



Prokofyeva N.V.

Features of the moral and ethical reflection of the modern adult

The article deals with the analysis of such a complex and multifaceted phenomenon as a moral reflection. This paper follows the idea of special relevance of the study of moral and ethical development of modern personality and the real needs of both science and society in a new psychological understanding of this phenomenon. The work summarizes the views on these issues formed within the humanistic-oriented branches of psychology, draws a parallel between moral reflection and successful personal development, and demonstrates the need for both individuals and society to create awareness and moral responsibility for it. The empirical part the article presents the results of the first phase of an experimental study of moral and ethical reflection of the modern adult and outlines the prospects for further progress of the experiment.

Keywords: *moral and ethical development, moral and ethical reflection, moral and ethical autonomy, responsibility, self-reflection, personal development, self-realization.*

The problem of studying the moral development gets a special relevance in the modern Russian society. The previous system of moral values and ideals was rejected, traditions and social regulators that operated in the past was entirely destroyed. Many people are in a situation of existential and ideological vacuum, they lose the meaning of life, which leads them to the need to find support inside them, to ensure their own ability of directing and regulating their life. Need for personal moral and ethical autonomy has increased, which involves self-selection, decision-making and fulfillment of certain actions on the basis of intrinsic criteria, taking into account their own psychological characteristics.

Moral and ethical development as a component of personal development – this is the way a person lifetime long. This complex, multifaceted process implies both psychological maturity and spiritual formation.

For modern psychologists this is quite obvious. But solely the reflection of significance of the process on the necessity of individual moral development is not sufficient to answer the questions what leads modern man to total frustration, to inability to be a full-fledged creator of own life and, to create a quality of life that inspires and leads him to the full disclosure of himself in the context of contemporary realities of life. There is a real need, both science and society in the new psychological understanding of this category.



There are a little bit works devoted to this subject despite the fact, that under the national culture mechanisms of transmitting spiritual and moral values is incredibly complicated, healthy socialization of young people is difficult, and there are no social programs to help adult with understanding of and adherence to its own true values.

Due to the obvious “complicated reality” of modern times and the speed, the reality of the modern environment changes, the need for the study of personal qualities that help a person to effectively build its vital reality, while maintaining their integrity and individuality raises [6]. Many modern psychologists have pointed out that the necessary elements for this is the desire for personal development (self-realization) and the capacity for moral and ethical reflection. The relationship of these trends led us to our scientific interest.

The complex realities of our time dictate the need for translation of moral categories from the ideal to the real field, which every man understands as his development field [10].

Person develops morally in stages, gradually learning the meanings of his life by organizing own crystal of life values and priorities, which allows him to bear the full responsibility for himself and his life. “At the stage of assimilation of ethical standards through a system of personal values the person, using all the mechanisms of the generation of meaning, comes to “positing” of meanings when the meaning of comprehended content is revealed through the specific existential act in which the subject sets the value of something in his life by his conscious and responsible decision” [1, p. 49].

The capacity for self-reflection (the ability to assess the past, analyze the present and plan for the future); the ability to self-willed and healthy behavior; responsible attitude to the world, to himself, to surrounding; a critical assessment and choice of own values system and ability to develop on this basis creatively and professionally – all these concepts are modern psychologists believe to be the key to ethical and moral development of healthy personality.

Based on the theoretical analysis and review of empirical studies, we set the scope of empirically measured different level constructs, which have relevance to the moral reflection and the phenomenon of self-development, that meet the logic of our study. Such constructs are: the level of belonging to a moral issue; moral settings coming from the degree of importance of certain moral categories for the individual; the level of moral education; the level of development of the sense sphere (meaningfulness, richness of life, satisfaction with self-realization, the presence of meaning in life and life goals); orientation of responsibility in the form of internal or external locus



of control; the overall level of reflection; the desire for self-realization. Psychometric methods, which measure these constructs, were included into the prepared test battery.

