

Holistic Life Concept as the Main Psychological Neoplasm of the Late Maturity Period

Elena N. Chueva, Elena S. Shuchkovskaya, Elena A. Tyagunova,
Anastasia A. Kulik and Anelia S. Shiryaeva

Abstract--- *The problem of the psychological conditions for the constructive development of the personality in the period of late maturity remains one of the most important problems of modern psychology in connection with the actualization of the idea of self-realization and the demand for each individual in society.*

Keywords--- *Constructiveness, Destructiveness, Bipolarity of Development, Holistic Life Concept, Life Path Concept, I-am-Subject-of-Life Concept, Vital World Concept.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The problem of the psychological conditions for the constructive development of the personality in the period of late maturity remains one of the most important problems of modern psychology in connection with the actualization of the idea of self-realization and the demand for each individual in society. However, today this question remains insufficiently studied in psychological science.

Currently, many researchers, speaking of the continuity of the development process throughout life, note the relevance of the study of the mechanisms of personal development throughout the entire period of maturity. In line with the new approaches to the development of a mature personality, an increasing emphasis is placed on the need to study an adult as a subject of life activity, the unity and interconnectedness of the individual and social development of a person is being asserted.

Personality development in the period of maturity is characterized by multidimensionality and variability. The period of late maturity is characterized not only by involitional and destructive processes, which lead to the collapse of opportunities, but also by constructive, system-forming processes, as a result of which new formations are formed that contribute to the further self-realization of the individual.

The purpose of our study was to systematize and generalize theoretical approaches to the problem of invariance of personality development in the late maturity period.

Based on the proposition that the development of an individual is not limited to any specific periods of his/her being, it is carried out throughout a person's life and is characterized by multidimensionality and variability; for the development of a mature personality, both constructive and destructive processes are characteristic, the unity and struggle of which is the driving force of this development process.

Elena N. Chueva, Assistant Professor, Candidate of Psychological Sciences, Vitus Bering Kamchatka State University, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy City, Russian Federation.

Elena S. Shuchkovskaya, Assistant Professor, Candidate of Psychological Sciences, Vitus Bering Kamchatka State University, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy City, Russian Federation.

Elena A. Tyagunova, Assistant Professor, Candidate of Psychological Sciences, Vitus Bering Kamchatka State University, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy City, Russian Federation.

Anastasia A. Kulik, Assistant Professor, Candidate of Psychological Sciences, Vitus Bering Kamchatka State University, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy City, Russian Federation.

Anelia S. Shiryaeva, Assistant Professor, Candidate of Psychological Sciences, Vitus Bering Kamchatka State University, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy City, Russian Federation.

As a **hypothesis**, we have suggested that the constructive development of a mature personality results in the consistent formation of integrity and integration of personality structures, and the formation of the “Holistic life concept” is an indicator of the constructiveness of personality development in late maturity.

The methodological basis of our research consists of the conceptual provisions of domestic and foreign psychology on continuity of personality development in ontogenesis (Ananyev, 1972; Asmolov, 2001; Bodalev, 1999; Ollport, 1998; Petrovsky, 2000; Rogers, 1994; Erikson, 2000 and others), the position on the unity of progressive and regressive transformations in the process of personal development (Antsyferova, 2001; Vygotsky, 1984; Feldstein, 1996 and others), position on the subjectivity of the personality, its activity essence and creative orientation (Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, 1991; Aleksandrova, 2000; Bodalev, 2000; Vesna, 1998; Leontiev, 1974; Slobodchikov, 1994; Rybalko, 2001 and others).

As the main research method was used theoretical analysis of the literature. The statistical data presented in this work were obtained by empirical research of the author in earlier works (Chueva, 2005).

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of currently existing points of view regarding the development processes in the late maturity period allows us to distinguish two main approaches. According to the first one, personality development in the period of late maturity is generally considered as a regressive-destructive process, as a process of ageing, degradation and extinction, in which negative changes occurring at a physiological and social level lead to adverse changes in personality structures (Alexandrova, Airiyan, 1989; 1974; Averbukh, 1969; Casten, 1960; Comfort, 1967; Korsakova, 1996; Panina, 1985 etc.). The second approach regards development as the ongoing development of a mature personality, as a qualitative transformation, modification, enrichment of systems formed at the previous stages of ontogenesis (Antsyferova, 1996; Vygotsky, 1984; Rybalko, 2001; Shakhmatov, 1987 etc.). Mature personality retains the ability to development, which is not limited to any specific periods of its existence but is carried out throughout life and is characterized by multidimensionality and variability.

