

THE NATURE OF LONELINESS: THE MEASUREMENT OF LONELINESS AND THE PROBLEM OF ITS COMPENSATION

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Abstract: One of the most acute problems of our time is considered - the problem of loneliness. The nature of this social phenomenon is analyzed. Loneliness is considered inextricably linked with the crisis in communication. At the same time, communication is seen as the substance of human existence. Loneliness is not substantial; it is only a consequence of the unsatisfactory quality of the available forms of communication. Therefore, it is possible to minimize loneliness only by improving people's communication. Transformation of communication and overcoming of the most acute forms of loneliness is impossible without measuring its basic characteristics. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of compensatory communication as a way of harmonizing the world of personal communication. It is also taken into account that compensatory communication gives us both (+) and (-) harmony.

Key words: loneliness, communication, compensatory communication, measurement of loneliness, self-assertion of personality, emotional components of communication.

Introduction

In the modern scientific knowledge, the problem of the interconnection of the levels of scientific knowledge becomes more important. The theoretical level implies a thorough justification of its provisions by empirical data and vice versa. The metrological component of it is all the more important in social and humanitarian cognition. Especially productive is this methodology when studying the problem of loneliness.

The crisis of communication fixed by the researchers and, as a result of this crisis, the transformation of loneliness into a global problem of a modern man poses to the representatives of social and humanitarian knowledge, and not only to them, questions about how this state is being overcome in practice, what are the possible ways of overcoming it, depend on how they affect the person.

However, due to the multidimensionality of these issues, the process of their resolution is far from being completed. Until now, the destructive power of loneliness has not been fully revealed, although some scientists call it "the plague of the 20th century".

Any social and humanitarian research should be based on a solid philosophical basis, which has a fundamental evidentiary basis. Without losing contact with the results of empirical research and their direct generalizations, the author must be able to immerse himself in the metaphysical depth of the problem he is studying. In our case, this is a social and philosophical analysis of the problem of loneliness, which is most efficiently carried out in a dialectical connection with the study of the topic of *communication*.

1. The Nature of Loneliness

Trying to determine the essence and nature of loneliness, it is impossible to do this, leaving aside the topic of communication. It is important to investigate the conditions of communication that generate alienation and loneliness, to determine what is to be understood as communication.

The theoretical attitudes of various authors are antinomically interrelated to *the nature of loneliness*. Some are inclined to see in it only a *state of consciousness*, the causes of which are correlated either in the characterological features of the personality itself, or in the conditions of its existence. The polarity of these approaches is removed by synthesis, which takes into account both circumstances. However, the psychological concept of loneliness is not exhausted by what has been said. For the very fact of experiencing loneliness is treated by some as a manifestation of pathology, others as a normal state. As a normal state, moreover, rooted in the very conditions of human existence, loneliness is interpreted by existentialists. Unlike representatives of the psychological approach, for which loneliness is a temporary state, an exciting personality, existentialists believe that people are initially lonely. No one else can share our feelings and thoughts with us; disunity is the essential condition of our experiences. The opposite point of view is widely known. For many researchers it is self-evident that *communication is inherent in human being*, that it expresses the very nature of human existence. So in the works of M. Buber, S.L. Frank, M.M. Bakhtin and V.S. Bibler with great power expressed the idea

of the dialogic nature of the existence of man and his culture.

The newest research, including in the field of biology, confirms the importance for a person of full communication and harm that loneliness brings. Man in the process of evolution passed a long school of group socialization. Only together people could resist the challenges of nature and hostile communities. Our body perceives loneliness as insecurity. "For thousands of years, the value of social communication has become part of our nervous system, so the lack of such a protective force creates a stressful state in the body", says Professor Kachioppo, Loneliness causes stress, and prolonged or chronic stress leads to an increase in the level of the basic hormone-cortisol, which is responsible for a complex of reactions associated with anxiety, danger and even the threat of life" [2, p. 112–113].