Exploring the concept of “moral and ethical reflection”, we are appealing to the semantic field that exists in modern psychological understanding of this problem, and rely on the degree of elaboration of this problem in the context of acceptable for today, because 20 years ago these categories had quite other content and were interpreted quite differently. An investigation of moral and ethical standards includes two trends: the first – the understanding of man as a social individual who follows public morality, the second (the modern approach) – the understanding of man as a person who aspires to perfection (self-fulfillment, maturity, individuation, integrity), and understanding of morality as the way to the inner self improvement.

Until the 60's in the West and until the mid 90's of XX century in Russia the freedom of choice of person was excluded, the responsibility for moral education was given to society, and all the moral choices of people had to be subordinated to purely social utility.

For the first time the problem of moral and ethical self-determination in terms of free choice of the person appeared in the existential-humanistic school, the main representatives of which are D. Byudzhenal, K. Rogers, A. Maslow, E. Fromm, V. Frankl, R. May. Scientists of this area have first talked about issues of self-realization, focusing on the spiritual and value component of development and on implementation of the internal spiritual content of the personality.

In Russia within of non-classical psychology this problem was studied by B.G. Bratus, E.V. Galazhinsky, V.E. Klochko, D.A. Leontyev, S.L. Bratchenko and as part of the spiritual and moral psychology by B.S. Bratus, V.I. Slobodchikov, F.E. Vasylyuk.

Understanding of the nature of man as a being a free, responsible, having the dual nature as material and as spiritual, which also does not deny his sociality, was formed within humanistic oriented directions. It lets talk about the problems of moral and ethical issues of self-determination and self-realization as two inter-related and mutually initiating categories suggesting personal development.

Thus, the relevance of the theme of our study is due to the increasing role of man in the definition of a vector of personal development and the need a moral certainty and autonomy for this.

The purpose of the initial phase of the experimental study was to split respondents into two experimental groups in terms of moral and ethical



reflection. To do this, we have developed two questionnaires: the questionnaire no. 1 – to study the level of a moral reflection; questionnaire no. 2 – to study the overall level of significance of moral categories and to identify the most important moral categories for the modern adult.

At the beginning of the study 200 people voluntary participated in the survey: 110 men and 90 women, aged from 35 to 63 years. All respondents are Russian, residents of Moscow. They consider themselves to Christianity (without specifying the spiritual direction: Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Protestantism) or are not able to accurately classify themselves to any type of religion.

In the primary stage of the research in the processing of questionnaires 30 people have been excluded from the list of respondents, since they showed complete ignorance, alienation and not involvement in the subject matter of the proposed material. In the next step in the study 170 people were involved: 100 men and 70 women.

First questionnaire, was offered to the respondents, consists of 14 questions designed to identify the level of moral and ethical reflection. The survey results were processed using quantitative content analysis. The procedure of the content analysis was to search through the text processing units of analysis, reflecting the confirmation of the presence of the object tag, reflecting in the certain characteristics of the respondents, which is significant for our study. Categories of analysis were identified by deductive method of semantic field issues. The number of categories coincides with the number of questions in the questionnaire. Each category corresponds to a specific question of the survey. Subcategories of analyzes were derived using the inductive method based on the study of responses.

At first, informative elements of the text were identified, and then entered together into one list and summarized in the categories. The criteria for assessing the presence of a particular category was presence in the text any of the units of analysis, such as: word, phrase, sentence, opinion, statement, feeling, family name. The fullness of answer the question also was taken into account. So, we have examined closed answers, which do not assume semantic verification, how the absence of category of analysis, that do not contain emotional and personal attitude to the problems of a given issue. Based on the analysis of the text, we compiled a dictionary-classifier and a coding matrix of content analysis. The scoring procedure was performed at a predetermined scaling methodology: for each question of the questionnaire respondents got either “+” or “-”, which suggested the presence or absence of a certain category of content analysis in the response.



