

# Reason and Feelings in Moral Convention

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**Abstract**—The study examines formation peculiarities of a social contract as a form of social agreement that determines the value grounds for interaction between citizens. The specifics of transformation of emotional experiences into rational attitudes of moral evaluation of the convention that meets the mutual interests of the parties involved in the social process is presented. Historical examples of the social contract formation related to the political and moral constants established as a result of social experience of survival of the individual are analyzed. The defining role of feelings, forming the atmosphere in society, which dictates the choice of moral priorities by a citizen, with the help of which he or she builds social communication, is established. The complex influence of political and moral factors on the range of state regulation of civil relations is emphasized. The comparison of feelings of shame, fear, love, which were used as the basis of social contract in different historical periods, allows us to draw a conclusion about the interdependence between emotional perception of social events and moral obligations. Political and social crises demonstrate the need to change the principles of the binding basis in society, which justifies the need to transform the moral standards of communication.

**Keywords**—social contract; social convention; agreement; moral obligation; sense of shame; sense of fear; civil society

## I. INTRODUCTION

Overcoming civil contradictions is the primary task of society, which determines the potential vectors of further development of the state. They are conditioned by the factors of social trust and agreement among citizens on the most important issues of social life; and it contributes to the unification of their efforts to achieve common goals. Difficulties arising in the process of finding public consensus determine a confrontation between different organizations, parties, alliances, initiating the emergence of conflict situations in interpersonal communication. External challenges and internal problems dictate the need to strengthen social consolidation. This situation actualizes the search for common grounds of social interaction, which include moral and political provisions that reconcile ideological differences in society. This prevents the differences from becoming a threat to the existence of the state system. Reference to the topic of social contract as a form of moral convention is related to the problem of formation of an individual's responsibility to the community, resolution of political differences, and acquisition of national unity on the basis of common civil obligations.

Objectives of the study: first, to determine the features of a social contract functioning as a regulator of moral relations in specific historical periods; second, to reveal emotional specificity of the moral agreement prerequisites; third, to establish the transformation mechanism of emotional experiences of a person into rational provisions of the moral convention, meeting the interaction needs between a citizen and society. The solution to these issues will allow revealing the dominant principles of the relationship of social actors in the social situation context. The paper uses the method of historical and comparative analysis, which traces the social mode genesis, and the allocation of fundamental facts that are important in certain political conditions. The system method application provides an opportunity to establish a causal relationship between morality and politics, reflecting the complex experiences, needs and aspirations of a citizen who is in search of strong foundations for social communication.

Research of the social contract in the 20th–21st centuries was held, mostly, from two perspectives: for one, a discussion about its influence on the political systems that emerged on the basis of social agreement between various political parties and groups in the works of D. D. Raphael [1], H. Warrender [2], L. Strauss [3], M. M. Goldsmith [4]; for another, an establishment of provisions facilitating efficient activities within the framework of professional convention in the works by A. A. Auzan [5], Yu. E. Blagov [6], M. L. Miers [7]. The comparative analysis of the social contract as part of philosophical search for the most adequate forms of communication between citizens is presented by the tradition of English researchers: D. G. James [8], P. King [9], R. M. Lemos [10], Westphal K.R. [11], Leno D. [12], Moehler M. [13].

## II. MORAL CONVENTION AS A FORM OF SOCIAL CONTRACT MANIFESTATION

A social contract is a worldview paradigm; and guided by the provisions of this paradigm an individual builds his relationships with the community, a part of which he perceives himself. The social contract includes a necessary set of social principles to implement a personal principle in collective interactions aimed at implementation of mutual interest as a result of joint social activities. It reveals the rights, duties, status roles, and needs for the social presentation of a citizen in accordance with the accepted in this society rules. A mental structure in the form of which the social contract existed (in the Middle Ages this concept was

used in legal practice as an agreement between free cities and sovereign princes on the provision of military force in case of danger) was a historically formed custom that met political, state, and military realities. In contrast to the legal law controlled by the state and demanding execution of the requirements and prohibitions contained therein under threat of punishment, this convention was of a moral nature and was governed by a citizen's moral feelings, which were based on the priority system of values in society. Depending on the generally accepted principles of behavior revealed in social contacts, such types of civic actualization as patriotism, solidarity, sacrifice for the benefit of others, mutual assistance, and duty were formed.

