

Thesaurus Applied Concept of Russian Youth

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Abstract: The thesaurus concept of youth gives an opportunity to make the ways of development of youth social subjectivity clear and find out its controversial traits both as an “objectivated” activity and in facts of self-consciousness, which perform an important regulative function. The circumstance that institutionalized world is not much assimilated by a young person demands compensatory actions from himself, i.e. self-independent and predetermined interaction in peer group. Gradually he is familiarizing with area, rules, realities of this world. The mechanisms of this familiarization are construction and projecting of social reality. The constructions and projects of a young man can essentially differ from constructions and projects of a “responsible adult” (parents, teachers, etc.) and besides dynamically change. One of the peculiarities of youth milieu is combination of several thesauruses. It causes event-trigger hyperbolization of one of them, which is considered to be the most suitable in this particular life situation. We will consider the trends of changes in value orientations of the Russian student youth, which are stated on the empirical level. However, in the beginning we will define what the theoretical meaning of the study on the Russian youth value orientations is. Also we will specify what the essence of the value aspect of the youth studies is.

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1. Introduction

In the conceptual dictionary for the humanities the term “value” was introduced by Rudolph Lotze. In his opinion, value exists only in its significance for a subject, but at the same time it is objective and possesses general significance for individuals. As H. Rickert explained, “Lotze wanted not only ‘calculate’ the world, but also “understand” it (Rickert, 1998) In other words, in philosophy the new category was being linked with the problem of understanding. Lotze noted the ambivalence of value and its subjective and objective nature. In the following interpretations of this category the stress was laid sometimes on the subjectivity of value, sometimes – on its objectivity. The objectivistic interpretation of value was reflected in Gordon Allport’s dispositional conception of person who elaborated “the test of values’ study” in the 1930s–1960s. In the Russian sociological school the dispositive concept of personalities have been offered by V. A. Iadov and it is still accepted by many other researchers.

The works by O. G. Drobnitskii (Drobnitskii, 1967) have had a considerable impact on modern Russian researchers of values and value orientations. Recently the traces of the approaches that were accepted in their time by the classics of the Sociological school of Chicago (Znaniecki, 1918) have been noticeable. During numerous researches on

values as a theoretical problem, scholars of different countries, representatives of various scientific schools have expressed many original ideas that allow us to speak of a high level of the elaboration of this matter. The development of the theory of values in modern Russia and in the world as well is expected to continue in the direction of preciseness. The life situation introduces this clarity into it when there are the period of transition and the birth of a new type of civilization – information-oriented. Also they expect the development towards applying of new scientific methods that are being shaped nowadays. In a number of cases it is necessary to follow the path of very general argumentation again in order to define the initial positions of the empirical study.

The specificity of the humanitarian knowledge (Gumanitarnoe znanie: tendentsii razvitiia v XXI veke, 2006) presupposes that the used terminology will be submitted by some parameters to other rules in comparison with the terminology of so called exact sciences. At this point there is a possibility of polysemy of terms and, in addition, historical mutability of their content. Therefore, it is important to trace down the history of their origin and understanding in various scientific schools. In essence, in the most cases in the humanitarian knowledge a scientist deals not with terms, but with *concepts*, i.e. with words. In these words aside from a certain content of literal, lexical, figurative, cultural

and philosophical meaning there is another image that appears in one's consciousness, and, in its turn, causes an emotional reaction. In contrast to terms, it is very difficult to translate *concepts* from one language into another. They bear imprints of language history and cultural history. This leads to difficulties in understanding of humanitarian concepts, which were created in different countries. The same concepts can be absolutely identical in diverse cultures seldom.

Exactly such a concept is the notion "value". In the Russian language it traces back to adjective *tsennyi* ('valuable'), which is formed from the noun *tsena* ('price'). The etymology of this All-Slavonic word can be determined in comparison with Avestian *kaēnā – mest'* ('revenge'), originally it meant *vozmezdīe, vozdaianie* ('retribution, requital') (cf. verb *kaiat'sia* – 'to repent'), then *shtraf* ('fine') and finally – 'cost of something' (Shanskii, 1961). If we refer to the dictionary of V. I. Dahl that registers usage of the word "tsena" ('price') and its derivatives in the XIX century, it becomes clear that word "tsennost'" ('value') by those times had not yet occupied a noticeable place in the Russian language and is defined "kak svoistvo po prilagatel'nomu" ('as characteristic on adjective') (Dal', 1955).

