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**MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE OF AN INDIVIDUAL
AND ITS FORMATION**

SUMMARY. We propose a psychological and educational interpretation of the concept of “meaningful experience of the individual”, the laws of its formation are described on the basis of modern studies of autobiographical memory.

KEY WORDS. Meaning of experience, existential function of memory, autobiographical memory.

The concept of meaningful experience is rarely used in the scientific literature. However, it allows to characterize quite accurately the results of meaning-making and its impact on the present and the future of a person. Using this concept, we want to highlight the connection of meaningful experience of a person with his memory, which in modern psychology is regarded as “psychological mechanism (a set of mental processes) of system organization of individual experience as an essential prerequisite for the implementation of future activities”[1; 48]. A number of studies indicates that the meaningful experience is constructed through a special existential memory functions (William James, F. Bartlett, L.S. Vygotsky, S. Rubinstein, A.N. Leontiev, J. Bruner, V.P. Zinchenko, V.V. Nurkova). This idea is expressed by V.P. Zinchenko in the following way: “The human memory has another important function, which we only mention. This is I-preservation in proper sense of the word. <...>” Today this function is regarded as the preservation of identity and, of course, not only in the processes of tool activity or work. This memory function is even greater than what is usually called autobiographical memory. It’s rather the memory for events, actions, feelings, thoughts about the meaning which form the personality. Our literature has used various options of psychological structures that could form the “core” of personality: the hierarchy of motives (A.N. Leontiev), emotions (A.V. Zaporozhets), a feeling of guilt and responsibility (M.M. Bakhtin), creativity (V.V. Davydov), meaning-making (A.G. Asmolov, B.S. Bratus, B.V. Zeigarnik) and etc. One of the candidates for this role may be the memory because a personality is a historical individual, who is aware of his place in the history, culture, the country, the nation, and finally, in the family and the tribe, and who does not forget about it”. [2] Modern researchers establish a linkage between existential memory functions, which are cognitive, emotional, and valuable components of the “self-concept”, and the personal

identity formation, reflective processes, the creation of self-descriptions and biographical life scenarios, a holistic cultural self-determination of a man.

At the same time, the questions about the essential structural and functional characteristics, mechanisms and laws of meaningful experience formation remain relatively little studied and there is a question about the extent to which this information can be effectively used in educational practice. Modern psychological and educational researches can identify alternative solutions of the problem.

From the standpoint of value-semantic approach, psychology of meaning and educational hermeneutics we can regard *personal meaningful experience* as a way of understanding the world and ourselves in the world, which was formed by a person during his interpretation of reality, and includes not only the acquired knowledge and the ways of changing the world, but, above all, meaningful attitude to the world, mediated by cultural values.

Meaningful experience includes different quality types of experiences that we can relate to each other, based on the idea of the long-term memory kinds (E. Tulving) with different ways of encoding information. This procedural knowledge “of how to implement actions that require specific skills” and propositional knowledge “that something has happened and is true,” is subdivided into semantic (words, concepts, rules, and abstract ideas; everything that is necessary to use a language; mental thesaurus, which organizes the person’s knowledge about the words and other verbal symbols, their meanings and references, the links between them, and about rules, formulas and algorithms for manipulating with these symbols, concepts and relationships) and episodic (memory of episodes dating back to the time and events having taken place in a personal experience, and the relationship between them) [3].

At the same time, the most specific kind of memory affecting the formation of personal meaning-making, whose essence makes the “personal knowledge” (M. Polanyi), is the autobiographical memory, regarded by E. Tulvingom as a form of episodic, and which is marked out by his followers as an independent one. Further to characterize autobiographical memory (AM) we adhere to an approach by V.V. Nurkova who is today the most prominent researcher in this field [4].

According to V. Nurkova, autobiographical memory is a “superior memory function, organized on the basis of meaning-making, which operates with a personal experience and provides the formation of a subjective history of the life and experience of one as a unique extended in time subject of life’s journey” [4, 3]. The content of autobiographical memory is a part of empirical experience, which is assessed as a relevant system of semantic structures of an individual. Autobiographical memory has a multilevel structure which principles are defined by the use of different systems of sociocultural resources.

