

The Digital World of the Future as an Evolution of the Past

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1 ABSTRACT

This article presents an extension of a discussion of ideas related to the upcoming global digitalization and the role and place of a person in the digital world. The digital environment of a human being and society was discussed in a number of reports at previous CORP conferences. This work makes an attempt to determine possible forms of our future society based on an example of historical development of human society and taking into account growing digitalization of all aspects of life. The work of N. Berdyaev “The Origins and Meaning of Russian Marxism” was used as a guide on historical retrospective.

Keywords: digital world, modern society, digitisation, human society, modernisation

2 INTRODUCTION

People have always tried to understand what human society is. Historically, the following eras stood out: primitive communal system, slave-owning and capitalism. The attempt to build communism (socialism) was unsuccessful, although it had a strong influence on the social development of mankind. The classics of Marxism distinguished the following main classes of a modern society: the peasantry, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Nowadays, such a classification does not seem to be a good one. The stratification of modern society is based on other grounds, such as the attitude to property and the level of financial capabilities of an individual and/or a family. From this perspective, in the modern industrialized state, the following social segments can be distinguished: the super-rich class, the middle class and the poor. It is believed that the sign of a healthy society is the presence of a stable “middle class” (see Fig. 1). But the presence of the middle class is based not only and not so much on the attitude to property and the presence of certain financial opportunities. Fundamental social principles also play an important role, they allow a specific group of people to live as a whole, as a state. The basis of the slave-owning system is the “slave”, which is the main productive force of this society. The concept of “slave” is of interest both from the retrospective (historical) point of view and from the point of view of prospective development of modern society. In the materials of the CORP 2019 conference, you can find a number of ideas that notice the current real danger of sliding of modern society into “digital slavery”. It is noted that now there are signs that were already witnessed at the dawn of human civilization.

Nowadays we are facing a new era of civilization and it is not clear what we should expect from the new digital world. The analysis of social revolutions shows that revolution does not always lead to progress. Sometimes, revolution pushes society to the previous cycle of evolution to repeat it. This effect has already occurred in the attempt to incorporate Marxism in the Russian Empire. The main objective of this work is to find out if revival of the digital Marxism is possible in the future digital era. It is stated by N. Berdyaev that “Marxism” comes very close to “Fascism” (in its historical realization). This topic is currently highly relevant and very important.

It is necessary to note that the history of mankind evolves in a spiral, and therefore we should expect re-occurrence of past historical events in one form or another. These days, human kind is entering a digital era. Any new era, whether it is the transition from manual labour to mechanical labour, development of capitalism, or the attempt to spread communism, was always followed by a social disruption of a certain magnitude.

Let us analyze the variant (past) of social development in Russian Empire in as an example, relying on N. Berdyaev’s work. This genius Russian scientist very clearly demonstrated the essence of Russian society, of Russian state and their interactions, and their role as a source of progress and a contributing factor in annihilation of the old Empire. This example illustrates the ideological basis on which a new era of future society, i.e. a new digital world, can be constructed.

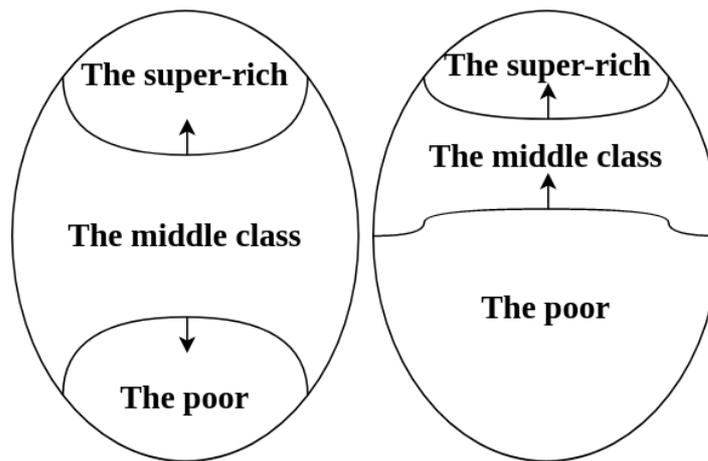


Fig. 1: Modern society: (a) a healthy society, (b) a revolutionary society.

