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The choice concept in modern psychological science

The article is devoted to the analysis of the choice ideas in foreign and native psychology, distinguishing of the choice characteristics from a position of various psychological approaches and directions, ordering of the choice characteristics according to a number of criteria.

Key words: *the choice, the choice of neurosis, the neurotic's choice, the choice of own life direction, the choice types, healthy development of personality, the choice of prevailing need, the scenary choice, freedom of choice, the willed choice, the choice activity, the choice situation, the choice of possibilities, the choice as the life activity regulation, ways of the choice's studying, the choice characteristics.*

Fast speed of modern life and prompt social changes constantly put the person before necessity to choose. In psychology the choice is more often investigated from the point of view of its result, than from the point of view of its process; while some process characteristics of the choice are designated theoretically, they are insufficiently studied empirically. A situation developed in the psychological science and practice necessarily demands the careful empirical research of choices made by personality. Meanwhile a necessary condition of the experimental studying of any psychological phenomenon is its theoretical definition. With a view of decision of the named problem there has been carried out an ordering of the choice ideas available in the native and foreign psychological literature.

In the most general form we consider the choice as the subject's development of a decision in a situation of comparison of various alternatives. In sociology there is studied the choice of a level and style of life [13]; in philosophy there is studied the person's choice of own essence, vital prospects and senses [5]. In foreign and native psychology the choice is considered from a position of its various approaches and directions.

Within the limits of the psychodynamic direction the choice is considered as the style determined by physiology and ontogenesis the person. In works of Z. Freud there has been noted the connection of the choice features with a character of psychosexual development, mutual relations with parents, protective mechanisms and the sublimation ability [15]. Psychoanalysts more often consider the neurosis choice [10] and the choice of the object of love [11]. "This process is the nonintellectual procedure of the choice between various and equally realizable possibilities. The choice



of the object of love has the irreversible and defining character, which the subject makes at a certain decisive moment of his history" [11, p. 115]; it is connected with changes in the subject's personality [22]. Thus, the choice is predetermined by the physiological organization and personal history; it is nonintellectual, irreversible, influences all further human life.

K. Horney, in her psychological conception, considers the neurotic's choice. This choice is caused by the prevailing way of the basal anxiety overcoming, namely: 1) submission to others' opinion; 2) direct statement of any, probably unreal, program of development; 3) avoiding of the choice problem as such; 4) love reception at any cost; 5) persuasive passion to accumulation [25]. K. Horney also notices that elections of men and their great achievements in the public and professional life are caused by "envy to motherhood" [5]. The choice is global, physiologic, pathologic, depended on a sex.

In the individual psychology of A. Adler the choice is caused by a balance of inferiority-superiority, social adaptation level, birth order, ability to cooperation. The normal person's choices are realization of his vital style and movement on the way of realization of socially useful activity. Bad social adaptation conducts to the development of the inferiority feeling which overcoming is connected with the superiority complex occurrence. At the same time, being only combined with the person's ability to cooperation, the superiority motivation can provide success. Personality chooses some direction of own life, thus it, on the one hand, is influenced by the individual features and family roles, and, on the other, should possess some abilities for success achievement [1]. The choice is global, connected with motivation of success.

Distinctions between people in the ability to choose are marked in the collective psychology of K.G. Jung [28]. He speaks about the existence of two typical attitudes towards the object of perception: introversion and extraversion, which being connected with prevalence of one of four cognitive processes, are concretized in eight personal types, each of which has the distinctive choice ways.

1. The choice of the extroversive-intuitive type of personality differs by the presence of the waiting attitude of contemplation and scrutinizing.
2. The choice of the extroversive-cogitative type of personality is carried out proceeding from the objectively focused intellectual formula; everything that corresponds to it is truthful.
3. The choice of the extroversive-feeling type of personality is carried out proceeding from the feelings adapted by upbringing to objective situations and the all-significant values.
4. For the choice of the extroversive-sensing personality the objects causing the strongest sensations are the decisive ones.
5. The choice of the introversive-intuitive type of personality is carried out on the basis of internal unconscious images, at the account of the moral and esthetic party of the future act; this is the choice of the mystic-dreamer or the artist.
6. The choice of the introversive-cogitative personality is carried out on the basis of own ideas.



