human. The Latin adjective “valens - velentis” with the meaning of “powerful” was used in the Roman languages with the meaning of “courage, bravery” and in the end, it gained the meaning of “value”.

The term of “value” in prof. P. Ilut’s opinion, has a strong polysemy with totally distinct meanings starting from the “value” one in an economic sense to the “national values” referring both to a national specific and also to valuable personalities. Even in this last meaning, the axiological meaning (and now established in the humanities sciences) is a sensibly different one, the values meaning general and abstract principles, which guide our attitudes and behavior, as direct or indirect determinants. Value represents the embodiment of some purposes, projects, wishes, intentions, in other words, the objectification of the human essence in products of the creative activity specific for each type of human attitude.

“Value” as phenomenon, in I. Alexandrescu’s opinion, presents a triple determination:

- a) the capitalizing act takes place at the social knowledge level;
- b) human appreciation, even if it is subjective, it has objective premises;
- c) the value is established on certain criteria historically and socially conditioned by praxis

The fundamental notes of the “value” concept are: generality and centrality in the spiritually symbolical universe of the society and in the structure of human personality, the standards of human actions (evaluative criteria), the motivational vectors, which determine and guide the human action, their strong character, intended as a subscription to “that which is desirable”.

Without the ability to count on a unique starting point, an unconditionally privileged question, a mandatory inaugural problem, the same for all orientations and thinking systems, understanding issues, as I. Craiovan points out - the notions of value are inherent, because value is

- a) the most directly lived fact, a private personal experience;
- b) joins, however, subjects, realities, which thus have or are values;
- c) however, it seems to be something came from afar, an intangible or accomplishable ideal, an order above reality, an insensible land, purely spiritual.

It is not easy to decipher the proportion between ideal and value. For philosopher P. Andrei, the ideal would be an ideal value, which, the individual enunciates under the society’s influence and to whose accomplishment he aspires with all his might, value which becomes an appreciation criteria to all the other values. The philosopher refers here to the highly humanist ideals, assumed by exceptional personalities, which transgress everyday life. But, usually, life ideals become known to us as a web of aspirations and wishes of individuals with the assessment of personal abilities and social development tendencies, a web which evolves on the e axiological canvas of each person. The ideals appear more concentrated as values and they do not have criteria functions in evaluating our own or other people’s actions.

The philosophical universe of value attracts, rejects or causes reluctance, but it is unavoidable by the human being in its perpetual attempt of self-definition and “construction”. This, as the value belongs to the emotional sphere of the human spirit, it cannot be included in knowledge acts but in an improper, incomplete way.

Values are felt, lived, values are not theorized. There can be an endless discussion on values, values can be described, explained in a rigorous way, however, “living the value” is what gives value to the value. The themes, which can be approached at the theoretical level concerning values can refer to the way in which value is awakened in humans, how value’s hierarchies are built, which is the social origin of certain values etc. However, all these speeches lose sight of the value as value and also of the experience associated to it. The human has many moral, religious, legal experiences which sometimes get dramatic accents, but these do not fully explain the phenomenon of value.

In conclusion, thinking about the value’s concept and essence, we mention that every discussion about values, as an ideal, can be presented in three parts:

- value as a subjective experience, specific to each individual (considering the psychological side of value);
- value-as a quality associated to things and phenomenon;
- value as a concept of maximum generality (considering the rational side of value).

Previously, we mentioned the most important concepts which value intercrosses with.

In comparison to the social rules, which are in themselves, standards of the conduct, values are more general prescriptions of behavior, being, in the same time, purposes and unreachable private moods of our existence. Social rules, even owned and practiced by the individual, seem to him more exterior and impersonal, while the values are felt more intimately.

The value also intercrosses with attitude in the version that, values are owned by individuals, but even in this position there are differences between these two concepts. An attitude refers to a system of convictions referring to an object or a specific situation, while a value refers to a unique conviction, one of big generality. Values as fundamental principles of behavior or purposes are at individual level tens, attitudes are hundreds or even thousands.