3 REVIEW OF N. BERDYAEV'S WORK "ORIGIN AND MEANING OF RUSSIAN COMMUNISM"

In his work N. Berdyaev tried to answer this question: from where and how Russian Marxism came to be? His work goes far beyond Marxism as a doctrine and Russian Empire as a State, and has universal human significance as a fundamental theoretical study of Russian society as a whole. N. Berdyaev began to explore Russian society from the beginning of the Moscow kingdom, that means he explored it on the global historical scale. Such global scope and analysis enabled him to articulate his two famous questions: from where and how Russian Marxism came to be? Completely different from the Western version and very much different from its author's version (Marx).

According to N. Berdyaev, Russia went through an entire era of transition from the Moscow kingdom to the Stalin period. Kyiv Rus was not considered by the philosopher because, after its collapse, the civilization on the territory of Modern Russia, Ukraine and Belarus shifted its direction of development. The doctrine of Moscow as The Third Rome became the ideological basis of the Moscow kingdom's formation. Under the symbol of this messianic idea of Moscow as A Third Rome, sharp nationalization of the Church took place against the background of the Byzantine Empire's destruction. Religious and national merged together just as in minds of ancient Jews. But in the powerful State, the church began to play a service role and the Moscow kingdom became a totalitarian state. In the 17th century the most important event in the Russian history took place – a religious rift. Folk Orthodoxy severs its ties with the Church leadership and hierarchy.

The second blow to the idea of Moscow as a Third Rome was inflicted by reforms of Peter the Great. In the 19th century the conflict had taken on new forms: Russia, searching for social truth, collided with the Empire, searching for power. During that period, in the second half of the 19th century, a new cultural layer emerged in Russia. Later, that layer will be named "Intelligentsia". Raised on western teachings like Hegel, Kant, Schelling and others, that group was very much withdrawn and distant from common people. Liberal ideas were always weak in Russia. As a consequence of the divide of life in Russia, the fear effect was always present in Russia's ruling class. After the emancipation of peasants, the fear effect became predominant in the ruling class. Despite the great importance of the reforms, everyone was overwhelmed. Frustration and the divide of life in Russia were particularly clearly articulated in the work of the Great poets like Lermontov, Pushkin and others, who predicted the horrors of the forthcoming revolution almost 100 years in advance.

Catastrophic world view became typical of the majority of talented people. Russian writers of 19th and 20th centuries' felt themselves hanging over the edge. Infiltration of the West caused a critical turn in Russian soul, but in a completely different direction than in Western civilization. Russian literature and Russian thought indicate that in Imperial Russia there were no unified, cohesive culture. There was a rift between the cultural layer and the people, the old regime had no moral foundation. Everything was lining up to a revolution. Marx's doctrine of Marxism emerged from this background. The basic idea in Marxism: economy is the basis, ideology is the add-on. Marx's economic determinism exposes western man's illusions. It is very much similar to what Z. Freud did in his psychoanalysis. Marxism is not only science and

politics, it is also faith, religion and this was its strength. Lenin and the Bolsheviks set for themselves Marxism as the only orthodox, i.e. totalitarian.

Bolshevism proved in 1971 to be the most loyal to the original Russian traditions: the search for a universal social truth, Russian methods of governance and domination by violence. For Lenin, Marxism is primarily a doctrine of dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin did not assert the principle of the majority but the principle of a selected minority. Lenin denied freedom within the party and his principle applied to all of Russia. Lenin understood that a coherent doctrine, a coherent world view and binding symbols are needed. The doctrine of Lenin justifies a totalitarian doctrine that covers the totality of life. It covers not only politics and economics, but also thought and consciousness, all the creativity of culture. Such doctrine can only be matter of faith. The revolution in Russia led to the old kingdom being replaced by a new kingdom. The totalitarianism and demand of a holistic faith as the basis of the kingdom correspond to the deep religious instincts of the people. The soviet State was very similar in its spiritual construction to Moscow's Orthodox Kingdom. It, too, was suffocating. Socialism is quietly morphing into a kind of Russian fascism. Its features are: a totalitarian state, state capitalism, nationalism, chieftain, and, as a base – a militarized youth. The mission of Russian people is the realization of social truth in human society. The concept of freedom in Russia refers exclusively to the collective, not to the individual. The value of N. Berdyaev's work is that he clearly showed how easily false prophets can play on the instincts of a whole nation by changing names and slogans, but, in fact, not changing anything, can lead the society back where it tried to escape from. This historical example should be a handbook for anyone trying to understand what awaits our society in the near digital future, which is almost inevitable.

