



## Social and Psychological Nature and Essence Public Opinion

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**Abstract:** The variety of points of view about the nature and purpose of the public opinion is largely due to the fact that in history and modernity there is not a single prominent scientist (thinker), political and statesman who did not give his characteristics to public opinion. Analysis, description of individual sides of this phenomenon are found in religious teachings and mythological legends, Indian, Chinese, ancient Greek philosophy, later scientific research, as well as in the works of modern scientists, incl. philosophers, sociologists, political scientists and of course psychologists.

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### INTRODUCTION

First of all, let us single out two areas related to the assessment of public opinion as a phenomenon and subject of scientific analysis. Among the supporters the first direction - scientists who adhere to the point of view of objective the existence of public opinion, the presence of features and characteristics characteristic of social and psychological phenomena. The second direction, unites persons who consider this phenomenon of mass psychology to be ephemeral. Thus, a significant number of modern American researchers call the constructions of collective entities like "group mind" sterile. P. Sorokin wrote about this, arguing that "terms like "social consciousness", "soul of the people", "national spirit" can exist only in the quality of poetic images; taken in their literal sense, they do not correspond to reality" [12]. This, in particular, is the position of G. Le Bon, asserting that "no names assigned to opinions, nor their false application in life can change the essence of things" [7]. Supporters of this point of view neglect collective mental processes in favor of the individual psyche. Based on this logic reasoning, P. Bourdieu believes that public opinion does not really exist, that it is done by professionals. In his opinion, sociologists, social psychologists do not measure "public opinion", but only produce artifacts. In the polemical article "Public opinion does not exist" P. Bourdieu warns from incorrect and uncritical inclusion of mass assessments in public administration processes [2]. In the future, this point of view is developed by P. Champagne, who believes that there is not only real public opinion, but also "Opinion measured by public opinion polls" [14]. In reality there is a social, socio-psychological space, which is managed by survey sellers, political scientists, psychologists, communications advisors and political marketing, journalists and other professionals.

## **LITERATURE ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGY**

These "social agents" are the creators of any ordered "public opinion" which is nothing more than a "symbolic weapon in politics in a symbolic fight". Denial of the collective nature of public opinion, focus on the problems of typologizing individual psychological traits and attitudes naturally leads to hypertrophied conclusions about the objective existence of only the individual opinion of each individual. This implies the conclusion is that since the individual is concerned only with his own problems, which are often in conflict with the public, the collective position should be artificially formed by external methods. Accordingly, the socio-psychological nature of public opinion as a product of communication, interaction, public the discussion is artificial. Thus, public opinion is replaced by a set of individual opinions and positions. As a result, public opinion is considered as a percentage of certain positions, points of view, attitudes. This approach reduces public opinion to the sum of single value judgments, expressed in the course of the survey and not related to the general matter of mass activity, behavior, mass (public) consciousness. The other extreme is to endow public opinion with a futuristic focus. Among the researchers who recognize the existence of public opinion, there is a group of authors who attribute public the opinion of "futuristic orientation", or represent its state as "dominance of demonstrative irrationality." As a result, a certain part researchers even admit the existence of a mystical element in public opinion. Public opinion knows in advance what will happen in society and prepares the masses for the perception of this future. In this case, the boundaries of public opinion are delineated by the irrational meanings of fetishized symbols that act as a reference point for choosing a model of behavior (rational / irrational). This approach is largely associated with the absolutization of the connection of public opinions with sensory perception. The origins of such a characteristic of public opinion can be found already among the Eleatics, who argued that opinion acquaints only with the subjective appearance of things and does not give knowledge of their essence. With this approach, the principle of rational stability of generally recognized meanings and values in public consciousness is questioned. Moreover it is obvious that the emotional manifestations of the mood of the crowds themselves are fundamentally different from the content of public opinion. Spontaneous rallies demonstrations and unrest have little to do with the nature, content and manifestations of public opinion. The basis for the study of public opinion as a rational process is the classical theories developed by L. Dörmann, E. Noelle-Neumann, G. Tarde, D. Truman, J. B. Foucault, Y. Habermas and others. For supporters of the point of view of the objective existence of social opinions, this phenomenon of mass psychology appears as a spiritual reality, one of the forms of manifestation of the state of mass consciousness. In public opinion reflects the interested value attitude of the social subject to the debatable, informationally accessible and understandable ones affecting his interest objects that function in a spiritual or spiritually-practical form. The objective existence of public opinion is manifested in mass evaluative and practical activities in the process of social regulation. Public opinion as a phenomenon inherent in collective psychology acts as an attribute of public consciousness, one of the forms of its manifestation. The most common manifestations of public opinion are collective judgment and collective behavioral acts, customs, traditions. Public opinion is characterized by immersion in the practice of everyday life, concreteness, asymmetry in the choice of the object of assessment. Analysis of the content of the works of Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Tarde and others allows highlight the list of characteristic features, the content of public opinion. This is most clearly reflected in the statements: "the mind falls into assumptions and opinions"; "Opinion can be based on knowledge of the reasons and not based on it"; "Opinions are divided into those based on general reasoning, poorly verified facts, and those based on sensory experience"; "Opinion is based on sensory perception in the form of common sense"; "The opinion introduces only with a subjective appearance of things and does not give knowledge of their essence"; "Opinions - only a semblance of knowledge"; "Opinions are what they believe in but don't know"; "opinion there is a conscious recognition of something true, insufficient as with a subjective, the same objective side. "

