BG Pulse Journal USA
ISSN:1947-2536 http://www.bgpulseusa.com/index.php/bg

THE MARGINAL PERSONALITY OF THE CONVICT: A SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF RESOCIALIZATION

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Abstract. The article examines the phenomenon of the marginal personality of the convicted from the perspective of social philosophy. The author analyzes the process of resocialization as the movement of an individual between two cultural spaces – the generally accepted social culture and the subculture of the criminal community. It is demonstrated that a convicted person, being in conditions of forced isolation, finds himself at the intersection of value systems, which generates a deep contradiction between his individual identity and social norms. The article substantiates that the effectiveness of resocialization depends not so much on the perfection of legislative mechanisms as on the consistent passage of the individual through the stages of value transformation. It is concluded that the socio-philosophical understanding of this problem opens new opportunities for developing practical recommendations in the field of penitentiary policy.

Keywords: marginal personality, resocialization, convicted person, social adaptation, value transformation, criminal subculture, social isolation, intercultural communication, social conflict, penitentiary system.

1. INTRODUCTION

The challenge of reintegrating individuals who have served prison sentences back into a normal social environment remains one of the most pressing issues in modern social philosophy and related sciences. Although the penitentiary systems of various states have a diverse arsenal of rehabilitative measures at their disposal, practice shows: Legal measures alone cannot ensure a person's genuine return to society. This is a deeply personal process that affects the innermost layers of identity, values, and worldview.

A convict, isolated from their familiar social environment, inevitably finds themselves in a state of duality: they simultaneously belong and do not belong to both their former society and the criminal environment in which they are forced to exist. This borderline state, which sociology refers to as marginality, requires serious philosophical consideration, as it represents not an abstract category, but the fate of a specific individual.

The purpose of this article is to explore the socio-philosophical nature of the convict's marginal personality, to examine resocialization as a process of gradual value transformation, and to identify the key contradictions that impede the successful reintegration of former convicts into society.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical basis for this study is formed at the intersection of social philosophy, sociology, criminology, and cultural studies. Among the scholars who have addressed this issue, the following perspectives merit special attention.

Of fundamental importance to understanding the nature of socialization is the definition provided by N. Abercrombie and other authors of the “Sociological Dictionary”: socialization is understood as the process by which an individual internalizes the cultural norms and values of the society to which they belong [1]. Building on this definition, one can conclude that resocialization represents a secondary, often conflict-ridden, journey along the same path—but one that must account for the distortions acquired under conditions of isolation.

Erich Fromm's concept of the “sane society” offers another perspective on the problem. According to his thinking, an individual's loss of connection with the community and their resulting

alienation give rise to a “market character”, in which specific relationships between people become manipulative, and the person begins to be seen as a means to an end [2]. Within the penitentiary system, this logic manifests with particular acuity: the convict ceases to perceive themselves as a subject, gradually internalizing the role of an object of external influence.

Milton Bennett's model plays an important role in understanding the cultural aspect of resocialization. According to his model, the process of mastering a new culture involves successive stages: denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration [3]. This framework, originally developed for intercultural communication, reveals a striking structural similarity to what a convict experiences upon returning to society. A person who has long lived by the laws of the criminal world perceives generally accepted norms as something alien and initially rejects them.

T. F. Minyazeva points out that the goal of criminal punishment in the form of imprisonment will be achieved only if a positive impact is exerted on the perpetrator's personality [4]. However, the very concept of “positive impact” remains conceptually undeveloped in Russian legal science, which significantly complicates the practical application of this thesis.

Yu. M. Antonyan, M. I. Enikeev, and V. E. Eminov see the ultimate goal of the execution of punishment as the “restructuring of moral views and attitudes, and the reorientation of criminologically significant personality traits” [5]. This approach is, of course, essentially correct; however, it focuses primarily on external behavioral manifestations, leaving aside the individual's deeper value transformation.

G. F. Khokhryakov viewed the penitentiary environment as a special social system that generates its own norms and rules, which often directly contradict those that are socially accepted [6]. This conclusion is of fundamental importance: a convict does not simply “drop out” of society – they actively integrate into an alternative system of norms, and subsequent resocialization becomes a struggle between two systems of equal significance to them.

I. A. Sternin, in his research on interpersonal communication mechanisms, showed that the effectiveness of communication largely depends on the interlocutors' ability to overcome cultural and psychological barriers [7]. When applied to convicts, this means that the very language of communication with society becomes difficult for them: over the years of isolation, a special communicative code is formed that is incomprehensible outside the criminal environment.

V. M. Trubnikov, studying the mechanism of social adaptation for those released from serving their sentences, pointed to the existence of so-called “turning points” in a person's life that determine the vector of their future development [8]. These critical moments, in his view, are the true points of resocialization – it is here that the decision is made as to whether a person will return to a criminal lifestyle or find a path to a law-abiding existence.

S. Boltkov, analyzing Russia's experience with involving the public in assisting prisoners, showed that institutional measures, when detached from direct human involvement, prove to be largely ineffective [9]. Public organizations are capable of filling the vacuum of social ties that inevitably forms for a person released from a place of incarceration.

A. V. Dmitriev, examining the conflict-theory aspect of social processes, draws on the concepts of L. Coser, R. Dahrendorf, and K. Boulding, who argued that social stability is determined by the aggregate of conflictual relationships and the type of connections between them [10]. This thesis allows the conflict between a convict and society to be viewed not as a random phenomenon, but as a structurally determined element of social dynamics that requires management rather than elimination.

Thus, a review of the scholarly literature indicates that the problem of the resocialization of convicts lies at the intersection of several academic traditions and requires a comprehensive socio-

philosophical approach that considers both the value dimension of personal change and the structural contradictions between the individual and society.

3. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

3.1. Marginality as the Ontological State of the Convict

An individual sentenced to imprisonment occupies a unique place in the social structure. They are not a full-fledged member of free society, yet complete immersion in the criminal underworld does not grant them a stable identity either. This liminal position has not only a sociological but also a profound ontological dimension: a person deprived of their usual connections and points of reference is forced to reconstruct their understanding of themselves and their place in the world.

Marginality in this context is not a static state but a dynamic process. Isolation destroys previous social roles and ties, yet it fails to create stable new ones in their place. The resulting vacuum of values is filled spontaneously – as a rule, by the norms and attitudes transmitted by the criminal community. This community has its own hierarchy, code of conduct, and system of sanctions, which often prove more comprehensible and consistent to the convict than the abstract requirements of formal law.

It is fundamentally important that this dual affiliation does not remain neutral. The longer a person remains in isolation, the more deeply they become rooted in an alternative value system, and the more difficult it becomes for them to later perceive societal norms as something inherent and organic, rather than imposed from the outside. In essence, with each year of imprisonment, the social distance between the convict and society grows, and this is precisely what makes the process of resocialization so complex and multi-faceted.

3.2. Group Identity and Its Destructive Potential

One of the key mechanisms hindering successful resocialization is the phenomenon of group-centrism. In conditions of imprisonment, convicts form stable micro-groups that begin to fulfill a social protection function. Within such a group, a specific system of solidarity emerges: its members consider their own norms to be the only valid ones, and mutual assistance within the group is seen as natural, while contact with the outside world is viewed as suspicious and potentially threatening.

This mechanism creates a vicious cycle: the more actively society attempts to influence a convict from the outside, the more strongly they identify with their peer group, and the more ingrained their hostility towards "outsiders" becomes - primarily representatives of the prison administration and society at large. The contradiction here is structural: for resocialization to occur, the convict must weaken their ties to the criminal group, yet it is precisely this group that currently serves as their sole source of psychological security.

Breaking this cycle is impossible without targeted efforts to form alternative social ties – ones that could offer the individual a comparable level of security, but within a framework of law-abiding activity. The task of the penitentiary system is not to destroy the convict's group identity, but to gradually reorient their values by involving them in new forms of social interaction.

3.3. The Transformation of Values as the Core of Resocialization

A philosophical interpretation of resocialization requires a shift in emphasis from external behavioral control to the internal value-based transformation of the individual. Behavioral changes not supported by a profound transformation of values are superficial and temporary: a person released from prison will revert to familiar patterns of behavior as soon as they find themselves in a familiar environment.

Genuine resocialization presupposes that the convict not only learns new rules but also experiences a fundamental restructuring of their worldview. This process passes through several

necessary phases: an initial rejection of new values, their gradual dismissal as insignificant, then a painful comparison of the two worldviews, and finally – given a favorable set of circumstances – the acceptance and internalization of societal norms as one's own.

None of these phases can be artificially accelerated or skipped. Attempts to impose "correct" values on a convict through directive methods will inevitably meet with resistance, which can manifest as either open opposition or passive conformity – an imitation of reform without any real internal change. The latter is perhaps even more dangerous than open rebellion, as it creates the illusion of success where there is no real result.

3.4. The contradiction between the individual and society as a driving force for transformation

A socio-philosophical analysis allows us to see the contradiction between a convicted person and society not only as a source of conflict but also as a potential resource for development. Societal control over the individual, which objectively carries an element of coercion, generates a counter-response: the desire to preserve one's own identity. It is precisely in this clash of two wills that the conditions for genuine value-based choice are born.

True rehabilitation cannot be the result of unilateral pressure; it is always the fruit of a tense internal dialogue that a person has with themselves and with society. Consequently, the task of resocialization institutions is not to suppress the convicted person's individuality, but to create conditions in which this dialogue becomes possible and productive. An environment devoid of respect for the individual forecloses the path to such a dialogue, whereas an environment that recognizes a person's right to inner development opens it.

4. CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATIONS

The conducted analysis allows for the formulation of a number of theoretical and practical conclusions.

First and foremost, a person sentenced to imprisonment should be viewed not as an object of correctional influence, but as a subject of value-based transformation. This approach fundamentally changes the logic of penitentiary activities: the focus shifts from controlling behavior to developing an individual's inner potential. Without this re-evaluation, any reforms to the penitentiary system will be merely formal in nature.

Secondly, resocialization is a staged process in which each subsequent stage is possible only after the completion of the previous one. Skipping or artificially compressing individual phases inevitably leads to the formation of unstable adaptive strategies that crumble when confronted with real-life difficulties after release.

Thirdly, the phenomenon of group-centrism among inmates cannot be suppressed by administrative measures; it must be transformed. The deliberate creation of conditions for forming new social ties, oriented toward law-abiding behavior, can gradually redirect the group identity of inmates into a constructive channel.

Fourth, effective resocialization is impossible without the active participation of civil society. State institutions, for all their importance, are not able to fully replace genuine human connections. It is public organizations, volunteer movements, and family institutions that can create the social context without which an individual's value-based transformation remains incomplete.

Fifth, the final period of serving a sentence must be seen not as a formal stage for summing up, but as an active phase of preparation for life on the outside. The practical social interaction skills and abilities developed during this period are fundamentally more important for preventing recidivism than any disciplinary measures.

Thus, a socio-philosophical understanding of the problem of the convict's marginal identity is not an academic abstraction. It paves the way for a qualitatively different understanding of the goals and methods of the penitentiary system—an understanding centered on the individual, with their inalienable right to personal development and reintegration into society.

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