The concept of "communication" (is taken extremely broadly) covers all possible intersubject interactions: direct and indirect, real and imagined; socially acceptable and negative (conflict). Communication is the substance of human existence, it is inherent in human being, expresses its essence; loneliness is not substantial, but it expresses the quality of communication itself. Loneliness is not a complete lack of communication, but rather its insufficiency, incompleteness, defective. That is its nature. It is an indicator of deformation in the sphere of personal communication. In this case, loneliness is immanent to communication, it is inseparable from it, but it has a different degree of severity, often acts in latent forms. In the concepts of M. Buber and M.S. Kagan as a subject-partner in communication is considered nature, God (according to Buber) and other modalities of the subject and quasi-subject. Other authors, analyzing loneliness, distinguish between the cosmic, cultural, social and interpersonal dimensions of loneliness. [10] Measurement of loneliness is understood by them in a metaphorical sense.

The above reasoning gives an idea of the nature and nature of loneliness and communication. But since the aim of our research is connected with the problem of loneliness measurement and finding ways to overcome it, a problem that is practical in nature. It is necessary to find more specific language and communication and loneliness. For example, I.I. Ovcharenko defines loneliness as "a state and sensation of a person who is in a real or imaginary communicative deprivation (isolation from other people, rupture of social ties, lack of meaningful

communication for him, lack of communication)" [7, p. 729]. In its turn, communication is the *interaction* between people, based on direct interpersonal contacts. Communication is a means of achieving the commonality of people, while preserving the individuality of each, exchanging meaningful information for them, self-affirmation and emotional saturation.

2. Measuring Loneliness

The interpretation of the essence of the concept of measurement in the twentieth century was quite dynamic. If before the concept of "measurement" was applied to the measurement of the physical properties of material objects, today such a point of view becomes controversial. From the point of view of philosophy, this is not surprising, for "the thought of man is infinitely deepened from the phenomenon to the essence, from the essence of the first, so to say, order, to the essence of the second order, and so on without end" [6, p. 227]. Thus, the development of scientific knowledge, the expansion and deepening of its subject areas required a convergence of methods of natural and social and human sciences. The development of humanitarian knowledge required it to overcome the descriptiveness and application of methods of exact sciences. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, new approaches to measurement have been formed for the present century. The source of these approaches is in the development of metrology itself. Domestic specialists in metrology

R.E. Taimanov and K.V. Sapozhnikova believe that the International Vocabulary of Metrology - Basic and General Concepts and Associated Terms, 3rd ed., 2008 version with minor corrections, BIPM, JCGM 200, 2012. (VIM). "...a significant step has been taken towards expanding the scope of measurement" [11]. But at the same time, in a number of their publications and during speeches at local and international forums, they propose and substantiate proposals on the correction of the basic concepts of metrological terminology in the next edition of VIM. This will expand the scope of measurements, where the subject of research is a person, without reducing the requirements for the results of measuring measurements. Analyzing the contents of the notes to the fundamental terms of the VIM dictionary, R.E. Taimanov and K.V. Sapozhnikova draw our attention to the fact that the measured values can be non-physical (NOTE 6) [12]. Heuristically for the study of loneliness in connection with compensatory

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processes we hear suggestions about the correction of the term “qualitative property” NOTE 1 to the term “measurement” in VIM [12]. It is difficult not to agree with the authors that “Quantitative value is not appropriated if there is no social need in it or this need is unrealizable at the modern level of science. The same property, depending on its use, can be a quantity or a qualitative property” [12]. And since loneliness is interpreted by us as an indicator of such a *quality of communication* that does not satisfy the communicative needs of the subject, the above approach to measurement seems to us to be very heuristic.

