

## THE PROBLEMS OF RESEARCH OF PERSON RESPONSIBILITY

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**Анотація.** В даній статті робиться аналіз малодосліджених аспектів відповідальності особистості, котра приймає рішення. Робиться спроба намітити подальші шляхи дослідження даних проблем. Особливу увагу приділено зв'язку відповідальності з процесами прийняття рішень. Розглядається проблема прояву відповідальності на різних етапах прийняття рішень, починаючи від його планування, закінчуючи реалізацією рішення. Досліджується питання співвідношення відповідальності людини як суб'єкта власних дій та відповідальності виконавця. Наголошується на важливості становлення саме суб'єктної відповідальності як основи збереження демократичного ладу в суспільстві. Вказується на проблему дослідження феномена уникнення відповідальності. В той же час розглядають можливості існування психологічних факторів, що обмежують відповідальність людини. Приділено увагу відчуттю провини як вказівнику на втечу людини від свого призначення.

**Ключові слова:** Відповідальність, прийняття рішень, суб'єктна відповідальність, провинна, перекладання відповідальності.

**Аннотация.** В данной статье делается анализ малоисследованных аспектов ответственности личности принимающей решения. Делается попытка наметить дальнейшие пути исследования данных проблем. Особое внимание уделено связи ответственности с процессами принятия решений.

Рассматривается проблема проявления ответственности на разных этапах принятия решения, начиная от его планирования, заканчивая реализацией решения. Исследуется вопрос соотношения ответственности человека как субъекта собственных действий и ответственности исполнителя. Отмечается важность становления именно субъектной ответственности как основы сохранения демократического строя в обществе. Указывается на проблему исследования феномена избегания ответственности. В то же время рассматриваются возможности существования психологических факторов, ограничивающих ответственность человека. Уделено внимание чувству вины как указателю на попытку избежать человеком своего предназначения.

**Ключевые слова:** Ответственность, принятия решений, субъектная ответственности, вина, перекладывание ответственности.

**The summary.** The paper studies underinvestigated aspects of personality's responsibility for making decisions. Further ways of the given problems investigation are outlined. A special attention is given to the connection between responsibility and decision making processes. We have considered the problem of responsibility manifestation at different stages of decision making, from planning to decision implementation. The problem of responsibility of a person as the subject of one's own actions and responsibility of a performer is studied. Particular emphasis is placed on the importance of subjective responsibility as the basis of democratic society. The problem of avoiding responsibility phenomenon is outlined. Psychological factors which limit person's responsibility are studied. Particular emphasis is given to the feeling of guilt as an index of person's escape from his destination.

**Key words:** Responsibility, decision making, subjective responsibility, shifting of responsibility.

**Formulation of the problem.** Responsibility is studied by many sciences and different constituents of this phenomenon can be determined. Of all science branches psychology investigates the most important, i.e. human, constituent of responsibility. Responsibility has been investigated by such approaches as

existential psychology, attribution theory, locus of control theory, trait theory, etc. In our study we treat responsibility in its widest sense as the acceptance of duties and responsibilities [8]. Responsibility is inextricably related to the feeling of guilt. The last, which is rooted in the genetics, creates the basis of responsibility [4]. Responsibility is a meaning creation (principle), which regulates the activity of a human, correlating one's motives, aims etc. [9]. As postmodernists (and not only them) point out, human activity more often endangers balance in nature processes, than regulates these processes. We are now in the situation of risk, when the results of our solutions can make the very existence of humankind problematic. Post-nonclassical science emphasizes the ethical component in the scientist's activity, requiring that the results of an investigation should contribute to the survival of humankind, and not vice versa [2]. Postmodernists' views are probably too pessimistic, but they are still worth paying attention, because the problem of risk in human activity and responsibility for its consequences has not been solved yet, partially due to the limitations of human mentality and its possibilities to analyze information and act correspondingly in complicated situations. But at the same time (and it is proved, for example, by D. Dörner's experiments) one can adequately make decisions in complicated situations, if necessary training is provided [3]. One can to a certain extent overcome the limitations of his mentality, as it is shown by the activity theory. In any case this problem needs further thorough investigations.