The moral components of a social contract determined the meaning of the relationships between an individual and the social environment of his existence, between opposing political groups, between the civil society and the state. The unification of rights and duties of a citizen reflected in the *modus vivendi* was to neutralize some negative phenomena, for example, moral chaos, total amorality, general unscrupulousness, dishonor which posed some danger to the social system itself. Following the moral principles adopted in the community as the fundamental rules of behavior was the criterion of recognition in the choice of "friend – foe", which determined the disposition to a particular individual and an emotional atmosphere of communication, on basis of which a sense of trust and harmony between citizens was formed. The public recognition of an individual contributed to the manifestation of openness, sincerity, and goodwill towards him, which became an incentive for social cooperation, allowing overcoming material, class, and educational barriers. Otherwise, society rejected the individual, showing suspicion, doubting his moral qualities, bringing him out of the circle of mutual obligations, which is tantamount to breaking the social contract.

An agreement between the individual who perceives himself as a citizen and society that dictates moral rules provides for a mutual interest in the effectiveness of the social contract. The parties involved in the social process demonstrate mutual respect, mutual understanding, mutual assistance, thereby strengthening the principles of mutual contract in order to maximize its implementation for the benefit of the majority of population. A personal well-being in such a situation is correlated with social prosperity. The interdependence in achieving success determines the unity of purpose for social partners. On the basis of this premise, the fulfillment of the assumed moral obligations gives the individual some benefit expressed in collective recognition, expanding the space of individual opportunities. The beneficial exchange of knowledge, energy, resources and creative achievements among the parties to the social convention is pragmatic, which strengthens the motivation for its implementation. Overcoming political differences is a utilitarian function of the social contract which does not allow predilections to dominate the general civil priorities (protection of the motherland, welfare of the population, veneration of national shrines, religious worship, state stability), perceived as an absolute beginning of social communication. The causes of interpersonal conflicts were

absorbed by the agreement which involved the primary human needs.

The social contract model is based on the joint experience of significant events. The commonality of the collective feeling becomes the binding basis of civic participation. Emotional manifestations caused by events affecting the majority of citizens serve as an indicator of the relationship with the community to which the individual belongs. The affective nature of a person coincides with a potential social reaction, which is comparable to social reflexes. The spontaneity of the citizen's spiritual impulses indicates the importance of the provisions of the social contract, which were in direct connection with the survival of the individual. The variety of emotional shades caused by conflicts of social and public life is reduced to the basic constants — sense of duty, anger, fear, and love, which determine the mood in society. Filling the public atmosphere, they created the preconditions for radical changes in the political sphere.

In crisis situations of historical changes, the accumulated frustration and dissatisfaction with the situation in society became the reason for the revision of the provisions of the social contract both at the personal level and at the collective level. The existing set of customs, regulating social activities in the previous format, did not satisfy the citizen and caused a protest against the social system, which was formed into a complex of negative emotions that prevent constructive dialogue. The primacy of emotional reactions to social changes is justified by basic human needs. In case of deterioration of the possibilities of their implementation, the subject imposes responsibility on the state, society, as a structure with real powers, which casts doubt on the validity of the existing convention. Feelings expressing approval or disapproval of public initiatives are a reflection of the struggle for existence, presented in the form of a desire aimed at preserving or reforming the society, guaranteeing the territory of residence of the ethnic group, the right to certain activities, and protection from external enemies. The variability of moods, and with them the vector of civil activity generates the need to fix the basic principles of social interaction that meets the actual problems of the individual. The effective functioning of the mechanism of the social contract involves the transition of the emotional component in the form of moral custom, subsequently justified by rational conclusions. Consistency affects and logical principles determined by the need for a clear scheme of management of their passions, with which the individual is trying to balance the biological and social essence.

### III. FORMATION FEATURES OF A MORAL CONVENTION WITHIN THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

The concept of "social contract" proposed by H. Grotius and T. Hobbes as an example of a convention between citizens is included in the philosophical use in the 17th century, but its interpretation can be traced in semantic analogies in earlier periods. The collective nature of the life of the Greek Polis provided for the participation of the citizen in public events (meetings, debates, referendums,

proscription voting), which discussed political, moral, economic issues of fundamental importance for the majority of the population. The assessment of the projects or decisions submitted to society was the excited state of the listeners depending on the expected compliance with the civil aspirations. It reflected a stereotype of reactions, coming from accepted customs. The feeling of apprehension, anxiety, excitement in case of a threat to the common interests; joy, delight, triumph, as a reaction to the positive news (victory over the enemy, progress in reforms, cases of heroism and courage) pointed to the penetration of the principles of the General Convention. The most effective forms of influence on the behavior of a citizen by society were a sense of duty and a sense of shame, which determined the basis for choosing the right thing in the collective system of relationships.