In the period of late maturity, there is an increase in the differentiation of the types of the life path, which leads to the bipolarity of the vectors of personal development. So on a biological level, along with a change in the psychophysiological capabilities of the organism, the deterioration of the physical condition leading to pathological changes, there is a normal ageing process, not burdened by chronic diseases; changes in the characteristics of the nervous system, reduction of sensory-perceptual functions and cognitive processes are resisted by the formation of compensatory mechanisms that ensure adaptive restructuring of mental processes.

Among the social predictors of the constructive-destructive process of development one can single out: reduction-preservation of social functions; restriction-expansion of social activity; lack of material means and material independence; absence-presence of physical, material and spiritual support; non-freedom-freedom in choosing social roles.

The psychological component of the destructive vector of development implies “ageing” of the emotional sphere, a depressive and anxious state as a cumulative experience of life dissatisfaction, decrease in self-esteem,

self-acceptance, negative self-attitude, dissatisfaction with the life lived, loss of the meaning of life, reduction of creative activity, cessation of personal growth, conformity, dependence, loss of control over one's own life. The constructive vector of development, on the contrary, leads to a positive resolution of the contradictions of this period: emotional well-being, acceptance of oneself and one's experience, positive assessment of one's life, holistic acceptance and meaningfulness of life, a sense of life orientation, personal growth, openness to something new, striving for self-development, autonomy, independence, ability to organize their lives.

Thus, it can be argued that not only destructive, but also constructive processes are characteristic of personality development in the late maturity period. Constructive development is the development of a mature personality, during which new growths are formed, contributing to its self-realization. The constructiveness of development is expressed in the further integration of personal structures and their transition to a new stage of development. Disorders in the development of a mature personality, leading to the curtailing of the possibilities for its self-realization, are characteristic of the destructive vector of personality development.

The main achievement characterizing the late maturity period is *the integrity of the perception of life*. *Analytical-synthetic activity*, which is expressed in *wisdom*, in achieving harmony with oneself and the world, and the ability to look down upon, becomes dominant for this age.

The critical mental neoplasm in the period of late maturity, which determines the vector of further constructive development of the personality, in our opinion, is the formation of *the Holistic Life Concept (so-called HLC)*, which can be represented as a systemic integral mental education, implemented in cognitive, emotional-volitional and behavioral spheres. The main components of the HLC are: "The concept of the life's path", "I-am-subject-of-life concept" and "The concept of the life world" (Chueva, 2005, p. 77).

"Life path concept" characterizes the ability of a multi-level and multi-faceted reflection of his or her life activity by a person, and is one of the main reasons and conditions for the possibility of "redefining" circumstances and a way of one's own life. The life path concept *is an attitude towards life as a holistic phenomenon in the unity of the past, present and future, the acceptance of the value of life as such, the existence of the meaning of life, life purpose and time perspective*.

One of the main tasks of the late maturity period, according to most researchers (Antsiferova, 2001; Lidars, 2000; Frankl, 1990; Erickson, 2000 and others), is to accept one's life path. Despite the variability of the so-called "healthy types of old age", in each of which the main content of the life of an older person becomes different, at first glance, activities (social work, activities within the family, amateur activities, travel, etc.) having attitude to the older, according to A.G. Lidars, is a special internal activity aimed at accepting your life path. An older adult not only works on the meanings of his current life, but also inevitably interprets his life as a whole (Lidars, 2000).

Understanding your life becomes possible with a well-developed level of reflection, which is characterized as the spiritual activity of the individual. The mature personality is characterized by the perception of life as a holistic phenomenon, "where the space of being is addressed simultaneously to the past, present and future, where external events are perceived as stages of spiritual development that have a certain value from the point of view of a single life process as integrity" (Vesna, 1998).