Hegel singles out the substantial principles of justice in the form of common sense, the presence of great power in all time. As negative qualities, he attributes the randomness of opinion, its ignorance, perversity, false knowledge and false judgment [3]. In general, public opinion is characterized by the content of both rational assessments and irrational, unconscious feelings, perceptions, intentions and etc. The data of linguistics, psycholinguistics, etc. show that public the opinion is self-sufficient, that it possesses the capabilities of a special mass understanding of life. Public opinion is characterized by three levels of self-expression. At the first level, opinion manifests itself as an interested value judgment that expresses a spiritual attitude. On the second, it acquires the qualities of a position, incentive. Finally, at the third level, public opinion is able to act as a practical attitude, action. In this case, it manifests itself in the corresponding mass behavior (for example, electoral behavior, participation in actions of political support or opposition, etc.). Thus, it can be argued that public opinion means the product of collective understanding of the social environment, generally significant representations reflecting the needs and interests of social communities, expressed in evaluative, socio-psychological judgments in relation to socially significant facts and behavioral acts. As a spiritual reality, an instrument of socio-psychological self-organization, self-expression of society, public opinion unites a stable system of collective consensus in a single space-time interval value guidelines formed on the basis of a long historical experience (including taking into account the transformation of the content of mass social assessments).

## **DISCUSSION AND RESULTS**

As a socio-psychological institution, public opinion provides social regulation of social relations, plays a special role in the system social interaction, has its own functions, a special nature of interaction with other institutions. In public opinion, the socio-political aspirations, interests, volitional motives of the people find their concentrated expression.[4] Public opinion closely related to collective psychology, politics, power, has the ability to influence mass consciousness, mass psychology, thereby, accelerating or, on the contrary, inhibiting social processes, becoming either a positive or negative factor in the mass consciousness, the existing socio-political system.[5] Public opinion, through a certain way formed mass moods, value judgments affects the mass attitudes, deeds, actions. Public opinion is characterized by a rule-making function aimed at developing a system of social standards that allow elements of the social system (from the individual to large social groups) to adapt to the changing environment of their existence. In public opinion find their concentrated expression of politically significant interests and needs, feelings and experiences, moods and behavioral attitudes of a sufficiently large number of people, it acts as one of the incentive sources collective behavior of the masses. The value of public opinion lies in its ability to satisfy socio-psychological needs for the continuity of generations, stability, strength and sustainability of the socio-political system, harmonization of the interests of various parts of society, ensuring the principle of legitimacy authorities. At the same time, the functional role of public opinion in the field of social and psychological relations is not only complex, but also multifaceted. Entering the sphere of public consciousness, public relations, public opinion acts as the most important tool of civil society, with its help society can and should actively influence the content, nature and effectiveness of power. Within this paradigm, public opinion is considered as one of the effective ways of interaction of the public with government and other political institutions, civil society with by the state [6, 7, 8]. In public opinion, public consciousness finds its expression, having special properties, structure and functions, as well as mass consciousness of different social groups, non-classical communities, for example, mass social and psychological formations of the crowd type. The reality of the objective existence of public opinion is confirmed by its essential characteristics, such as: "a special kind of moral superstructure institution", "value-colored judgment and mode of behavior", "Spiritual activity, the products of which are of a spiritual nature", "socio-psychological judgment of a self-aware community" (M.K. Gorshkov, A.K. Uledov). In this case, public opinion is considered in the context of "mass consciousness", "state of