The second offered questionnaire was the questionnaire no. 2, consisting of 40 items, which include moral categories that the respondents should assess by degree of importance for themselves from 0 to 10 points. Score points made by adding the amounts for all items of technique. The maximum expected number of points – 400, minimum – 0. Then more points respondent scored, then higher the level of significance of moral categories to him.

We transferred the scores obtained from the results of two surveys (questionnaires no. 1 and no. 2) to the normalized values (i. e. we normalized indicators of each respondent to a common base, led them to one). Thus, the maximum value for each of the studies is one, and the minimum is zero. Next, we combined the results of the two methods by calculating the mean value between them. For this purpose both studies are considered equivalent, i.e. the weight of each factor is 50 %, which allows us to find the result using the simple average method.

We ranked the participants' results from the lower to the higher value in accordance with the hypotheses and objectives of our work, then we formed two groups with the same number of respondents by 60 people, excluding the middle part of the sample (50 people), i.e. respondents with intermediate values.

The first group includes respondents with the lowest amount of points, with an average final value of two surveys from 0.31 to 0.45 (in the future, a group no. 1) – respondents with a low level of moral and ethical reflection.

The second group includes respondents with the highest number of points, with an average final value from 0.70 to 0.85 (in the future, a group no. 2) – respondents with a high level of moral and ethical reflection.

The results of the first phase of an experimental study

After processing questionnaire no. 1, we have identified 14 categories of content analysis:

- 1) respondents' assessment of morality as a necessary personal quality of modern man;
- 2) semantic field formed on the concept of "morality";
- 3) presence of positions on moral and ethical state of modern society;
- 4) discussion on the moral and ethical topics with other people;
- 5) personal attitude to the subject of the causes of moral degradation of modern personality;
- 6) ability to give spiritual and moral assessment of the another person identity;
- 7) responsible position relative to own level of moral development;



- 8) aspiration to concrete moral ideals;
- 9) reading spiritual and moral literature;
- 10) loving classical music;
- 11) presence concrete moral acts in own life;
- 12) interesting to moral oriented subject of the questionnaire;
- 13) desire to improve own knowledge of moral and ethical phenomenon;
- 14) aspiration to develop own level of internal moral and ethical potential.

In the further describing the results of the questionnaire no. 1, we omit the intermediate results for the total sample (170 people), and present data for the two experimental groups (60 people each), formed by the processing results of two questionnaires, since this information seems most interesting.

Figure 1 provides percentage presence of content analysis categories for the two experimental groups.

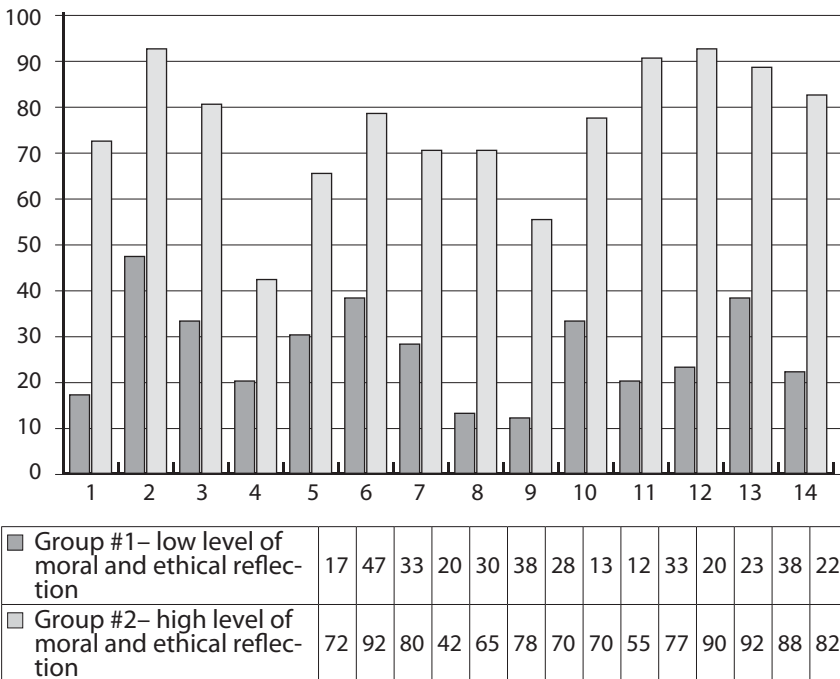


Figure 1. Percentage presence of content analysis categories for two experimental groups