7. In the choice of the introversive-feeling type of personality the deep internal feelings are broken outside in the form of acts.
8. The choice of the introversive-sensing type of personality is carried out proceeding from the way the objective irritant existing at present is reflected by the subject: "sometimes he is to act according to the unconsciousness image" [28]. Here the choice is individual and personal.

In the self-actualization psychology of A. Maslow the choice is the necessary element of the personality's healthy development. During each life moment the person is in the choice condition, "being forced to choose between safety and development. Thus any choice can be wise: from the development point of view or from the self-defense position" [14, p. 75]. Personality sorts out actual needs and solves what and how much should be satisfied first of all. Having stopped on the lowest needs' satisfaction, the person remains in safety, aspiring to development and self-actualization the person chooses the behavior conducting to the highest and meta-needs' satisfaction. The choice is characterized by dependence on the concrete person's hierarchy of needs; it is constant, wise.

In the cognitivism (G. Kelly) the choice can be considered as the result of alternative constructs sorting. Personality limits available alternative constructs (hypotheses) to the quantity most comprehensible to a given situation and solves what alternatives can be used. During the whole life personality sorts the constructs (alternatives) until would find parameters for the future elections. Thus, the constructs' change inevitably conducts to the change of criteria of elections' fulfillment [26]. The choice is selective, limited, set by the system of constructs used by the person.

According to the foreign psychology motivation theories (G. Atkinson, G. Heikhaugen), personality makes the choice proceeding from a prevailing motive. Prevalence of the motive is empirically counted as the weight factor for the problem-decision attractiveness. It is the resultant valency – product of advantage (value) of the event and expectation (probability of occurrence) of the significant event: success or failure. In the valency it is possible to distinguish the force of the motive of success achievement or failure avoiding and attractiveness of success achievement or failure avoiding at decision of the given problem. The expectation is displayed on the estimation of own ability and the realized difficulty of the problem [24]. Thus, the choice is situational, depends on the dominating motivation and self-appraisal.

In the scenary theory of E. Bern the choice can be carried out on the basis of the scenario which has been often unconsciously transferred to children by parents in the form of some rigidly fixed samples of behavior. The scenario is formed in the childhood (till 5–6 years) and connected with all components of parents' personality. "The motivating influence at construction of the life plan proceeds from the Child of the parent of an opposite sex. The adult condition of the parent of the same sex gives samples, the behavior program to the person. Parental conditions of both parents provide him with behavior rules and instructions making his antisenario" [3, p. 11]. It is important the parents' desire to transfer and the child's possibility to accept the scenario. So, the



scenary behavior provides the person with possibility to make elections on the model given by parents, however the active personal position of the choosing makes the scenario overcoming and own life management possible [3].

A problem of the possibility of own destiny management and the fulfillment of independent acts is closely connected with the scenary theory. Many scientists consider it from the point of view of the freedom of choice, free will, possibility to change for the better. The decision of this question is both recognition of the person's freedom, and the declaration of the necessary character of our life. The choice unfreedom is the result of the false self-identification: the person can't choose, what I he is to be, just as he can't choose, what I he would like to be: the situation chooses [17]. The person's healthy development is "an infinite chain of the free choice situations in which the person stays during each life moment" [14, p. 75]. The sensation of the open choice is very significant – when the person is free – "to become himself or to hide behind a facade,... to live or to die" [28, p. 244]. The society should give a possibility of such choice to the person [1], but only the person can make this choice: only the recognition of the subjective choice presence makes people free [28]. Free not only from, but also for – free to become independent; free to be various, instead of to possess the various [23], free to self create [16], to find the life sense, clearly to represent and achieve aims [21]. Awakening of the person is the important point: transition from "it have to" to "I have to", to finding of true independence [16], to comprehension of the life sense [21]. "The destiny of each person is defined, first of all, by him, by his ability to think and reasonably to relate to everything occurring in world around. The person plans his own life by himself" [3, p. 173]. Thus, the choice is free, comprehended and realized, causes independence, responsibility, development of the person. Difficulties on the self-cognition and self-development way force the person to make choices set from without (for example, the scenary).