The emotions experienced in the process of social contacts were the result of the perception of an unspoken agreement between compatriots, providing for the conditions of participation with others. It revealed the essence of the exchange of personal interests for social benefits, the first of which was the right to equal communication with the rest of society, not limited to moral condemnation from others. Compliance with the social agreement, which included moral requirements for the individual, was a guarantee of the power and stability of the state, which ensured the status of a free citizen. The emotional component in the potential was transformed into feats, enthusiasm, self-sacrifice, serving the common good. "For men are always exasperated at suffering injuries to which they are not accustomed, and on seeing them inflicted before their very eyes, and; and where least inclined for reflection, rush with the greatest heat to action" [14]. Affective metamorphoses, concentrated in the social atmosphere, were able to change the vectors of foreign and domestic policy of the city-state and, thus, to make adjustments to the content of the social contract in force in the territory and in the social environment. Manipulation of the feelings of the citizen took place in rhetorical speeches containing political pragmatics, which aims to turn the experiences of the listeners into favorable moods for a certain group. Attempts to use the moods of society in self-serving plans initiated the task of substantiating the principles of the social contract on the basis of rational, since reason in the perception of the Greeks was the absolute beginning.

The correspondence of the theoretical constructs of emotional expectations is one of the conditions of effectiveness of social customs. The everyday perception of moral precepts is transformed into a complex system of interrelations, which takes into account the state, social, political, religious needs, forming a causal relationship between the subjects of the Treaty. The justification of its provisions with the help of reason outlines the prospect of constructive results obtained by a citizen in case of following the logic of the relations of part and the whole. From Aristotle's point of view, the transformation of the emotional into the rational and vice versa should motivate the execution of moral instructions that represent the platform of social interaction. "For we assert that then, and only then, is there

virtue, when reason being in a good condition is commensurate with the passions, these possessing their proper virtue, and the passions with the reason; for in such a condition they will accord with one another, so that reason should always ordain what is best, and the passions being well disposed find it easy to carry out what reason ordains" [15]. In this situation, the improvement of the mind became a civil prerogative, thanks to which it became aware of the need to implement the moral requirements that stimulate the maintenance of the social Convention. Passions that cause emotional arousal, the subject of which were the arising inconsistencies in the performance by the parties of their obligations in the social contract, were balanced by the arguments of reason.

In the 17th century, the principles of individualism superseded the collective worldview typical of the medieval period of history, and dictated new grounds for social relations. The freedom granted to the citizen allowed making a choice of ways of cooperation with the society in accordance with the personal interest in the material results obtained as a result of the interaction of the parties of the social process. Social project proposed by T. Hobbes called the theory of "social contract", based on the provisions of the "natural rights" that formed under conditions of increased bourgeois influence in Europe. Its conceptual basis was the hypothesis of the priority of natural inclinations in man and the emergence of forms of social coexistence of the natural aspirations of the individual to a collective way of life, with the feelings of man determined by his instinctive nature.

The events that followed after the bourgeois revolution with its cruelty and intransigence served as the context of the theory of social contract T. Hobbes. The political aspect of the situation determined the Genesis of the formation of the moral foundations of the Convention and influenced the transformation of the individual's feelings into rational attitudes of maintaining social peace. "According to Hobbes, the basis of morals and politics is not the "law of nature", i.e. natural obligation, but the "right of nature" [16]. The natural state, which precedes the emergence of a strong social mechanism regulating interpersonal relations, appears to Hobbes as a concentration of chaos and anarchy, ignoring the observance of rules and laws. In the basic premise of the social contract, he highlights the passions that govern a person in anarchy: rivalry, distrust, ambition — combined, they activate the "war of all against all". The feeling of risk of losing the basic means of survival — food, housing, property, tools — turns into a total fear of their own kind, each of which is potentially an enemy. The aggressive atmosphere contributed to the transformation of fear into an all-consuming passion, which constituted human behavior, otherwise he became a victim of violence and he was threatened with death. The individual assesses the situation solely from the point of view of self-preservation, this is the highest priority feeling in the "natural state", and so any duties, promises and agreements lost all meaning, as contrary to the conditions of survival. The emotions experienced (indifference, conflict, insidiousness) prevented social contacts, and the egoistic nature of man, unlimited by the limits of social control, used them as an incentive to rise

above others, “and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.” [17]. Anxiety for one's own fate prompts one to seek security through strong rules that guarantee the preservation of life and property. The Convention is all about the universal moral obligations, protecting from the tyranny of permissiveness, meets the expectations of the British citizen during the times of social upheaval.