In new European languages there are two meanings of the word *value* – as "cost" and as "concernment" – which are usually separated. Thus, in French there is a word *prix* – a price, worth (in meaning of the cost) and there is a word *valeur*, which was fixed in the texts for the first time in 1080 (Robert, 1967), obviously, originated from the Latin word *valeo* – to be healthy, strong, mighty, which is used in the scientific texts in the meaning of "value". In English things look the same: price and value (valuables). As well as it is in German – *Kostbarkeit* (the subject) and *Wert* (the concept). Though the English *value* and the German *Wert* can correlate with the meaning of 'cost', usually they do so not in a direct, but in a figurative sense. Still, it seems unlikely that the Nietzsche's thesis about "revaluation of values" means the same what such a slogan meant in the Diogenes's times. The same motto pronounced in the Russian language and perceived by the Russian cultural thesaurus (ordered by the totality of social and cultural orientations) means something different. It should be underlined that even the most detailed explanations on their meaning in the first primary sources cannot conceal the fact that "value" is not a term, but a concept. So, on the emotional, almost unconscious level a representative of the Russian culture puts into this word a certain additional meaning, which is determined by the history of its existence in the Russian environment.

Even today as before the concept "value" is closely connected with the notion of price and payment. Its filling with a foreign philosophical content which comes from the West culture occurs without any support from the native scientific tradition of its interpretation. The Russian tradition of explanation of concepts in sociological sense has began to form only recently. This leads to the fact that Russian scientists in the field of the humanities accept those meanings, which at first was offered by different western scientific schools, and apply them for their needs very easily.

However, it is possible to emphasize a certain general meaning, which unites the initial centuries-old understanding of the concept "value" in the Russian culture and to some extent its scientific interpretation, which have appeared during the last decades: "value" is "something" what one cannot buy for money. If it is a thing then one does not grudge giving the required money for it. But if we are talking about people (parents, relatives, friends, beloved, heroes, idols, etc.) or concepts (Motherland, liberty, friendship, love, youth, health, art, science, etc.), in this case they belong to values if they are perceived as priceless, i.e. more significant than any money in the world. Finally, if money is understood as a value then it becomes priceless too and it loses the quantitative side.

The general arrangement of social reality construction of youngsters includes:

- (1) adaptation for conditions of environment (trial and mistakes; recognition of parts of environment and rules; alteration of behaviour according to rules; understanding and legitimation of a part of environment through "our");
- (2) completion of building of reality (symbolization through "good" and "evil", construction of symbolic universe; compensation for the inaccessible; activities for protection of "my world", separation of independence zone);
- (3) restructuring of environment conditions (ignoring of unimportant; change of proportions and combinations according to thesaurus; action beyond "my world" in compliance with own symbolic universe).

These positions realize themselves as a factual result of vital functions and fulfillment of the project.

Reality construction is obvious in the actions of different youth groups. The aim is not to settle on these well discernible behavioural and symbolic complexes, which are quite often distinguished by an exterior observer with negative evaluative attitude. Activity of youth in social construction of reality constitutes the most important condition of its

socialization and in this respect refers not to separate, but all youth communities.

2. Material and Methods

According to many conducted public opinion polls of the last 15 years they state in their conclusions that there is a general value-normative crisis concerning the Russian youth. This crisis consists in the reevaluation of cultural, ethical and spiritual values of the preceding generations. The collected data is quite often interpreted as a breach in succession and sharing in the social and cultural experience from the senior generation to the following one (Karpukhin, 2006). These deductions reflect the situation of untimeliness in the first years after the collapse of the USSR. There was also a noticeable movement from the hard regulation toward the support for a free self-determination of a young person in the youth policy of this time. Eventually the youth policy in Russia degraded to the state when young people had to count on their own abilities and talents. The youth and the youth policy turned out to be on the periphery of the governmental interests. Russia during “Jeltsin’s era” was simply not ready to respond to a great number of new economical, political and social challenges. The youth was left to the mercy of fate.

In our researches on the student youth we study the value orientations on the basis of several indirect characteristics taking the fact that students undergo the active stage of their secondary socialization into consideration. According to the definition by A. I. Kovaleva, socialization is a “process of formation and development of a person that consists in the mastering of social norms, cultural values and models of behaviour during the whole of his/her life, which allows to function in this given society” (Kovaleva, 2003). This is a double-sided process. One of its sides consist in the fact that society constantly assigns an orientation of socially acceptable behaviour and thinking for a person in different forms, by different means and with various effects. The other side of the process of socialization is personal mastering of these organizing and orientating impulses that society initiates. The result of the socialization is resultant of many differently directed influences. Since we examine the period of life when people are getting education, we can speak only about a certain level of socialization. This level of socialization is exposed to changes because any educational system directly acts as an institute of socialization. Besides, the macro-social environment begins to exert greater influence on a person during student years. This macro-social environment begins to be realized as essential and as a source of orientations and regulator of the choice of an outlook

on life. Therefore, in many respects value orientations will reflect the accepted in society life orientations, depend on an actual situation and change, sometimes significantly. At the same time value orientations are autonomous enough and can be reproduced from generation to generation not only in order of direct inheritance (through family), but also through mass media and network communication in various social communities (Lukov, 2004).