E. Erickson defines the last stage of human life as a stage of integrativity, and in later works as wisdom. The scientist sees the task of this stage in the search for the meaning of his life, in the integration of all the stages completed and in finding the integrity of his "I". The sense of integration of the Ego stems from the ability of a person to look at his whole past life and to feel satisfied with it. E. Erickson believes that only true maturity and a useful feeling of the "wisdom of past years" come in old age, but at the same time, he notes: "The wisdom of old age is aware of the relativity of all knowledge acquired by a person during his life in one historical period. Wisdom is the realization of the absolute meaning of life itself in the face of death" (Erickson, 2000, p. 234).

Thus, it can be said that the perception of the past, the present and the future, in their unity and integrity, contributes to the monochronological perception of life, and is one of the conditions for the constructive development of the individual in late maturity.

An equally important condition that ensures the integrity of the life concept is the existence of *a time perspective and the goal of further life*. The time perspective is a significant component of the psychological adaptation of the older adults. It has been empirically established that with age the desire for the future decreases, but if the activity of the individual is limited only to solving today's problems, then its psychological organization is depleted because a person can solve more complex problems by his creative abilities.

The progressive development of personality as a way of existence is provided by the manifestation of activity in resolving contradictions between changing conditions of being and real possibilities of satisfying needs and interests. Therefore, although older people are more peculiar to focus on the past, when planning a particular activity, it is possible and necessary to focus on the future.

One of the conditions for successful ageing that L.I. Antsyferova refers to is the ability of representatives of late adulthood to set not only short-term, but also long-term goals, not to avoid severe life problems, but to make efforts to solve them. In the psychological, virtual future, the person has his own intentions, goals, plans, anticipated events. All these formations have a strong motivational potential, which saturates the structure of the present. As a result, there is a further development of the personality (Antsiferova, 2001).

An essential condition that ensures the safety of the time perspective and determines the focus and freedom of choosing an adaptation strategy for old age, according to V. Frankl, is "*an awareness of the new life status on the eve of or very old age, an understanding of the meaning of person's new life*" (Frankl, 1990). The discovery of meaning in the new state largely determines the structure of emotional experiences of older people, characterized by the preservation of social ties at this age, since the meaning of life is experienced as "life involvement", these experiences are relatively independent of external and internal circumstances of life.

The creation of the life path concept becomes possible thanks to the unique inner activity of the individual, which allows him to rise to a new level of development, i.e. the level of spirituality. The ability of reflection allows us to evaluate life in its integral context, to realize what is valuable and significant in it. Life is perceived by a person as a value, and both past and future events as stages of spiritual development.

Awareness and acceptance of one's life are a source of further personality development. When a negative assessment is triggered, psychological defenses that make it impossible to evaluate and accept the whole life, bring it to the level of reflection. The system of values formed during life and life position developed in the previous stages become the primary determinant of life prospects.

As a result of the empirical research, we found that in the period of late maturity, compared with early maturity, the integrity, meaningfulness and subjective significance of one's life increase. Older people are distinguished by their great structuredness and differentiation in the description of their life paths, the emotional richness of reproducible images, the coherence and logic of the reproduction of life events, which indicates that the tendency of strengthening intranorderedness and integration of personality structures in the period of maturity continues. Indicators of a holistic emotional assessment, the dominant positive color of life, the existence of life plans and a temporal perspective did not have a statistically significant difference between the mean values obtained in the samples of middle and late maturity respondents (Chueva, 2005, pp. 112-113). These results contradict the widespread notion that the older adults are characterized by a decrease in the emotional richness of life, a lack of life plans and a temporal perspective.

At the same time, the late maturity period is characterized by the differentiation of respondents who have different levels of development of life course concept indicators. The first type is characterized by holistic meaningfulness of life, the presence of a positive emotional evaluation, a structured way of life, the existence of life goals and a temporal perspective. The second type is characterized by a negative holistic assessment of life, dissatisfaction with one's life both in the past and in the present, the absence of life goals, and a low structured way of life (Chueva, 2005, p. 113).