The feeling of fear is the determining factor contributing to the actualization of moral relationships. “Aversion to death” motivates the rational rejection of permissiveness of the natural state. Hobbes uses it as the foundation of the social contract, benefiting from the trials experienced by the individual, transforming them into the concept of “fear for love” (fear for love), which was the basis of a reasonable perception of human nature. The desire to overcome the emotional pressure of fear is possible only in the establishment of a lasting peace, which is declared the main preference of social existence. The transition from the natural regulator of behavior, which include affects arising in the form of reactions in the struggle for survival, to artificial norms of communication required strict control by the system, which has real power to maintain the balance of biological and social in man. “For Hobbes, *The Kingdom of Nature* is natural but unreasonable, whereas the state is reasonable but unnatural” [10].

The world is opposed to war, concentrating in itself all potential opportunities which the person in a natural state was deprived: longevity, wellbeing, comfort, respect. It focuses on the conditions under which a citizen could afford to comply with moral laws that promote a sense of inner peace, self-respect, self-esteem. Virtues, caused by reasonable grounds, created a sense of stability, reliability, prospects for life. In the social contract can be traced to the desire to overcome the emotional content, full of subjective experiences that potentially posed a danger to others. Using reason, one is able to construct situations, taking into account the benefits of moral behavior. Compliance with the social Convention, which implies moral rules in relations with fellow citizens, realizes the common desire for mutual adaptation. “That a man be willing, when others are so too, as fare-forth, as for Peace, and defense of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself” [17]. Mutual transfer of rights connects a person with others and thus makes him an equal member of the social community, which is confirmed by personal responsibility in the performance of the obligations assumed. These obligations are valid only in conditions of peaceful existence or when considered by men as a reasonable and social being.

The feeling of loneliness and isolation is replaced by rationally verified involvement with others. The long-term nature of the prescriptions was in conflict with the immediate benefits dictated by the passions but had the advantage of accessibility and clarity in understanding their own benefit in their implementation. The human mind resisted non-compliance because it was able to predict the consequences of potential anarchy. Hobbes, in building its system based on the natural feelings of man, made an artificial assumption in

the form of the state, acting as an absolute authority in the resolution of conflicts between citizens. “Nevertheless, this is an idiom of moral conduct, because the manner of this communal activity is, in fact, art and not nature” [18]. The nature of the emotional perception of reality within the political existence of man produces new feelings correlated with social existence: trust, justice, and mercy, tolerance, which are corrected by the right of punishment or approval belonging to the state. The egocentrism of the individual in the T. Hobbes system seemed to be a solid basis for relations between people, but who were forced to limit their manifestations, based on their own benefits, which coincided with social interests. The social convention did not imply a change in human nature but the establishment of a new type of moral relations based on the strongest passions, first of all — a sense of self-preservation [19] [20].

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Analysis of the moral agreement considered in the format of a social contract allows us to draw the following conclusions. The content of the social convention defining the principles of civil communication depends on the emotional atmosphere established in society as a result of coinciding of an individual's and society's interests. The experienced affects associated with the social existence of a person become a basis for the transition into rationally justified attitudes of behavior. External threats, social chaos, suppression of individual rights and adequate emotions — a sense of shame, fear, a sense of protest, identical to the feeling of freedom motivate formation in the social environment of the relevant values that determine the direction of an individual's actions and fulfillment of the obligations assumed [21]. Comparison of the social contract perspectives in antiquity, Modern times, the age of Enlightenment reveals the peculiarities of the Convention in different political situations. The commonality of civil expectations in Greek civilization considered a sense of shame before compatriots as the basis of transformation into a reasonable design of duty; a sense of fear during the English Civil War stimulated the consolidation of peace, supported by the state, as a condition of moral agreement; a sense of sympathy for fellow citizens in the era of Education determined the desire for freedom as the basis of the social contract [22]. A social agreement incorporates the most significant vectors of social and state development and stimulates formation of moral customs adequate to the historical situation at this stage of society development.

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