The theme of loneliness is boundless, if you try to designate it within the boundaries of culture, art, literature, philosophy, religion, etc. And in science, it acts as an interdisciplinary problem, naturally in unity with the topic of communication. But scientifically, we plunged into this topic, in spite of its theoretical and practical significance, not too deeply. There is no single philosophical concept of loneliness, articles on rather narrow topics and popular science books prevail. This is largely true of the problem of measuring loneliness. The most intensive loneliness is studied approximately from the 50s of the XX century, primarily by the efforts of US scientists. A tangible stimulus to intensify the study of the problem of loneliness in Russia was the publication of a fundamental collection of publications, a kind of ontology of solitude, called “Labyrinths of Loneliness” (1989) [5]. In Russia, the study of the theme of loneliness was intensified in the years of Perestroika, and in the 1990s a number of dissertational works were completed in which empirical methods was applied. Meanwhile, we still feel that the research of this problem is not only far from over, but is at the very beginning. The variety of theoretical constructions revealing the nature of solitude often depends on the composition of the empirical material that the researchers have at their disposal. And, on the contrary, often the decisive role is played by the approach to the problem of loneliness, which holds this or that scientist. Probably the future is behind the synthetic concepts of loneliness.

Daniel Russell, one of the creators of the UCLA loneliness measurement scale, said that even relatively recently regarding the measurement of loneliness, two statements appeared “1) there is very little empirical research on this important social problem; 2) the main obstacle to empirical

research in this area is the lack of adequate tools for measuring loneliness” [8, p. 192]. Now the situation is changing rapidly. There invented a lot of systems for measuring loneliness. But this set can be reduced to two conceptual approaches: *one-dimensional* and *multidimensional*. One-dimensional systems of loneliness, or as they are called – global systems, have a high degree of reliability. However, they represent loneliness as a single phenomenon, comparable to other holistic phenomena and differing from them by the intensity of the experience. At the same time, depending on the questions posed in the survey questionnaire and the contingent of respondents, information was received concerning self-assessment of the subjects, their level of concern, vulnerability to aggressiveness, depressiveness of selfishness, etc. With respect to multidimensional measurement scales, it is obvious that they allow us to establish dissatisfaction with different types of relationships with others and determine to what extent their existential needs are met: meaningful, intimate friendship, self-respect, safety, etc. Unfortunately, the method of expert evaluation is rarely used

(I.F. Shishkin) [14]. In our opinion, the most complete and profound measurement of loneliness could be achieved on the ways of synthesizing a one-dimensional and multidimensional system of measuring loneliness with the method of expert assessments of the place of personality in a communication system, coupled with the method of scaling the obtained results. *The prototype of a single person* (L.M. Horovitz, R.S. French, K.A. Andersen) [13, p. 243–274] can be a social and humanitarian analog of the standard in measuring physical quantities. But unlike physical standards, although it gives an organized set of characteristics, it has a high degree of error. The authors estimate their method as follows: “...the probability of occurrence of a single (prototypical-V.G.) sign was 0.55...” “Because of this, we cannot make specific predictions for individual cases; we can only express probabilistic assumptions about lonely people in general. The prototype allows us to make scientific predictions and facilitate the task of describing individuals who consider themselves lonely, but to determine the unique meaning of the concept of loneliness for everyone the individual is possible only in the course of a systematic study of this problem” [13, p. 274].

3. The problem of compensatory communication

Many people who have not put up with their own loneliness are fighting it. Unfortunately, this struggle is often spontaneous. This is how *compensatory* communication arises (from the Latin *compensare* to equalize, balance, compensate), producing correction, and often radical transformation of the communicative world of the individual and creating the basis for subsequent deeper and diversified changes in her individual and collective being. The most common are successive manifestations of compensatory communication in the youth environment. And it happens not accidentally.. For the most vulnerable to loneliness are children and young people under 30 years old. Here you can find out as *situational*, passing, surmountable loneliness and kinds of loneliness which are *chronic*. The danger of the latter is that having emerged at a very young age can accompany a person throughout his life. Respondents often avoid a direct answer to the question: "Is he alone?" For this would mean admit defeat. Such confessions stigmatize the person. It makes it "pushed aside", for example, in training collective. Recently, such activities among young people have been widely adopted as distance work. Working outside the office creates psychological discomfort. Scientists say that working outside the office causes a sense of loneliness. Due to the growth of the intensity of communication in networks, the mass enthusiasm for young computer games, the number of computer addicts increases, and consequently people who find it difficult to maintain full-fledged, traditional communication grows as well. Compensatory communication defeats loneliness only in case of *overcompensation*, but more often softens it, or, more dramatically, replaces one of its forms with the other. We should not forget that the second group of lonely people, naturally having a different nature, is elderly people after 60 years.