The second component of the HLC, i.e. "I-am-subject-of-life concept", is presented to us as an integral semantic substance, which is formed under the influence of the inclusion of an older person in the context of the existence of humanity as a whole. It combines such characteristics as: the awareness of the person himself through the prism of universal values, the assessment of his personality based on his lifetime contribution to the development of society, the understanding of his own value through the value of his life.

Adequate attitude to oneself, preservation of one's identity, acceptance of one's own uniqueness and originality, openness to something new, striving for self-development, self-perfection, self-realization, existence of an individual value system and value attitude to one's life in general, freedom of choice, control and control over one's life, creative activity is the main indicators of a positive "I-concept" of a mature personality.

The work done in the field of self-assessment of the older contains very contradictory information. Some studies suggest that age does not affect the feeling of happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem. In others, the fact of age influence on self-esteem is definitely emphasized.

In an experimental study of L.V. Borozdina and O.N. Molchanova (1996) the following factors affecting the content of self-esteem at a later age were identified: the sphere of social contacts, communication and its style, relationships with people, work and professional activities, health and personal qualities. At the same time, the past is included in the process of actual self-perception, i.e. people of the late age, evaluating themselves, are guided in the so-called "I was – I am" continuum.

According to researchers, self-esteem is strictly dependent on employment, health status and emotional tone of the older adults. When comparing different motives of personal dissatisfaction, family conflicts, material difficulties and poor health are distinguished. Among the circumstances that significantly affect self-esteem in old age, the degree of discrepancy between the real situation of an older adult and the ideal assessment of his life opportunities (regret of unrealized opportunities, made wrong steps at crucial moments, irreparable life mistakes) is pointed out. The greater the discrepancy between the true situation and the idea of how it could be under other conditions, the deeper is the dissatisfaction with life and the lower is the self-esteem of the individual.

Contrary to the prevailing stereotypes, older people do not represent a homogeneous mass of boring, inactive people passively living their days. According to the data, 29% of respondents, regardless of age, live an active, productive life, 37% report a slight decrease in life saturation, but treat this as a normal phenomenon, 19% of respondents do experience a feeling of loneliness, anxiety, boredom, monotony, and 15% consider their lives difficult and meaningless (Chueva, 2005, p. 105).

In the period of late maturity, two types of older adults are defined, which are characterized by polar development vectors. The first type is characterized by a positive attitude towards oneself and one's life in general, satisfaction with self-realization, relations with close and surrounding people, acceptance of the value of one's "I" and the world as a whole, striving for new things, knowledge and self-development. The second type is characterized by low satisfaction with what has been achieved in life, dissatisfaction with one's past and present life, lack of plans for the future, dissatisfaction with relationships with close people, a feeling of loneliness and experiencing emotional emptiness (Chueva, 2005, p. 125).

"*Vital world concept*" is the ability of a holistic perception of the world and people, accepting the dichotomy of human nature, finding one's place in the World, achieving harmony with oneself, with other people and the world as a whole.

A person entering into a particular relationship with the world around him is forced to adapt to it constantly. The need for adaptation is continuous and growing with the changing environmental conditions, including adaptation to a changing family structure, professional and friendly environment. This is especially true for the older adults. Adequate adaptation implies a certain activity, which is due to the internal energy of an older adult. D. Birren stresses that the concept of "successful ageing" is especially close to experiencing one's own social and personal "value", close to one's own attitude to the life lived and to oneself, as well as to a person who has realized their social roles and interpersonal relationships (Birren, 1964).

At the same time, V.A. Ananiev believes that for mental health and a sense of well-being, the most important thing is not so much the number of contacts as the quality of emotional support and the feeling of intimacy. The feeling of well-being of a person is based on such parameters of social relations as social integration, affection, the ability of someone to educate and grow, getting confirmation of their importance, a sense of the reliability of partners in communication (Ananiev, 2001, p. 56).

The main distinguishing feature of the older adults is the richest life experience. Probably, the main problem of such people, as N. Pryazhnikov says, is that they do not always know how to make the best use of this experience.