4 CONTRADICTION BETWEEN SOCIETY AND STATE

The modern world undergoes a process of dehumanization, just as it did at the dawn of the Christianity. In F. Engels' work "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State" a scientific approach and analysis of the development of human civilization is outlined. F. Engels clearly showed that the foundation of such phenomena as family, private property and state, is an economic basis. This foundation seems to be the foundation of a modern society today. But as the Bible states: "Man shall not live by bread alone...".

As N. Berdyaev showed, the ideological superstructure begins to play a decisive role in determining historical truth. Nevertheless, one can wonder whether F. Engels' ideas about the basics and N. Berdyaev's ideas about the superstructure in the era of complete digitalization, i.e. the digital world of the future, are still relevant. It can be assumed that in a digital world the basic human values, society and state will remain. But the devil is in the details. What would be the leading ideology of such a society that will allow to organize life in such society? An analysis of numerous literature shows that human nature, its essence, has remained virtually unchanged throughout human history. Therefore, as in the past, humanity will be driven by two fundamental things: economics (as the basis) and ideology (as a superstructure). That is why, in the digital world (DW), the main issue will remain the same as before: the attitude of man to property.

In this aspect, we already have three layers of people with huge contradictions between them. Here we are talking about a smaller layer of super-rich people, the middle class and the poor. And under such circumstances, the ideas discussed in N. Berdyaev's work are more relevant than ever. We need the clear understanding of the following:

- What is the fundamental idea of the whole society that can unite all three layers?
- What power is and what are its methods of control?
- What is faith or what is its equivalent?

As a derivative from all the above concepts we get the concept of "freedom". What is individual freedom, whether there is one at all, what is collective freedom and the reciprocal relationship of these freedoms.

In such a society, as N. Berdyaev showed, contradictions are inevitable, and the main task is to prevent these contradictions from becoming antagonistic and leading to a social explosion on one hand and modern slavery on the other.

There are already some very bad trends in modern society. The main one is the blurring of the concept of ownership and the "sagging" of the middle class and its reduction. Continuation of this trend will inevitably lead society to destruction.

5 THE “SELECTED MINORITY” PRINCIPLE

Historically (for objective reasons), all socio-historical formations had a relatively small ruling elite. Small in number, compared to the rest of the population of a particular state. This is objectively due to the simple fact that there is not enough wealth for everyone. Moreover, the ruling elite always tries to accumulate in their hands the maximum of material and public goods and wealth, which can be used as levers to control the main mass of the population. But it is difficult, almost impossible, to manage the society only with material resources and the leverage of power. That is why at all times in the history of human development, there has been an ideology that came in various manifestations and forms. The most common form of such ideology is religion. Implementation of religion in the society has taken many forms. In Western Europe, it is represented by the Holy See, headed by the Pope, with Catholicism as the religious basis. In this case, Religion is clearly separated from the State. This way, the State power and the Church hierarchy were separated. In Byzantine there was another form, in which religion was united with the state, with state power, and was practically in the service of the state. In this case, as was noted by N. Berdyaev, happens an acute nationalization of the Church and, as a result, two fundamental essences of society, ideology and economics (as the basis of the state) merge into one, one serves the other. This leads to a totalitarian state in which the religious side and the nationalist one merge.

On one hand, this situation is very convenient for the ruling elite, but on the other hand, it is a source of deadly danger and great opposition. It creates a chronic effect of fear of the ruling elite and suppression of the grass roots. And yet, despite objective shortcomings and threats, the principle of “selected minority” continues to work, even under the guise of democracy. It is just harder to detect and trace here.

6 THE CONCEPT OF FAITH

The concept of “faith” continues to play a fundamental role in the history of human civilization. Since the birth of the concept of “state” all rulers and the ruling class have used the concept of “faith” as a symbol of a particular religion in their own interests. A new concept of “faith”, a new religion, usually appears at a time of total dehumanization and degradation of human society.

This is how Christianity emerged, practically on the ruins of the Roman Empire, and how the relatively young religion “Islam” gains an incentive against the background of the degradation of Christianity.

The concept of “faith” is not necessarily tied only to religion in its classical form (if we may say so).

This idea (the idea of “faith”) was also successfully used by the Bolsheviks in Russia, who turned Marx’s teachings into a new kind of Religion. The Nazis did the same in Nazi Germany. That way, we have sufficient reasons to believe that the “Digital world” or rather the transition of modern society to the DW will be accompanied by the rise of a new religion and new faith, capable to unite the society, the individuals and the collective.

An important observation arises: how to avoid the inevitable contradictions to which N. Berdyaev drew attention. How the elites, who run the society, “the selected minority”, can govern the DW of the future? Unlike the former times, today’s digital society has a fundamental difference from previous eras. First of all, currently almost every individual has the ability to receive and give information about themselves and also has many other opportunities. Under these conditions, a “faith” crisis can happen almost instantaneously.