As structural and functional unit of the AM on a micro level V.V. Nurkova describes autobiographical recollection (in the form of vivid episodes of the past, an important recollection, a turning recollection, a characteristic recollection). On a macro level, the role of the structural and functional unit is performed by a holistic view of a man about his fate (in the form of life stories, configuration stages of

personality development and metaphorical images of the past and momentary life-review).

Characterizing the mechanisms of autobiographical memory V.V. Nurkova compares cognitive, phenomenological, and sociocultural approaches to their study. [4] In the cognitive approach, the main attention of researchers focuses on the operational level of AM functioning and AM mechanisms is essentially boiled down to the additional processing procedures of “I-classified” information included in the model of the learning process. The phenomenological approach, including narrative psychology and psychoanalysis, describes the diversity of understanding of autobiographical experience through different times, the dynamics of emotions in its reflection and reconstruction. Narrative psychology marks out the structuring patterns of autobiographical experience in the form of the stories about the “history of life” events, including in correlation with the material of the autobiographical genre of art. Limitations of these approaches are associated with difficulties in the consideration of a number of issues, including such as the role of consciousness and cultural resources in the development and functioning of AM, the AM role in self-identification. In the sociocultural approach, which largely overcomes these limitations, AM is considered as “extremely human, developmentally late phenomenon, whose specific structural and functional characteristics of the content are determined by cultural specific models of autobiographical experience organization, assumed by a child in the process of interaction with the social environment” [4, 4-5]. Such approach allows us to consider AM as a socio-cultural product, as internalized individual ways of meaning-making and structuring our meaningful experience.

From the standpoint of sociocultural approach the formation of autobiographical memory in ontogeny occurs when a child studies different systems of sociocultural means of meaningful experience structure. According to V. Nurkova appropriation of cultural implements of autobiographical memory mediation, which are the means of creating an integrated, deeply personal subjective picture of the past, is made through a series of increasingly challenging forms: an autobiographical story of a single emotionally rich episode, important memories, a generalized existential theme that combines a set of memories; meaningful human life history, an integrated synthesis of personal meaningful experience through the creation of concept of his own destiny.

The information on ontogenesis of AP has a lot of in common with the research results about the autobiographical memory mechanisms in working with actual stressful experience of an individual. M.Sh. Magomed-Eminov [5] enumerates the forms of constructive “work” of an individual, creating the necessary conditions for the transformation of meaning: “1) the creation of fragmented, discrete events correlating with specific, particular identity of a person; 2) the generalized representations, which are reproduced in the constructive work of an individual and are placed in a spherical space-time of the life-world; 3) the construction of narratives, autobiographies, biographies, life stories, comparing with narrative identity; 4) the ontological modeling on the being a person history in the meaningful, existentially-temporal, cultural and

historical person's work, including the work of doing (M. M. Bakhtin) in the unity of the three temporal modes, the worlds" [5, 32]. It is important that in this case the author emphasizes the role of existential plan in the development of meaningful experience which is projected in consciousness in more and more complex forms.

Based on the above studies we suggest an alternative definition of the main properties of meaningful experience and the laws of its formation, which can be used in educational practice.

Personal meaningful experience is an existentially-temporal integrity and unites "the history of a personality" in the consciousness, not only in an individual and psychological, but also in the sociocultural dimension. By its nature, being a chronotope, meaningful experience concentrates on the interpretation of the past and develops in the current time and space, linking the existing experience with new challenges and future goals.

Meaningful experience has the property of *integrity*, as a substantial unity of cognition experience, value experience, practical work and human creativity in the world development and perception a person's capabilities (in terms of M.N. Skatkin and I.Ya. Lerner) and is the basis for competent decisions in new situations.

Polymodality of meaningful experience is expressed in the existence of main meaningful views through cognitive and figurative-emotional (indicated by L.M. Vekker), activity-related symptoms — through meaningful setting, anticipating the nature and the direction of new actions. Meaningful experience is characterized by invariance of dedicated relationships with variability of semantic content of thought. If the meaning is clear, it can be expressed in different sets of linguistic resources. In this case, the semantic content is always richer than its text content.

Meaningful experience is *a core of value-semantic position* of a person. In the individual consciousness, it is presented as an inner basis for defining life goals and life perspective. Perceiving in the light of the meaningful experience knowledge, like any new experience, is considered by a person in relation to his life's relationships and is experienced as a personal value, as an important step in understanding the world and themselves in this world.