mass consciousness", "self-aware community", "Mass phenomenon of group psychology", "concentrated expression collective intelligence of society. " The evaluative function of public opinion is manifested through the disclosure of its role as an indicator of the system of values prevailing in the mass consciousness. Along with the characterization of public opinion as a spiritual activity, the products of which are of a spiritual nature, it is important to consider this phenomenon in the context of the real behavior of large social groups. Under the influence of public opinion, the behavior of large social groups has not only spiritual but also material character. The direct connection of public opinion with "behavior", "deeds", "will", "law", "politics" is realized through a set of collective opinions on issues of public interest; opinions on a specific issue affecting the interests of a large group of people. As a tool for self-organization of the social system, public opinion contains a rational component, which manifests itself in the form of an internal factor substantiating the reasons for a specific behavioral act. Emotional the public opinion component establishes positive contact between the subject performing the action, and the reference group, expands the range of carriers of this opinion and reinforces the decision. In general, it can be stated that public opinion is a product of a collective understanding of socio-psychological reality, integrating universally significant ideas and directions that reflect needs, interests, values of social communities as subjects of public opinion. Public opinion is the result of a complex interaction of psychological, socio-psychological and social factors, which is realized in the socio-political sphere in the form of shared by the majority judgments and in collective types of behavior. As an integrative indicator of the state of society, public opinion reflects the degree of organization and stability of the social system, which is empirically recorded through the analysis of the system of social values and the approved ways of achieving them. The internal content, the fullness of public opinion is due to psychological and social experience of generations, historical and cultural environment, a system of norms and values transmitted through deep archetypes. Public opinion is not only an assessment of the social situation, but, first of all, - a rational assessment with an exit to a behavioral act.

**Conclusion:** As a result of the work it is worth noting, Research shows that public opinion as an integrative indicator understanding the social situation by a specific community and its individual elements has different levels of manifestation: a) a level reflecting a civic position and norms of behavior (the degree of integration of a the whole); b) the household level, reflecting the system of standards at the level of a narrow subcultures (ways of solving individual everyday problems). The analysis of the definitions of public opinion shows that in most of the approaches presented are based on the thesis of a collective subject of public opinion, which is directly related to such a phenomenon as social facts. At the same time, research shows that, not despite a significant number of people who do not recognize or dismiss the public opinion of an insignificant role, most scientists, socio-political leaders recognize the essential and indisputable role of public opinion in the regulation of socio-psychological and political processes in society. Thus, public opinion as a spokesman, a mirror of the soul, feelings and the morals of the people has a direct connection with the socio-psychological processes in society. To understand the dynamics of public opinion, it is necessary to understand the dynamics of mental processes, the desire and motives of mass activity, their results

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