7 INTRODUCTION OF THE CONCEPT OF “HERMENEUTIC TRIANGLE”

The permanent presence of the “fear effect” in the ruling class and the dissatisfaction of the lower classes require continuous ideological work to maintain a stable social situation. This is with the proviso that the economic situation is relatively stable. No ideological “lotions”, will save a society, except for the despotic regime. One of the recent examples is the collapse of the USSR. Apparently, for the modern DW the old ways of ideological work are clearly not enough.

Therefore, one should address the framework of a person's perception of information. Today, a person consumes basic information from computer networks. And it is very important to figure out: is it the very same information that a person has gotten used to over a thousand-year history, or is it a little bit of everything and of something else. Information in a modern network, on a computer, can take various forms: it can be data, measurements, knowledge systems and much more. At the same time, a person has an important property—an ability that is called “understanding”. In philosophy, the problem of understanding is

studied by its special branch – hermeneutics, which emerged from the science of understanding texts. The basic idea of hermeneutics may be reduced to the scheme of a “hermeneutic triangle” (HT, Fig. 2)

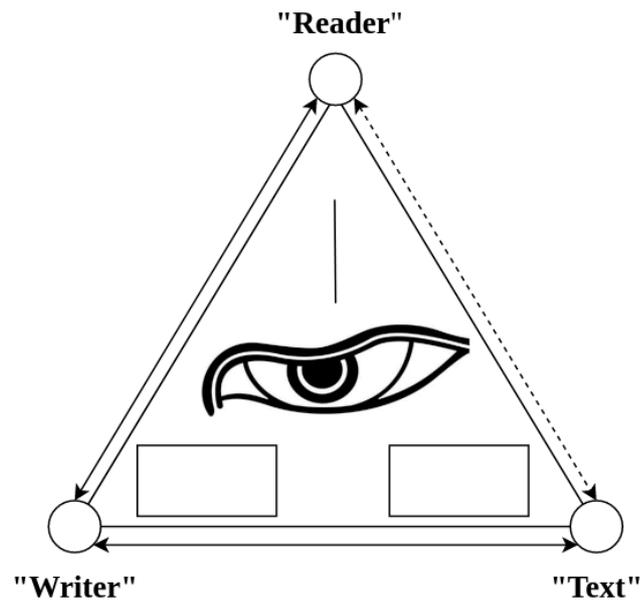


Fig. 2: Hermeneutic triangle

Figure 2 presents the interaction of three entities: “Writer”, “Text” and “Reader”. We will use this idea (HT) as a metaphor, as a fundamental principle. Everything that circulates in the World Wide Web (WWW) can be reduced to this principle. Through the new information entity (text), the “Writer”, that created this entity, acts willingly or unwillingly upon the “Reader”, who reads, watches or uses the “Text”. (The text is a collective name, that may present everything that is produced in the WWW and that carries any information). Thus, it makes sense to say that the Writer influences the Reader through the Text.

In the light of the above, such a metaphor as HT can be perceived as a new mechanism for concentrated ideology expression, in the ideal case brought to the level of religion. The History of Russia, expounded by N. Berdyaev, serves as the historical example that represents the use of ideology by a ruling class. N. Berdyaev depicted that kingdom based on power and orthodox religion was reborn (very rapidly for a historical scale) into the kingdom of power based on Marxism as a new religion. And from this we can deduce that future DW may prove to be the perfect medium for new “digital slavery” formation. It is possible to achieve unprecedented controllability of modern society using and/or uniting under the concept of DW all the set of modern computer tools, technologies, methods of artificial intelligence. For that to happen, it is essential to find the opportunity (the need) to justify the fusion of authoritarian power and new religion based on the concept of “faith” in order to avoid problems with open discussions and demands for proof. In this case, the meaning and the content of new religion do not matter. Recent color revolutions and different grass-root movements show that “proper” tuning of HT provides stunningly quick results. And there is no need for serious ideological training or construction of different theories, in other words for creation of theoretical and/or ideological basis for a new religious theory. Nowadays there is an eternal number of ideas about how to form a “new religion”. Potentially, new DW kings may set up a new religion or upgrade an old one rather quickly. There is also a probability of fairly quick replacement of one religion with another, taking into account the fact that human society is fixed historically on searching for social truth, while any state seeks power that can sustain this state both from the inside and the outside.