The results from the questionnaire no.2 allowed us to identify the overall level of significance of moral categories for the respondents, as well as identify the most important moral categories for the modern adult. The results of this study are shown in Table 1.

*Table 1***Summarized results of study on questionnaire no. 2**

Respondents	Number of people in group	Max number of points by the method	Points scored	% of total possible points
The total sample	170	68000	43117	63 %
Group no.1	60	24000	12130	50,5 %
Group no.2	60	24000	18690	77,8 %
Respondents with intermediate results	50	24000	12297	51,2 %

The results of the study for each of 40 moral qualities for certain groups of respondents are presented in the summary Table 2.

*Table 2***The results of the study for each of 40 moral qualities, for certain groups of respondents**

Respondents	Moral categories, evaluated by the respondents as the most important	Moral categories, evaluated by respondents as the least important
The total sample	The meaning of life, the inner harmony and happiness.	Collectivism, moderation, patriotism, altruism, duty, equality of people.
Group no.1	The meaning of life, happiness, inner harmony, respect for elders and care.	Forgiveness, patriotism and conscience.
Group no.2	Inner harmony, the meaning of life, the development of moral and willed sphere, respect for others, a spiritual self-perfection, benevolence.	Collectivism, equality of people.

According to the results of this study, we can state the fact that the respondents of overall sample and also respondents of the two experimental groups pointed the category of "meaning of life" as the most important.

On the total sample such categories as "inner harmony" and "happiness" also got high scores. These categories were the most important for the two experimental groups as well.



In the group no. 1 two categories: "respect for elders" and "care" received high scores.

Respondents of group no. 2 consider as important to develop the moral and volitional sphere, and they especially single out categories such as "respect for people", "spiritual self" and "benevolence".

Participants of common sample and of the group no. 2 have put minimum number of points to such categories as: "collectivism" and "the equality of people".

On the total sample, categories such as "moderation", "patriotism", "altruism" and "duty" also received low scores.

Respondents of group no. 1 consider unimportant for themselves categories such as "forgiveness", "patriotism" and "conscience".

Thus, in the first phase of the experimental study we have developed two questionnaires for the studying the level of moral and ethical reflection of the respondents. The obtained results allowed us to divide respondents into two experimental groups with low (group no. 1) and high (group no. 2) degree of moral and ethical reflection.

The subject of our scientific interest is to research relationship between the individual's ability to moral and ethical reflection, his aspiration to personal development and the development level of its semantic sphere. So for the next stage of our experimental study we plan to compare the two experimental groups on the following parameters: the relevance of the need for self-actualization (the method of relevance of basic needs "Pairwise comparisons" in the modification I.A. Akindinova); the degree of satisfaction of the need for self-development ("Diagnosis of the need for self-development"); stability of desired value attitudes to life, to people, to myself (test "Proverbs" S.M. Petrova), meaning-life orientation: meaningfulness, the richness of life, satisfaction with self-realization, the focus of the responsibility locus ("Test of meaning-life orientations" D.A. Leontyev), the overall level of reflexivity ("Determining the level of reflexivity" A.V. Karpov).