In the same order, the distinction between value and interest it is interesting. Referring to this distinction, M. Rokeach records the distinction in the following terms: “...an interest is just one of the value’s manifestations and therefore, it only has few of its attributes. An interest can (...) guide the action (...) can serve to adapting, defense, knowledge and update functions of the inner-self. But interest (...) cannot be classified as an ideal way of behavior or the last stage of existence.

It would be difficult to tell that an interest is a standard or that it has the “must” character.

Trying to conclude referring to the aspects that were pointed out in this short incursion, in the world of values also including some defining notes, without referring, however, to an exhaustive presentation, we synthesize the opinions of some authors, but we mainly refer to I. Craiovan:

- for synthesizing the social facts generally, the human has to have a technological knowledge, meaning a conscience of the purpose and of the value;
- the human conscience owning the existence, is realized through a discursive approach, the result of the act of rational knowledge, which constitutes a cognitive disclosure attempt of the world’s structures “as such” but through a valuable attitude which the human establishes meanings, gives a preferential statute to the works and actions.
- a fact becomes a value once it enters in the dynamic field of our interests and appreciations;
- value represents a relation between “something” dignified as valuable and “somebody” able to give value, a relation between the valued object and the subject who values it. This relation has a social character as the one who values, gives importance to those objects, activities or creations which, through their objective characteristics, prove to be suitable to satisfy the human needs, necessities, aspirations and they are historically and socially conditioned by practice. Thus, there is an inalienable correspondence between the characteristics of a valuable act and the human needs and ideals.
- the act of valuing, being constituted at a social knowledge level, has the priority over the preference acts, which happen at an individual conscience level even though it is only realized through this. In other words, the act of valuing is the validated preference of a human community;
- there is a value system for each human community, the historical and social changes causing changes referring to valuation criteria and either those based on consecution and hierarchy of values and an imprinting of a certain value dynamic;
- there can be pointed out the existence of few general-human values, values which respond to some universal necessities (needs and aspirations) of all people, these valued (prized and desired) them and capitalized on them indifferent of the historical time.

- every value has an intrinsic finality, which equates with saying that values are irreducible, not being able to be referred to a wider category. About this, Kant shows that there are three manifestations of the human soul, culture producer- the truth, the good, the beautiful- which results out of three special energies of the human spirit: the truth- from what is called the pure rationality; the good- from the practical rationality and the beautiful from the feeling. Originality and irreducibility of the values lead to preventing the superiority of rank, to preventing some temporary priorities depending on the socio-human needs, which they correspond to. The axiological approach has to emphasize the specific irreducible function of each value in social life and in individual's life.

- the human creates values and creates himself through values which become the human action's coordinates and ontological determinations of the human condition. Values motivate, give direction, offer appreciation criteria, reference models and systems, valuation principles for the human action. They suggest to the individual a complex group of code-solutions which record the collective experience of the group which he belongs in, anticipates and humanizes his creation.

- values contribute to individual's cooperation, having an integrative function in society, being at the same time "yeast" in social anticipation and creativity processes.

In conclusion, we try to define the social values as general and abstract principles, which, guiding the attitudes, interests, necessities, the person's behavior, appear as direct or indirect determinants. Value represents the embodiment of some purposes, projects, wishes, intentions, well, objectifying human essence in products of the creative activity for each kind of human attitude.

About the social values dynamics in today's world, referring to Romania and the Republic of Moldova, we think that, we should take into consideration the fact that these countries are found in a double transition: a deep and more lasting transition from traditional to modern, even with postmodern elements, and a faster and virulent one from what was before the 90s (socialism, communism) to what it is and what continues to be now (market economy, freedom, democracy, primitive capitalism, corruption). This situation also means a strong confusion and axiological ambivalence, the meaning of traditionalism with modernism, meaning a conjunction area, of harmony but also of confusion and contradiction, probably these socio-psychological phenomenon and mechanisms are more obvious with young people, overlapping what is classically called value's crisis.