Consequently, future DW can not avoid contradictions between society and government power, between different population classes: the super-rich class, the middle class, the poor. The concern of authorities that serve the upper class will be the process of sustaining an “illusion” of some kind of unifying idea for the whole society. Although, in reality, it is not possible to find such an idea besides global cataclysms and wars. In a peculiar way, this illusion may be projected through the middle class and also through different power structures, whose main activity will shift into cyber domain. However, the fear effect in the ruling class will not disappear. The level of this fear will be determined by the number and capacity of power structures and the degree of their activity. If it is not possible to avoid antagonistic contradictions between classes of future

DW, then creation of one whole cultural and spiritual space is out of question. In this case, the ruling class will always retain the feeling of loss of the moral lever, religious apparatus (democracy, church eparchy) will also start to degenerate at full speed, resulting in serious stratification. Since the question of the attitude of each individual to property will remain the main issue of the DW, the economic platform and the ideological superstructure implemented through the HT system will begin to turn into a mind illusion, which means that the same situation will appear as in the psychoanalysis of Z. Freud.

8 IDEOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS OF THE FUTURE DIGITAL WORLD

Modernization and improvement of the HT inevitably leads to a complication of the hierarchy and complexity of mathematical support (MS) and software, which, in turn, results in an increasing number of vulnerabilities and various kinds of “holes” and “rabbit holes”. That enables members of various segments of society to “travel” through that holes, provided they are able to understand that they are dealing with two types of illusions: economic and ideological.

At the same time, both illusions are controlled by the same elite. The concept of “faith”, that is fundamental for whole conscious life of the DW, will inevitably begin to erode. The inevitable crisis will hit, making all segments of the society equally dissatisfied. The upper layer understands that it is unable to control and adequately evaluate all the processes that are taking place. The lower layers understand that they live in a world of illusions, and not in the real world, and that they are simply being exploited for the unknown benefit. Also, every individual starts to understand that he has nothing to do with real property, and the real owners are hidden for him. It will be more and more apparent to the masses of the people that there is a real danger that digital society can become an orthodox and totalitarian system. Old methods of governing and dominating through violence (and there can be no other in a totalitarian state) will inevitably begin to fail. Once again, a critical problem of reorganization of society and transfer of power will arise. But, first of all, it will be necessary to solve the issue of property. And the process of power transferring is not a trivial moment itself. In any case, at least at the intermediate stage, the power will belong to the “elected minority”. And after that it is crucial for real democratic transformation to happen, a true one, not the disguised version that led to the Russian revolution in 1917. It is also very important for the politics and the economy to be separated from thought, consciousness, creativity, culture and religion. Only in these circumstances evolutionary transformations in DWs are conceivable. Politics and economics should not be subjects of “faith”, namely a new religion. Otherwise, the “old kingdom” will be quietly replaced by the “new kingdom” and society will be doomed again.

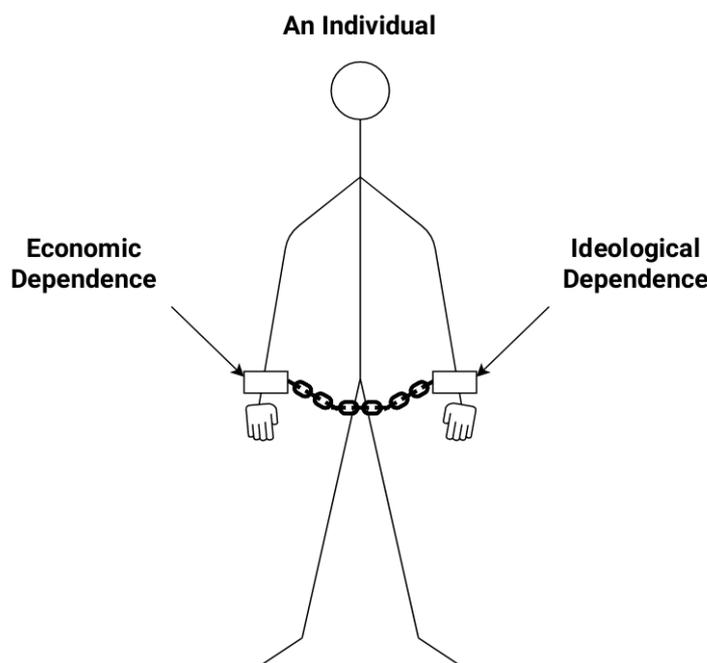


Fig. 3: The basis of slavery.