Compensatory communication is logical to evaluate as "*communication for the sake of communication*", that is, for the sake of those desired values that are directly in the self-valuable interaction between the "I" and "You". It replenishes the missing components of communication "interwoven" in the objective activity; communication is not self-worthy and often has an involuntary character, communication functional-role, not saving from loneliness. Analysis of the current communicative

situation shows that the most "scary" are the emotional and activity-volitional components of communication that initiate the activation of the need for emotional satiation and self-affirmation. The general compensation line will run over here. The study of the results of specifically scientific studies of groups with a deviant orientation (criminal groups, alcoholic microenvironment, community of drug addicts, spontaneous group communication of adolescents and young men, communication in informal youth associations and mass entertainment of sports and music fans) shows that one of the factors in their formation is unrealized personality in the sphere of her everyday communication, felt as a deficit of emotionally saturated, personality-oriented ties, lack of empathy and empathy, difficulties for self-assertion and social self-fulfillment, that is, they are socially compensatory. The same is said about the results of studies of extreme leisure activities of young people with primitive hedonism typical for them, combined with cruelty to others, to oneself and taking the form of unrestrained vandalism. [3] These are: parkour, communication within the boundaries of the subculture of dog hunters, crow killers (hunters for crows), people haters (hunters on homeless people, guest workers), etc. The tendency of the growth of the modalities of the compensatory behavior essentially increases. Participation in these groups would be less attractive if it were not strengthened due to the compensatory and communicative capabilities available in them. Therefore, the fight against a number of negative phenomena must have in its arsenal forms and means of communication that are advantageously different from those that can offer its members a negative environment. In the modern communicative situation, the role of the specific function of communication increases – the function of *self-assertion*, for only in the situation of communication does the real significance and role of the subject of communication reveal not only in relation to his social environment, but also in relation to all possible modalities of the subject of communication. [4] The realization of the self-assertion function, as a rule, is accompanied by the *hedonic function* of communication. Moreover, in modern society illusory (imaginary) self-assertion and primitive hedonism are widespread [3]. Thus, against the background of illusory compensation, there is a real decompensation of the personality in the sphere of communication, often accompanied by its degradation.

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It would be a significant “skew” if we have only talked about the forms of compensatory communication that cause our greatest concern. Do not forget about overcompensation means of communication. Unlike decompensation (dying compensation), it promotes personal growth and a radical transformation of the partners in communication on the basis of dialogical mutual affirmation. Such, for example, are various forms of joint artistic activity, reconstruction of historical events, volunteerism, etc.

Of particular importance there are activities specifically directed against loneliness: “In 2011, the crown princess of Denmark, Mary, launched a national initiative to overcome loneliness. In the US, the American Association of Retired Persons finances several activities to reduce the loneliness of the Elderly Age UK. An organization similar to the American Association of Retired Persons and other groups appeared in 2011. They started the company against the loneliness, named Campaign to End Loneliness. In 2016, the Air Force documentary The Age of Loneliness announced the "epidemic of loneliness" and helped this issue to become a national priority” [9].

The social value of compensatory communication is ultimately determined on the basis of whether it approximates the subject to real communication partners, from which he temporarily moved away, or, on the contrary, moves away from real connections and substitutes them. Similarly, you can draw a conclusion about *virtual communication on the network*, but this is a separate big topic.

Conclusion

The research we have conducted shows that we are at the very beginning of the path to study loneliness. That loneliness and communication are two sides of the same coin and in their analysis it is advisable to use the antinomic method, since here we come across trans-rational events. The concept of compensatory communication shows how and with what results a person can overcome deformation and monotony of everyday lonely existence. We badly need the ultimate general theory of loneliness, which would act as a methodology for a detailed study of this phenomenon and its eradication.

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