Relying on meaningful experience, a person considers himself as "identical" to himself. The proposed understanding of the meaningful experience correlates to some extent with the concept of *personal identity* as a holistic view of a man about himself, his way of development which allows him to take his life as meaningful continuing integrity.

At the same time meaningful experience is always *multidimensional* because it concentrates and structures different forms of psychosocial personal identity into integrity—moral, civil, ethnic, religious, etc.

The concept of the *meaningful experience* is comparable to the interpretation of vital experience by A.S. Belkin [6] as a mixture of thoughts, feelings, actions, experienced by a man and are as valuable as an important subjective experience, which is embedded in the personal concept of life, answers important questions and allows us to formulate completely new challenges for ourselves, which isn't indifferent

and which leaves a trace not only in the mind, but also in the feelings of a person, his behavior strategies, and more—in the strategies of life.

Meaningful experience is an individual model of the life world, which is constructed in the process of its interpretation through the lens of culture. Personal meaningful experience—is a meaningful construction of human life reality. It is created, tested, corrected many times during a lifetime by relying on the actual experience of the activity experience. It connects the tendency to transformation and preservation of personality stability; it is flexible, dynamic, ambiguous, and often contradictory, just as the human interaction with the world, which is reflected in it.

The formation of personal meaningful experience occurs in the form of cultural appropriation, supported by the mechanisms of creativity, interpretation, living through and reflection of subjective value of new experience, mediated by cultural values and meanings. Meaningful relation between a man and the world returns to his culture through productive activities. In other words, the meaning, appeared and functioning in the structure of consciousness, is a universal self-organized form of the culture. In the context of educational process personal meaningful experience acts as a central component pertaining to the humanities, which provides the student's entrance to the cultural field, his identity and self-development. We share the view of A.A. Veryaev [7], considering the content of education as a small semiosphere, which is a means of forming the internal culture of a person on the basis of personal and meaningful integration.

The formation of the meaningful experience is comparable with several stages that take place in the interaction of existential and subjective plans: 1) in the urgent present of a person the events occur and accomplish to actualize the sense of his own identity etc.; 2) a meaningful attitude to the events is developed to link different temporal and event-spatial points of human life into a single node and to compare, identify, generalize them etc.; 3) a new level of understanding of the events is reached by the way of important facts of his own biography in the form of narratives, autobiographies, biographies, life stories; 4) there is a transition to a more complex form of a new experience interpretation through the inclusion of new evidence of person's biography in the life scenario, in the context of understanding the meaning of his own life and destiny.

Meaningful experience may be considered as a personal educational product, since it includes a significant, meaningful, obtained through his own efforts knowledge about the world and himself in the world which is 'lived through' by a human. In our opinion there are open questions for the educational theory and practice: 1) what the actual content of the emerging of meaningful experience of the learners is 2) what the status of "personal knowledge" from assimilated knowledge, cultural values, methods of work has acquired and from memory later as unnecessary will not be released. In order to saturate, concentrate and further enrich the meaningful experience, you need to know in what form this experience is "packed", in what way through the minds it is represented, what work understanding does and how to organize it. It is very important to see this plan of personality development, which is not so obvious,

but very real and substantial for teachers. As a rule in teaching practice the content of marked out learners' "units" in psychology emerge in the form of autobiographical memory (memories, life stories, understanding their purpose in life). They are made not only spontaneously (they are really influenced by many factors—intrapersonal, social and psychological), but also aside from the educational process.

Experience of using the procedures and techniques of sense-actualization with narrative texts is presented in pedagogical hermeneutics. However, the understanding of a place and a role of these psychological structures and the mechanism of their development in the personal meaningful experience related to the autobiographical memory mechanisms can significantly change the attitude of a teacher to them and make them the subject of care, attention, and they can be used at lessons of different subjects, especially in solving problems of learning and education. For the development of the personal meaningful experience, as shown above, the event-trigger component of education is important, when the students have an opportunity to "live through" educational events (and in practice often—planned "events"!) as meaningful for themselves, to get a new experience of self-knowledge, to open productive, creative abilities, new facets of their personalities, meaningful social trial and sociocultural practices.

Interpretation of gained experience is not less significant, its deep understanding, a dialogue and a cultural polylogue in this process, and it result in important life lessons that can be possible only with the adoption of this experience as an integral part of the "I" as a fact of personal biography.

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