Within the limits of the cultural-historical approach of L.S. Vigotsky there are distinguished a choice reaction and a willed choice. The first is a manifestation of organism's functions, struggle for the general motor field, live process of occurrence, establishment, closing of the reaction resulting in some movement. There is no true willed choice here. The accumulation of personal experience and occurrence of motives underlies the possibility to choose at will. At the willed choice the personality's role is maximum: it actively resolves the struggle of motives for the realization of either activity. The basic characteristics of the willed choice are its great complexity and earlier realization (even before action) in comparison with the choice reaction [6]. The true choice is characterized by the presence of will, complexity, before-activity, motivation, the dependence on personality's experience.

In the activity theory the choice is defined as "the difficultly organized activity having its motivation and the operational structure, possessing the internal dynamics, sensitive to features of the object and regulated by the subject" [12, p. 98]. On the basis of the presence of the choice alternatives and criteria for their comparison there are distinguished simple, sense and personal choices.



1. The simple one is the decision-making activity in the situation of comparison of some alternatives on the known to the subject criterion. The choice is intuitive, automated, reduced, isn't dependent on personal characteristics; it appears as the programmed mechanical act solving tasks of optimization on the basis of the set algorithm.
2. At the sense choice the subject compares qualitatively different alternatives for finding of the bases having some sense. Choosing, the person each time all over again carries out rather developed activity, rejecting some vital relations without rational enough basis, risky.
3. The personal or existential choice is carried out in critical life situations when the subject is given neither the criteria of alternatives' comparison, nor the alternative. This choice has very difficult operational structure. The choice alternatives' construction and the person's readiness for the greatest number of events' variants are provided with internal personal preconditions [12].

Within the limits of the activity paradigm the choice is provided with alternative-ness, personalityness, motivation, presence of the dynamical, developed and difficult structure.

In the personal-activity approach it is considered that the presence of several competing kinds of activity demands a value choice realization from the person. A.G. Asmolov characterizes the value choice by free operating with senses and values: in the vital situations the person transforms, and in critical – creates new senses and values [2]. So, the value choice is based on the active and operating position of personality; it is characterized by the person's ability to reflection of value-sense formations and their flexible correction.

Within the limits of the approach connecting the choice and consciousness of the person, V.F. Safin offers a "choice situation" concept as "the concrete form of self-consciousness manifestation, consciously directed by the subject on definite purposes, selection of means and ways of their achievement" [19, p. 78]. The choice situation defines the ascent of a higher level of development of personality; its result is the intention transformation into the intelligent purpose. Depending on the expansion or reduction of social contacts V.F. Safin distinguishes a positive and negative choice; depending on prospective time of the purpose realization – a strategic, tactical and situational choice. The choice proceeds in the form of the decision and its realization in life on the basis of the subject's comprehension and correlation of his "I want", "I can", "I have" and the requirements claimed to the person by the social environment. Experience of the purposes not achievement leads to the person's comprehension of contradictions between intrinsic forces. The decision of these contradictions is carried out by transformation – at the coincidence of senses – group or public needs, possibilities, requirements into personal formations of the subject; that is the content of the psychological mechanism of the person's self-determination [19]. Thus, the choice is personal, conscious and self-conscious, target, sense, caused by features of the concrete social environment,



providing self-determination of the person, demands regard for means, ways, time of the purpose achievement.

