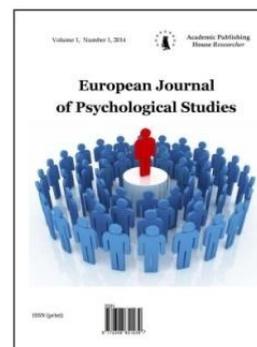


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Published in the Russian Federation
European Journal of Psychological Studies
Has been issued since 2014.
ISSN: 2312-0363
Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 80-84, 2014

DOI: 10.13187/ejps.2014.3.80
www.ejournal12.com



UDC 316.62

Contemplation as the Research Subject in Psychology*

Garnik V. Akopov

Samara State Academy of Social Sciences and Humanities, Russian Federation

Abstract

Social and historical processes in modern Russia determines the high relevance of the scientific and methodical study of the phenomena of contemplation (global – dynamic and social – personal balance (imbalance)).

Concept of "contemplation" is studied in the system of modern psychology categories. Actualization of problems in contemplation complements the new scientific understanding of the well-known opposition "conscious-unconscious". Contemplation as a term of Philosophy can be compared to a relevant psychic phenomena which potentially can be a process, condition or properties of a subject (individual, personality, individuality).

Further comparison of psychological (intentional) contemplation notion with the basic mental processes (attention, memory, perception, sensation, affect, thought, imagination, action, etc.), mental health (including special) states and the properties of the individual personality, individuality. Contemplation as the mental phenomenon considerably supplements the phenomenon of activity and expands the range of individual and psychological characteristics of personality.

Comparing contemplation to the phenomena of the altered state of consciousness: meditation conditions, mystical conditions and other.

Keywords: contemplation; consciousness; unconscious; activities; personality; meditation.

Introduction

The dynamics of events, the speed of technical, economic, social, organizational changes become so high that we can speak about "the dynamic stress" or a stress of insuperable lag in quickly changing life. Rate of changes can significantly exceed possibilities of individual or group adaptation of the personality and social groups. Social and psychological consequences of non-optimal speed excess of globalization over opportunities of social and personal designing and self-designing (information glut, fast and continuous change of social, professional, family, interpersonal, etc. roles, multiple identification, polyethnization, multiculturalization, manipulization, makiawelization, etc.) are found in "sophisticated" crime, narcotization, depression, psychosomatic diseases, mental imbalance. Psychological differentiation is aggravated with each new generation which organically appropriate quickly updating birth environment with the corresponding artifacts not always and not fully fitting into the world image of previous generations. In analogy with A.P.Nazaretyan's hypothesis of technical and humanitarian balance (Nazaretyan A.P., 2008) it is possible to state a hypothesis of global – dynamic and social – personal balance (imbalance).

* The support of the article is provided by the RHF grant. Project number 12-06-00595

In the applied (practical) plan psychological technologies (psychopractice) of existing today consultation, diagnostics, maintenances, correction, etc. do not often give desirable effect. A series of demo researches allowed to assign contemplation as the mental phenomenon which considerably supplementing the phenomenon of activity and expand the range of individual and psychological characteristics of personality. Contemplation consideration as actualized unconsciousness organically connects it with processes, conditions and properties of consciousness. As S.L. Rubenstein noted: "Greatness of the person, his activity is shown not only in deed but also in contemplation, in ability to comprehend and treat correctly the Universe, the world, the life".

Contemplation is a rarely used in modern psychology term which has categorical status. A broad response is associated with the word combination "sensual contemplation". After works by Karl Marks it was "neglectfully" returned to sensualism, it also wasn't accepted by "grandiose" prospects of economic, social and political practice, metaphorically indicated as "Pandora's Box" in one of the works by M.K. Mamardashvili.

Constitutive growth of the scientific interest and confidence (Agafonov, Akopov, Allahverdiv, Zinchenko, Petrenko, etc.) to the problem of consciousness during the last years make it possible to hope that contemplation will take its deserved place in the categorical system of theoretic and applied psychology and modern science. In definite contexts (binarity, dichotomizm) not activity and consciousness give one of the basic oppositions in modern Psychology of consciousness but activity and contemplation in any diachronic plan, which is deduced from dialectical discourse "subject and consciousness" (Akopov, 2010).

As there are some prospects of interpretation of the term "contemplation" let's notice some established meanings of words.

In Ozhegov's dictionary (Ozhegov, 1964) contemplation (contemplete, contempletor, contempletive) is defined as passive observations, inactivity.

More extensive field of meanings is in Dahl's dictionary: to contemplete is "to examine attentively and continuously, observe, look intently, go deep into the subject, learn it, admire it // consider sth carefully with mentality and spirit". "Contempletting the nature, we contemplete the majestic creator" (Gurevich, 1993).

In concise encyclopedia in Philosophy there procedural and resultant aspects in three groups of meanings of consciousness; superficial and inner, perceptual and notional ways of contemplation; "empirical, non-conceptual, irrational comprehension of reality", etc. (Ilyin, 2006).