References

1. Abakumova I.V., Kagermazova L.Ts., Savin V.A. Dialog kul'tur kak smyslotekhnologiya formirovaniya ustanovok tolerantnogo soznaniya i povedeniya studentov vuza [Dialogue between cultures as a conceptual technology of forming the values of tolerant consciousness and behavior of high school students]. *Rossiiskii psikhologicheskii zhurnal – Russian Psychological Journal*, 2013. v.10, no.1, pp. 46–59.
2. Almayev N.A. *Primeneniye kontent-analiza v issledovaniyakh lichnosti: metodicheskiye voprosy* [Application of content analysis in personality research:



- methodological issues]. Moscow, Institute of Psychology RAS Publ., 2012. 167 p.
3. Asmolov A.G. *Psikhologiya lichnosti: kul'turno-istoricheskoe ponimanie razvitiya cheloveka* [Personality psychology: cultural and historical understanding of human development]. Moscow, Smysl Publ., 2010. 448 p.
 4. Bratchenko S.L., Mironov M.R. *Lichnostnyj rost i ego kriterii. Psikhologicheskie problemy samorealizatsii lichnosti* [Personal growth and its criteria. Psychological problems of personal fulfillment]. St. Petersburg Publ., 1997, pp. 38–46.
 5. Valiantov Kh.Kh. *Dukhovno-nravstvennoye razvitiye lichnosti v uchebno-sobytiynoy deyatel'nosti. Diss. kand. psikh. nauk* [Spiritual and moral development of the individual in training and event activities. Cand. psych. sci. diss]. Kazan, 2003.
 6. Galazhinsky E.V. Search the methodological foundations of studying the psychological determinants of personal fulfillment. Available at: http://psy.tsu.ru/data/pdf/3_07.pdf (Accessed 20 April 2013).
 7. Gostev A.A., Borisova N.V. *Psikhologicheskiye idei v tvorchestvom nasledii I.A. Il'ina: na putyakh sozdaniya psikhologii dukhovno-nravstvennoy sfery chelovecheskogo bytiya* [Psychological ideas in a creative heritage of I.A. Ilyin: through creating a psychology of moral and spiritual spheres of human existence]. Moscow, Institute of Psychology RAS Publ., 2012. 288 p.
 8. Klochko V.E., Galazhinsky E.V. *Samorealizatsiya lichnosti: sistemnyj vzglyad* [Self-realization of the person: a systemic approach]. Tomsk: Tomsk University Publ., 1999. 154p.
 9. Leontyev D.A. *Samorealizatsiya i sushhnostnye sily cheloveka. Psikhologiya s chelovecheskim litsom: Gumanisticheskaya perspektiva v postsovetsoj psikhologii* [Self-realization and essential powers of a man. Psychology with a human face: The humanistic perspective in post-Soviet psychology]. Moscow, Smysl Publ., 1997. 335p.
 10. Leontyev D.A. Spirituality, self-regulation and values. Available at: <http://www.institut.smysl.ru/article/spirit.php> (Accessed 20 May 2013).
 11. Leontyev D.A., Ivanchenko G.V. *Kompleksnaya gumanitarnaya ekspertiza: metodologiya i smysl* [Integrated humanitarian expertise: methodology and meaning]. Moscow, Smysl Publ., 2008. 133p.
 12. Tarasyan N.A. *Osobennosti dukhovnosti i samosoznaniya sovremennogo rossiyskogo yunoststva. Diss. dokt. psikh. nauk* [Features of spirituality and self-awareness of modern Russian youth. Dr. psych. sci. diss]. Stavropol, 2012.
 13. Shtumpf S.P. *Dukhovnost' kak sotsiokul'turnyy fenomen: aksiologicheskaya napravlennost' i perspektivy razvitiya. Diss. kand. psikh. nauk* [Spirituality



as a socio-cultural phenomenon: the axiological direction and prospects of development. Cand. psych. sci. diss]. Irkutsk, 2007.

14. Maddi S. Creating Meaning Through Making Decisions //The Human Search for Meaning / ed. by P.T.P.Wong, P.S.Fry. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1998, pp.1–15.
15. May R. Psychology and the Human Dilemma. Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1967, pp.168–181.