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**CIVIL IDENTITY AS ETHICAL
SELF-DETERMINATION**



Civil identity is a societal construct of consciousness and communicative practices, the construal of public and private levels of social life emerging around the recognition of the values of individual freedom, dignity and uniqueness of human. It is influenced by the involvement of knowledge in the organization of social and economic development and is associated with the generation of cultural and emotional values and norms of everyday life. Civil identity exists as a discursive-ethical activity focused particularly on the person's moral self-determination in the dealings with the community and society. Contemporary semiotic studies allow combining the development of the signs language and art representation with that of the physical senses and emotional perception of reality within one context of understanding. All human systems interact with the brain and are interdependent.

Attention is drawn to fact that civil identity as ethical self-determination is congruent with the responsibility that exists in connection with the growth of civilization's potential of empathy.

Keywords: *civic identity, self-determination, values, freedom, dignity, perception, empathy, responsibility, semiosis.*

If we look at the contemporary map of the world in terms of the reality of civil society it is easy to notice significant differences in the socio-political life and welfare between countries where civil society has become a fact and where a political resistance is exerted on it. This prompts us to turn to the analysis of civil identity as the “dynamic core” of large-scale changes in the civilized world.

The purpose of my article is to outline the relevance of civil identity as a civilization perspective that unfolds through the innovative values of personal and social life of man and woman.

Civil identity and its ethical meaning

The concept of “identity” has become popular since the 1950’s owing to the works of E. Erikson. He identified three elements of “self-identity” molded during the interaction of biological and psychological characteristics and cultural context. Identity is a complex societal construct. Primarily the problem of identity has a practical axiological intention. As noted by Charles Taylor, identity is the question of what makes our life worth living and to living with dignity. The idea of identity expresses our desire to define what is important for us, and what is not. Anthony Giddens notes that identity as a phenomenon of post-traditional society has distinct biographical and narrative dimensions: “The individual’s biography, if he is to maintain a regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing ‘story’ about the self” [Giddens, 1991, p. 214].

The narrative of citizenship is formed around the practical implementation of the individual’s freedom. It should be emphasized that the problem of human freedom cannot be resolved on its own basis or through reflection on itself. Civil identity is shaped by the communicative intentions of liberation from domination and violence. The desire of freedom was understood as a natural human right to be free from violence within a particular historical community. Human freedom is also carried on by discourse and ethical practices which have a semiotic content. Ethical responsibility as the style of social behavior can become a reality in the condition of civil society. The grounds for our judgment we can find in the examples of resignation from office for the ethical reasons by statesmen and officials that is a common rule in modern democracies of civil society.

Since the end of the 18th century the belief has been establishing itself that every individual is different and unique. The new artistic culture and philosophy assert the idea of “self-determination” of the subject and the importance of daily life. Also a moral ideal of universal benevolence extends.

The Scottish enlightener Adam Ferguson in the mid-18th century in *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* examines the social demand for the recognition of human dignity, kindness, politeness and tolerance. Interestingly, this query is formed from “the people” under a rapid development of commercial society which was against brutal corruption, social, religious and political conflicts and wars spread at that time. A. Ferguson was looking for a positive image of the individual with the soft, polite, sensitive and affectionate manners in speech and behavior — “a gentleman”. The present-day civil culture engenders a world view to recognize individual human vocation and is itself engendered by it. Man is regarded as a creative person, capable for self-development and implementation of his skills, talents and dreams.

The new identity even although it is replacing the previous one does not convert itself into a single identity. This means that identity is not limited to its only single type and shape. People can have different forms (levels) of identities at the same time under the influence of the existence of their private and public activity. The formation of civil identity leads to the awareness of ethnic and national identities as those that complement each other. Civil identity reveals its creative potential in its ability to bring about an entirely new type of trust and social capital; it becomes a major civil type's factor for making legitimate the free market relations, political national identity and democratic governance. At first they are formed as diverse national systems of verbal communication, which replace the Latin language in education and public life. It concerns the historical evolution of humanity as the process of semiosis.

The idea of civil values in the nineteenth century derives its political exercise in the formation of new national democracies which become the banner of national liberation movements that radically changed the geopolitical map of the world. The national self-determination aspect of civil identity is extremely important but, unfortunately, I have to miss it in this short text.

Civil identity and economic creativity

During the civil progress, man of new urban environment — the bourgeois, burgher, has gone on the scene, focused on the production and consumption values and goods produced through creative human resources: dignity, knowledge, intelligence, creativity, innovation, tolerance to others and recognition. The economist E. Beinhocker put it as follows: “To summarize... economic history in brief: for a very, very, very long time not much happened; then all of a sudden, all hell broke loose”. There has been a *10 fold* increase in average global income in just eight generations. E. Beinhocker has attempted to work out the extent of this explosion. According to his estimates our economy is currently flooded with about 12 billion different products that must have occurred in the last 250 years [Beinhocker, 2007].

The economic historian, Deirdre McCloskey decided to call this extraordinary rise in living standards and wealth since around 1750 “The Great Fact”. We can consider everything that is created in the process of economic production as a valuable and tangible implementation of individual talents and abilities of people. Economic development was caused by many factors, but among them are especially important *ethical discourse* and *representational* guidance forming the civil brand identity. I could agree with the position of D. McCloskey: “I am claiming that ideas, or “rhetoric,” enriched us. ... The cause of the enrichment was not in the first instance material change or routine incentives. ... Contrary to Samuelsonian economics, a seventeenth-century change in rhetoric

about prudence, and about the other virtues exercised in a commercial society, started the material and spiritual progress. Meaning and ethics grew favorable to innovation. Ever since the new rhetoric of bourgeois dignity and liberty has been spreading progress to the poor of the world” [McCloskey, 2012, p. 1–2].