This, in particular, can be confirmed by the monitoring research “Russian Institute of Higher Education Through the Eyes of Students” (the project supervisor, I. M. Il’inskii; the supervisor of the IV–VI stages, Val. A. Lukov), which is conducted by Moscow University for the Humanities since the year 2000. The purpose of this project is to reveal the important features of a new type of educational institutions for Russia – the nongovernmental institutes of higher education. In the course of the studies it was very important to found out what were the problems of this new subsystem of the Russian higher education, what it manages to obtain, where its unrealized resources are and what the prospects of its development are. Within the framework of the monitoring two groups of institutes of higher education were compared – State and nongovernmental. Both groups consist of the best Moscow institutes of higher education and institutes of more than ten other Russian cities in the closing stages.

The results of this research show that with all the difference between the students of the State and nongovernmental institutes of higher education their attitude to the studies, their satisfaction with the student life, integration in the life of his/her institute of higher education, the level of material well-being, belief on their future life prospects and plans and – what is important most of all – the basic values of the Russian students have a similar configuration. This configuration is determined by the features of economical situation, by social and cultural processes and by public spirits in a country.

According to the research, which was not especially devoted to analysis of students’ value orientations, we obtained a significant material for sociological generalizations. The most important indicators were outspoken by the students in the form of answers table to the question: “What does a ‘good life’ mean for you?” In the research that took place in 2014 (N = 2500), the answers of the students were distributed in the following way (refer to table 1; the amount of the percent indices exceeds 100 % since there was a possibility to choose several answers).

The achievement of material well-being is the most wide-spread value orientation in the student community. However, it does not close the belief

about a “good life”, in respect of which such values as a “good family” (83 % in total), a “good work” (81 %), health (78 %), love (76 %) are still quite significant too. These components form per se understanding of happiness of the contemporary youth and draw the picture of expected life quality in the future.

The tendency toward a spiritual side of their vital activities (family, health, love) is noted in the answers of the students from the regional institutes of higher education. At the same time, both groups have evaluated the factor of possessing political power as less significant.

In this case it is not values' denomination or their hierarchy what interests us the most, but rather the act of putting values into the context of the modern Russian reality. Eventually this seems to be the way to a more exact reflection of value orientations. Similarly we consider the problem of patriotic values. We avoid the use of the word-marker “patriotism” and reveal the problem-solving situation in the collation of answers on the two following questions: “Are you proud of your country?” and “If they offered a profitable contract, which would propose leaving your Homeland for permanent residence abroad, would you agree?” Brought in the contexts of the present state of life quality in the capital and in the region and prospects for a realization of acquired education, it is possible to consider these answers to be the indicators of the patriotic spirits in the midst of the Russian students.

3. Results

The fragments of the research show that the students of all four groups of the institutes of higher education approximately to the same extent are divided in the expression of their own opinions, estimations, viewpoints, level of political activity, etc. It confirms once again that the generalizing word “*student body*” represents the reality in its exactness. Indeed, the 35 Russian institutes of higher education that were examined during the course of the research are very dissimilar to each other. But student community shows one very significant and firm trend: though there are presented miscellaneous, sometimes diametrically opposite standpoints, but in what that concerns the value orientations and social norms the distribution of answers mainly differs on the gender and age bases, on the specific features of professions they have chosen, in some cases depends on the territorial specificity (that is why we distinguish the city of Moscow from the rest of Russian regions) and almost is not connected with the legal status of a institute of higher education (State or nongovernmental). This is the question of vital importance for the Russian educational system:

hitherto the public prejudice exists regarding the nongovernmental institutes of higher education.

If the students of Moscow and other regional institutes of higher education have differences in the value orientations then they are not exceeding the scale to speak of some significant gap between them and what actually separates the capital from the province. Patriotic aspirations are more typical for students from the regions as well as intentions to work in the professional field, willingness to wait for a job placement guaranteed by a native institute of higher education after the graduation, slightly higher level of optimism in the view on the future and others. But as a rule these differences are too insignificant.

To draw a conclusion it is important to mention that the researches of the Russian youth that have been carried out during the last decade show that even the new conditions in every day life have not caused a full rejection of the traditional Russian cultural and historical values of the preceding generations among the young people. Furthermore, it is possible to expect that in the situation of globalization and power of mass media, which reflects the dominant position of the American culture in the modern world and, certainly, has an impact on the Russian youth, the value system in the thesauruses of the young Russians must gain more autonomous nature. This is a form to express the efforts and possibilities of the Russians to defend their own identity.

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