Realizing the approach considering the choice in the context of possibilities, A.A. Komlev defines the choice as the set of possibilities, the dynamic process of preference of one of a fan of available possibilities, as the result of elective activity – the possibility taken into a shape of decision, as much as possible answering to the purpose achievement. The choice is carried out proceeding from known possibilities potentially cognizing by the person. The vital choice, differed by a time generality, actualizing in points of the subject's transition into qualitatively new condition and being a turning-point on his life course, is subdivided into the existential, moral and social choice [9]. Here the choice is limited by knowledge experience; it is dynamical and simultaneously static, optimum.

The regulatory approach to the analysis of psychic phenomena postulates the choice specificity on each of levels of life activity regulation, offers to distinguish the following choices according to a content.

1. The choice as the nervous signals' regulation – depending on the structure of own organs the individual makes either movements and actions.
2. The choice as the movement's execution caused by perception; it is characterized by absence of intention, search of alternatives and under control of the integral subject.
3. The choice of the action's variants on the basis speech-thinking regulation. Personality, proceeding from own motives and purposes, chooses voluntary, consciously, purposely. It operates the choice by means of words and thoughts, however is limited by available degrees of freedom.
4. The choice at will level, differs by the necessity of choice of an alternative among different variants of programs concerning the same level of the mentally reflected hierarchy of values. Personality makes the choice of whole activity that demands engaging of will power and considerable willed efforts [4]. Thus, the willed choice differs by voluntariness, premeditation, consciousness, comprehension, subordination to the subject.

The decision-making theories traditionally considered the choice in situations of the decision of sensory (Zabrodin U.M.) and cogitative (Tikhomirov O.K.) tasks, and last years in risk situations (D. Kaneman, A. Tversky, E.A. Savina, H.T. Vang). At the decision of sensory and cogitative tasks in the internal plan personality operates with sensual and intellectual images, estimates probability of a result correct answer/achievement, aspires to choose the most optimum way of decision. Training promotes the fulfillment of more quantities of successful choices. Thus, success depends on personality's qualities and training of individual properties [7, 20]. In researches of the choice features in risk situations there was revealed influence of the task's content (framing-effect) on the risky decision acceptance. This cultural-universal mechanism is more often observed in the female sample, rather than in the male one [8, 19]. Here the basic features of the choice are optimality, correctness, dependence on the problem's



content, sexual and personal features, training level of the choosing.

Our research interest to the choice problem demands the review of methodical ways of its studying. There can be offered the following ways of the choice studying.

1. Experimental. Here they set some experimental situation to the investigated: according to the person's activity and ways of its decision there are made the conclusions about behavior in the choice situation.
2. Natural. The choice is studied proceeding from the features of the social situation of development: there are investigated ways of thinking and behavior of the concrete social-age group: for example, schoolboys, students, graduates of pedagogical university, young medical experts.
3. The choice studying through research of the answers set by the instruction in the test form.
4. Research of the person's vital choice in conditions of change of values and the life sense as a result of various life events, such as illness, love, marriage, birth of the child.

Thus, the choice is both the process, and the result of this process. Within the limits of various psychological directions and approaches the choice is defined and studied by criteria of personality's spheres (personal, motivated, value-sense, nonintellectual, free, premeditated, purposeful, limited by knowledge experience and organization of this experience); consciousness participation (conscious, self-conscious), level of mental regulation of behavior and activity of the person (willed, voluntary); individual features of the person (physiologic, ontogenetic, pathologic); efficiency of the choice (optimum), presence of the choice alternatives (alternative, selective), structures (dynamism, displaying character and complexity of the structure), reversibility (irreversible) and scale (global).

In various degree the choice is the realized process of the person's development of a decision on the basis of comparison of various alternatives in a concrete time situation. The choice completeness is mainly estimated by the result's presence, instead of by time limits, and not by the stage character. Dynamics of the choice is considered in a context of the subject's confidence in own choice, occurrences of doubts in the preference of either alternative.

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