I think, however, that we can get on harder ground, if instead of setting the “bourgeois virtues” we allocate the ethics of citizenship. It seems that it is more appropriate to speak about the “civil virtues” and civil liberties, which are not equal to that of “bourgeois cunning”. Peter Koslowski justifies the intimate connection between ethics and market-based economic development: “Hayek introduced the argument that the market society replaces the society of small groups by an abstract order that renders ethics obsolete. This Hayekian argument is flawed and must be turned round. The market society requires personal ethics since it does *not* rely on the face-to-face control of small groups but on the formal rules of market coordination *and* on the ethics of observing contracts and of realizing mutual value creation. The ethos of *pacta sunt servanda* cannot be guaranteed by the legal system and mutual monitoring devices only” [Koslowski, 2008].

Trust as an ethical value has one fundamental importance — its measure defines the relationship between the individual and business and between the citizen and the state. Civil identity has moral and ethical values for individuals regarding their cultural and social behavior.

Identity and compassion or empathy

Civil identity is a complex *societal* phenomenon. It combines cultural, social, commercial and epistemic values and means. As social structures in a modern time are built with acts of knowledge that are carried through our communicative speech and action “society is inherently associated with truthfulness and accuracy of statements and norms” lying in the public sphere [J. Habermas]. The epistemic factor of identity cannot be reduced to knowledge of a purely abstract, conceptual and discursive level. It is also formed by the participation of a representational level of perception that influences us through signs, images, sounds and other things which we comprehend on unconscious “bodily” level.

Contemporary semiotic studies allow combining the development of signs language with the development of the physical senses and emotional perception of reality — within the context of understanding. All human systems — nervous, muscular, physiological, etc. — interact with the brain and are interdependent. “Neural processes and social relationship both contribute to the creation of mental life. ... The middle prefrontal circuits function to integrate the processing of social information, autobiographical consciousness, the evaluation of mining, the activation of arousal, and the coordination of bodily response and

higher cognitive processing” [Siegel, 2012, p. 157]. Civil identity generates a fundamentally new type of cultural, emotional and ethical relationships that are open not only to responsible freedom, but is aiming to overcome the vanity of human suffering. Civil identity is manifested in every day human worries and it has the existential character of caring for others. On this occasion, M. Iacobony suggests that “mirror neurons are brain cells that seem specialized in understanding our existential condition and our involvement with others. They show that we are not alone, but are biologically wired and evolutionary designed to be deeply interconnected with one another” [Iacobony, 2009, p. 267].

Research in the areas of biology, neuroscience, psychology and bioethics, conducted over the past 20 years has proved conclusively that human brain by its evolutionary period increased biological predisposition for solidarity and cooperation in the mutual perception of the suffering of others as one’s own rather than for aggression, materialism, utilitarianism or pleasure [Rifkin, 2009, p. 42]. Thus the increase of life’s energy apparently associated with the self-determination capable to represent multiplication of compassion or empathy as an ethical responsibility before others is the main dimension of civil identity.

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Анатолій Карась. Громадянська ідентичність як етичне самовизначення

Громадянська ідентичність є соціетальним конструктом свідомості й комунікативної практики. Вона формується на публічному й приватному рівнях соціального життя й виникає довкола потреб визнання індивідуальної свободи, гідності й унікальності людини. Важливим

моментом її становлення є те, що вона складається під впливом знань в організації соціального та економічного розвитку й пов'язана з генеруванням культурних та емоційних цінностей і норм повсякденного життя. Громадянська ідентичність виявляється як дискурсивно-етична активність, що зфокусована переважно на особистісному моральному самовизначенні у відносинах з суспільством. Сучасні семіотичні дослідження дозволяють пов'язати розвиток мовних знаків і мистецьких репрезентацій з фізичними відчуттями та емоційним сприйняттям реальності в єдиному контексті розуміння останньої. Всі системи людини взаємодіють з мозком і є взаємозалежними. Пропонуємо взяти до уваги, що громадянська ідентичність як етична самовизначеність особи є конгруентною з відповідальністю, котра перебуває в зв'язку зі зростанням цивілізаційного потенціалу емпатії.

Ключові слова: громадянська ідентичність, самовизначення, цінності, свобода, гідність, сприйняття, емпатія, відповідальність, семіоз.

Анатолій Карась. Гражданская идентичность как этическое самоопределение

В статье рассматривается проблема формирования гражданской идентичности, являющейся социетальным конструктом сознания и коммуникативной практики. Она формируется вокруг потребности признания индивидуальной свободы, достоинства и уникальности человека. Важным моментом ее становления является то, что она образуется под влиянием знаний в организации социального и экономического развития и связана с генерированием культурных и эмоциональных ценностей, а также норм обыденной жизни. Гражданская идентичность существует как форма дискурсивно-этической активности, сфокусированная преимущественно на уровне личностного нравственного самоопределения в отношении с обществом. Современные семиотические исследования позволяют увидеть связь между развитием вербальных знаков и репрезентаций посредством искусства с физическими чувствами и эмоциональным восприятием реальности в едином контексте понимания последней. Все системы человека взаимодействует с мозгом и являются взаимозависимыми. Подчеркивается, что гражданская идентичность как этическое самоопределение человека конгруэнтна с ответственностью, пребывающей в связи с возрастанием цивилизационного потенциала эмпатии.

Ключевые слова: гражданская идентичность, самоопределение, ценности, свобода, достоинство, восприятие, эмпатия, ответственность, семіоз.