They especially suffer from the “lack of demand” of their experience, and therefore – the lack of demand for themselves. The feeling of “uselessness” or the opposite feeling “neediness” highlights another concept – self-esteem. That self-esteem is the core of personality. “Therefore, the search for self-determination in the period of late maturity is, first of all, the search for an opportunity to establish oneself as a valuable member of a given society, as well as a specific social group and family” (Pryazhnikov, 1999).

The principal factor of positive development in old age is the structuring and transfer of experience, i.e. finding oneself in socially significant activities. The need to invest in others a part of oneself, one’s aspirations, thoughts, discoveries is one of the most essential needs of an older person, created by the need for a positive understanding of one’s life, continuation of oneself, and is related to the need for personalization and embodiment of oneself in another. An older person seeks to “incarnate” in another, to “stay” in him. The recognition of this “contribution” by others is the most important factor of psychological well-being, creating a sense of wholeness and meaning of a life lived, relieving the fear of illness and death. The feeling of being unnecessary, unclaimed, on the contrary, is the strongest psychological factor leading to a deterioration of the emotional state, a change in the inner position, a decrease in social and personal claims.

Communication with relatives and age-mates plays a significant role in this period. An age-mate helps to understand the whole concept of his life. Communication with friends of youth carries a special psychological burden. They help to return to the past, which is so valuable for each person. Age-mates are those people who “knew me young”, this is the group of people who entered part of life. Communicating with age-mates allows one to feel oneself belonging to a group, complicity in a kind of community, forms the “We-feeling” as one of the important emotional components saving the personality from existential fear of loneliness, of human “trifle” in the face of the world, before fear to disappear, without having left a mark, to be forgotten” (Sapogova, 2001, page 23). That is why it is so difficult and painful for older people to experience the loss of relatives, friends, acquaintances because with their loss they lose a part of their past, a part of themselves.

On the other hand, the memory of them helps to come to terms with the thought of the inevitability of death, since physical death does not mean leaving the memory of the descendants. At the same time, in the later age of life, friends serve as a “buffer” against the injuries and losses accompanying this period. Friendly relationships reduce the feeling of loneliness and give a sense of personal fitness, self-esteem, and the ability to compare oneself with others.

Among the dominant meaningful life values of older people, such values as relationships with people around them, understanding and finding their place in the world, mutual understanding between people, the well-being of children and grandchildren, “being needed” by others, harmony and well-being in the family, favorite work and benefits for the society become to be top ones (Chueva 2005, p. 128).

Thus, *the satisfaction of an older adult with his relationship with the outside world* is another component of a holistic life concept. In turn, this component is inextricably linked with the previous two types, since the system of relations with society formed at this stage of development is the result of a life-created scenario made by a person and brought to life.

Conscious satisfaction with life is the result of serious inner work in understanding one's life as a whole, in understanding its value, in realizing one's own importance, in one's own eyes and the eyes of others.

Understanding one's life gives rise to the need to transfer one's own experience, to continue oneself, to incarnate oneself in another, which is possible only thanks to the further self-realization of the personality and its creative activity. Building a holistic concept of life is the result of thinking and assessing oneself and one's life in general, understanding its value and significance.

III. CONCLUSION

Personal enhancement is not limited to any specific periods of its being; it is carried out throughout life and is characterized by multidimensionality and variability. The period of gerontogenesis is considered not only as a process of involution, destruction and destruction of personal structures, or as a process of adaptation, adaptation to changing social conditions, roles, physiological conditions at the present moment of time, but also as a process of continuing development and enrichment of a personality characterized by appropriate personality neoplasms. Characteristics of this stage are the discrepancy, divergence and the amplifying individualization differentiation of age changes causing a vector of the constructive or destructive orientation of a further life path. The constructibility of personal enhancement in the period of maturity is characterized by the strengthening of integrity and integration of personal structures. A mature person goes through a series of stages of forming integrity, each of which leads to the emergence of new structural and functional formations, i.e. in early maturity to the integration of the personal "I", in the period of medium maturity to the integrity of "I am society", in the period of later maturity to the formation of the Holistic Life Concept (HLC), which can be represented as a system integrated mental formation, which includes the "Life path concept", the "I-am-subject-of-life concept" and the "Vital world concept".

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