In Encyclopediain Philosophy contemplation is defined as "direct connection of the consciousness to the subject", "entering through the phenomenon outward to its inward" or (in dialectical materialism) "integral awareness preceding conceptual and logical thinking" (Encyclopedic Dictionary of Philosophy, 1989).

In one of the new dictionaries of philosophical terms "essence contemplation" is defined with the help of the term "ideation" (phenomenology by E. Husserl) which is interpreted as "consciousness orientation on "general" ("essence", "eidos", "a priori") and also method of contemplation of the general". In this case the term "essence contemplation" is much alike as "categorical contemplation" and "ideation" (Dictionary of philosophical terms, 2007).

There is a very interesting statement in this dictionary which cites S.L. Rubinstein "contemplation is a reciprocal action of the subject and object realities" (Dictionary of philosophical terms, 2007).

If we compare the previous definitions and characteristics of contemplation with the notional system of Psychology we will have the following results. Contemplation as a term of Philosophy can be compared with a relevant psychic phenomena which potentially can be a process, condition or properties of a subject (individual, personality, individuality). Being characterized as a reflection it can both acquire and lose activity (freedom, intentionality, orientation, mediation, etc.) being an equal phrase "the subject reality" and "the object reality" (S.L. Rubinstein). Inversing from outward to inward and vice-versa contemplation can pay its "attention" to different subjects, objects, phenomenon, essence, processes, conditions, etc. making and destroying typologies, classifications, connections, disconnections, whole and its component parts, compositions and deconstructions.

At the same time contemplation doesn't have clearly visible, audible, tangible, etc. content (image) being often synchronously with stimulating and supporting visual, sound, kinaesthetic, etc. background. In these terms contemplation can be defined as actualized unconsciousness, i.e. in

contemplation the work of unconsciousness is shown to consciousness in forms of nonverbal (internal) languages.

It is to be mentioned that the source, means and “tool” of the contemplation is not only visual system: certain correlations of sounds (noise of wind and forest, pipe, long songs, symphonic or other compositions, etc.) intra corporal and superficial and muscular harmonious sensations (light satiation, feasible physical tension, primary exhaustion etc.), quiet long movement, flight and so on. Contemplation in synchronism can be characterized as being free from history, not being worried about the future in present.

From age-specific psychological point of view contemplation has dominant role (A. Ukhtomsky) during age and other crises especially in babyhood, youth and declining years.

Some illnesses are “good” for contemplation actualization (see the tale by L. Tolstoy “The death of Ivan Ilyich”) which helps to show hidden contexts and other meanings. It is very important to differentiate the contemplation and experience here. In this case the initial characteristic is emotions. For contemplation emotions are not obligatory if they and in most cases are not appropriate.

The character of correlations between contemplation and psychological processes is rather complicated. Contemplation is congruent to attention but it is doesn't coincide with it (nondirectional concentration, pensiveness). Contemplation can be turned from the present to the past and vice-versa disorienting the memory. It can be the sensing of reality and irreality blending perception with imagination. Being alien to mediation the contemplation doesn't think but at the same time it comprehends the essence. Not taking up (responding) any of the emotions mentioned in the science contemplation perhaps has the majesty of *Giaconda* by Leonardo da Vinci and at the same time absence of motivations and obvious (visible) activity.

Equalizing the realities of the subject and object (L.S. Rubinstein) contemplation is an opposition (antinomy) to the activity confirming or destroying the unity of activity and consciousness. Contemplation is opposed to pragmatism (utilitarianism, lucre, commitment, etc.) not only in one of its types – aesthetic contemplation(I. Kant). In its “fixed” opposition to any vector of motion (activity) contemplation is illuminating. At the same time it is not flash of inspiration or insight as both of them are final phases of purposeful search, expected solution of the settled problem. Contemplation is absolutely free as it can't be regulated.

According to V.F. Petrenko and V.V. Kucherenko «concentrating «here and now» by sight a majestic mountain ridge or looking at the horizon of the great ocean we feel practically the same as a person who was standing here and contemplating centuries ago. At this moment the past, present and future (in sense of an unborn man) are combining together and we feel chasm of eternity” (Petrenko, Kucherenko, 2007).

Freedom or fortuity (spontaneity) are expressed in possibility of this condition to be actualized or not as well as its semantics.

Correlating contemplation to the phenomena of the altered state of consciousness (ASC) makes it possible, in our opinion, to put contemplation to class of ASC as an unusual condition of consciousness if the last is defined as a version ASC. In this case in the class of ASC contemplation ranks not coinciding with other known phenomena (meditation, trance, prayer, seclusion, mantric and jantric contemplation, etc.). At the same time some ASC are closely connected with contemplation stimulating ar generating each other (see conditions Samadhi, Vipassana) (Petrenko, Kucherenko, 2007).