Special attention should be paid to the following signs of the kingdom: totalitarian state, state capitalism, nationalism, leadership mania (cult of the leader), militarized youth. One also needs to pay attention to the

concept of “freedom”. This concept should apply only to the individual. A shift of an individual freedom into collective freedom should be prevented. Otherwise, the process of dehumanization of DW will inevitably start, as it happened time and time again throughout the history of mankind.

9 PRECONDITIONS OF DIGITAL SLAVERY FORMATION

In our opinion, a very successful definition of slavery is given in the work of B. Spinoza: “Man’s lack of power to moderate and restrain the affects”. There are a number of factors or conditions that are necessary to form a platform to create slavery, the main of which are (see Fig. 3):

- Ideological (spiritual, religious) dependence.
- Economic dependence. The ideal option is the absence or illusion of property.

The essence of the slave was described very properly by F. Nietzsche: “The Enlightenment causes revolt, for the slave desires the unconditioned, he understands nothing but the tyrannous, even in morals, he loves as he hates, without NUANCE, to the very depths, to the point of pain, to the point of sickness—his many HIDDEN sufferings make him revolt against the noble taste which seems to DENY suffering”.

Let us consider in more detail the conditions for the formation of slavery:

(A) Ideological dependence.

The digital world allows to increase significantly the influence on person’s spiritual world to almost unprecedented levels. It is due to the fact that the HT forms and adapts very quickly. Examples of this phenomenon are: the organization of colour revolutions, various public mass movements, sects, the organization of riots, etc.

This fact also determines the sustainability and danger of ideas of the Islamic State (IS) and similar phenomena. Digital opportunities allow not only to spread ideological, religious and other forms of propaganda, but also serve as means of organizing and managing various events (strikes, rallies, terrorist acts, etc.).

(B) Economic dependence

The economic dependence of the individual can be realized through deprivation of property. There are various ways to deprive a person of property:

- By force: property is simply taken away on a pretext, or without it.
- Bank lending system, including long-term (up to 25 years or more). Nowadays loans are issued for almost everything. Loans for single housing (real estate) are considered to be especially dangerous. In this case, the individual becomes “bank’s serf”, tied also to this real estate and to the job that pays for the loan.
- A system of cashless money, electronic financial instruments that attach the individual to a specific banks. It is not only about the person being controlled completely, but any minute for various reasons his access to financial resources and tools can be blocked, and he will remain with absolutely nothing, “an ideal slave”.
- Stock and securities markets. The owners of these specialties are the owners of virtual property, which can be lost almost instantly, for various reasons: market fluctuations, the decision of law enforcement agencies and/or other departments, etc.
- Precious metals and jewellery, which can be officially evaluated and traded only in special organizations (banks) with state control.

Under certain conditions, the above dependencies turn a person into a modern slave. Conditions for the small and a part of the medium-sized business are approximately the same. The life span of such business is extremely limited, and it has a very small chance of survival in a totalitarian (and even in a democratic) state. This type of business plays a role of plankton in a democratic state. In a totalitarian one it is simply not needed. In most cases, it can function normally only in the form of affiliated structures of state-owned companies or large private companies. The probability of vertical growth of small and medium-sized businesses is almost zero. In other words, development plan from small to medium to large business is practically impossible. Small and medium-sized businesses can emerge as a source of serious business only

artificially, in someone's interests. Spontaneously, such an opportunity exists only if at some point the owner of small business is replaced, which makes a vertical elevator phenomena only a formal illusion.

10 CONCLUSION

This work presents an attempt to shape the challenges of the future human society, based on the example of evolution of man, community and state. Analysis of N. Berdyaev's work allowed us to pinpoint a number of important issues:

- The essence of a human in a global historical scale remains practically unchanged.
- Human society conceals in itself a set of challenges and contradictions.

Consequently, it can be easily assumed that the future digital society will not avoid “old” problems associated with both an individual and a society.

New technological means, the development of digital technologies, systems and methods of artificial intelligence, act undoubtedly as catalysts for scientific and technological progress and the development of society as a whole.

Nonetheless, they also lead us to old problems. And the problem of “digital slavery” is by no means mythical. The emergence of this threat has objective preconditions, and the task of progressive humanity is to avoid the sliding of the future society into this shameful development spiral. N. Berdyaev showed an example of such a metamorphosis of human society. His work surprisingly logically shows how the 1917 revolution degraded back into the “new-old Moscow kingdom”. Slogans mingled, but the deep essence, the fundamental basis of the old kingdom remained.

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