In this regard, the conclusion to which come V.F.Petrenko and V.V.Kucherenko, in our opinion, can be carried not only to meditation conditions, but also to contemplation. Congruous quality of contemplation and meditation is connected with «change of forms of a categorization of the world, oneself, others, with removal of the subject-object opposition of "me" and the world», i.e. «duality removal» (Petrenko). However, at all similarity of the designated mechanisms (decategorization, opposition change of quality “me” – “not me”), the contemplation condition unlike meditation not obligatory and not often associated with disappearance of "me", «its dissolution in common consciousness of the world». Contemplating "me" is at the same time and «in itself» and «in object» (world), it is safe though with poorly distinguishable borders that is apparently more common for the western mentality, in comparison to the east. More general mechanism of regulation of conditions in one and in the other culture is a presented by us context of factorial structure of consciousness, the mechanism of a contact ratio (communication, semantic

communication) and freedom (a choice, creation) in a combination with internal or external life plans. General for both cultures (West-East) predictors of contemplation are situations of extreme restrictions in external communication (various forms of a privacy). Processes of inward communication in this case in autocommunication or transcommunication forms (according to Kabrin) are equally possible but are not equally probable for the designated cultures. Other ratio in case of extreme restriction of the external freedom which is subjectively accepted in one mentality (East), and only more or less limited in the other (West). Here the border between meditative (trans) and contemplate conditions, in our opinion, lies. As the confirming examples alternative to examples from Buddhist literature, it is possible to bring the contemplating character from the store "White nights" by F.M. Dostoyevsky, or early literary etude "Contemplation" by F. Kafka.

More differentiated cross-cultural researches of the contemplation (meditativeness) moments in ornamentalistics, architecture, in gardening, in long-drawn-out songs and in other genres of musical folklore, poetry etc. will allow to define variety of modus and the structures imprinted as organic conscious and unconscious additions in different types of human activity.

If we continue the comparison we will note that contemplation is also not the same as mystical conditions. According to the book by W. James who, as P.S. Gurevich (Gurevich, 1993) said "is still unsurpassed on penetration into secrets of mystical experience" it is possible to draw the following main conclusions. One of main differences is that a psychological basis of mysticism makes «aspiration to have direct contact with supernatural» while for contemplation it is not so obligatory. P.S.Gurevich points at four main characteristics or criterion of mystical experiences by James. Some of them coincides with contemplation manifestations, for example, «impossibility to state own feelings and impressions in usual language since as mystical experience has no concrete analogs in terrestrial life» (Gurevich, 1993). The meditating (contemplating) person can't give the definite answer expressing the experience. Certainly, it is possible to find certain words as I.A. Ilyin did it in his wonderful sketches: «The person indulges in easy and free looking; happiness of pure and disinterested contemplation is given to him; it enters a certain God's theater, ancient as the world and mellow as its Creator», etc. (Ilyin, 2006). But transfer of the "true" contents demands other sign means not usual speech.

Other characteristic of mystical experience – intuitiveness, as a special form of cognition ... the moments of an inward enlightenment» (Gurevich, 1993). According to this, P.S.Gurevich while characterizing «ancient gnosis» mentions contemplation, all-inclusiveness and intuitiveness of reality comprehension (Gurevich, 1993). That is, intuitiveness which is common for mysticism does not have anything in common with contemplation which also can be a form of cognition, an enlightenment, etc. The third sign – short duration which is quite general both for mysticism and for contemplation though time, in our opinion, in these conditions is necessary for estimating a little differently.

Very important sign of mystical experience is «the will inactivity» (Gurevich, 1993). Contemplation is also characterized by a "stop" of previous processes, lack of an action and movement vector. Difference is, in our opinion, only in a mystical condition at least a part of previous expectations remains while contemplation doesn't have this, since it is always one-staged (at the beginning), situational, unexpected (sudden); and it (contemplation) isn't obligatory unlike mysticism, looks for «mysterious communication with the God and the world» (Gurevich, 1993).

As a certainly general characteristic of mysticism and contemplation it is necessary to admit with the conclusion by P.S.Gurevich: «a certain ocean consciousness in which differences between the individual and the world are removed. They disappear in unlimited integrity» (Gurevich, 1993).

It is possible to claim that both cases have psychopractice of finding of alive (rational and irrational) experience whether it is perception and comprehension of the world, or the private relation, or system of the relations.

And if the mysticism this purposeful "immersion" in other consciousness or unconsciousness contemplation is spontaneously found point (area) of a convergence of consciousness and unconsciousness.

Thus, putting the category of contemplation in subject area of modern psychology allows to study the corresponding phenomena both in theory-methodological and in applied plans and, in particular, in the annex to such branches of psychology, as age-specific psychology, pedagogical, clinical, personality psychology, ethnic, crosscultural psychology, etc.

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