Modern studies consider responsibility in historical and interdisciplinary contexts [15], showing the association of responsibility with freedom and sense-value sphere of a personality. New methods of this phenomenon investigation have been elaborated recently [9]. But studies of responsibility are centered mainly on its general manifestations. Only a negligible minority of investigations differentiate manifestations of responsibility of activity's different participants, though it is always highly important to discover different variants of this phenomenon existence.

Responsibility is of great importance for modern Ukrainian society, because it is the precondition of democratic state foundation. Responsibility of a person should be viewed at different levels, beginning with decisions at the level of everyday situation and ending with the responsibility of a statesman for political decisions. According to the principles of scientific methodology, it is required to determine general patterns of phenomenon's existence and development, peculiarities of these patterns functioning in certain cases of this phenomenon manifestation, the changes in this phenomenon manifestation during the transition from one level to the other. It is also important to study the responsibility as an integral phenomenon in the structure of man-world interaction.

**The aim of the paper** is to outline further ways of responsibility problems study at the modern stage of psychological knowledge development.

**The main part of the study.** Responsibility is directly related to the process of decision making. This relation has been identified by many investigators, but its contents have not been fully revealed. In order to understand the role of responsibility in the processes of decision making, we must turn to existential psychology. The main thesis of this psychological school concerning decision making is simple: the person, making a decision, changes the world; and as the person's decisions are the source of changes in the world, man is responsible for these changes [5]. It should be also added that the inactivity of people is also a decision, which influences the world as well.

The person with underdeveloped subjectivity is, during decision making, under the influence of outer forces. And though this does not mean that such a person is irresponsible for his/her actions, he/she loses the feeling of responsibility. Responsibility is based on universal values, and the underdevelopment of sense-value sphere of a person leads to the accepting of pseudovalues, created by the state or some ideology. It should be noted, that in the ideology of antihumanism the central place is occupied by the image of an enemy, and this can be clearly seen in the politics of 20-21 centuries, where many ethnic, racial, religious groups have been proclaimed enemies. The main peculiarity of the attitude to the enemy is the

non-recognition of his/her human rights, and we can observe this phenomenon in the actions of Nazi, American soldiers in Iraq, Ukrainian police during Revolution of 2013-2014, Russian military forces in East Ukraine etc. In all these cases we can observe the same forms of humiliation (moral humiliation, undressing, torture etc.), which demonstrates the existence of general patterns in the actions towards people who are considered to be enemies.

It is necessary to admit, that during antihuman actions people mostly do not feel guilty – they are just “following the orders” or “acting for the greater good”. Such statements turn into defensive mechanisms, which shield the person from the recognition of his guilt.

The non-recognition of one’s own guilt leads to false existence, this is the central thesis of existential psychology. And as S. Kierkegaard, the founder of existentialism, points out, the recognition of guilt makes remorse possible, but people tend to weaken this feeling by careless life [7]. It would be interesting for empirical psychology to check if this thesis is true.

In general it is difficult to distinguish true joy of life from defensive mechanism, which may be related to the escape from one’s destination. According to existential psychology, a responsible person cannot be wholly happy, because he/she constantly feels responsible for the world.

In the classification of responsibility’s different types we may distinguish subjective responsibility, which characterizes the person as the creator of one’s own being, and the responsibility of a performer, i.e. the responsibility of the person as a part of the system, performing certain functions.

Psychologically developed person is characterized by the high level of development of both responsibility types, and the first kind of responsibility dominates over the second one. Let us study the disorders of behavior structure, which are related to the correlation of the mentioned types of responsibility. It is necessary to admit that the responsibility of a performer has a social nature; it is formed in the process of socialization, when it is required from the child to perform certain duties. This type of responsibility is considered to be mostly important in

totalitarian systems, but it also plays a significant role in democratic states. This is quite understandable because the responsibility of a performer is a normal attribute of people's interaction in the society. This responsibility type demands (in the existential sense) the bravery to be a part of some community (it has been brilliantly described by P. Tillich [16]). We may say that the responsibility of a performer includes the care about his family, performance of professional duties, law-abidingness etc. But this type of responsibility is limited as it functions according to principles of a social system which are alienated from man. The main problem is that without awareness of yourself as the subject, as the creator of outer reality, responsibility may be destructive for other people. A vivid example of this can be R. Höß, the Commandant of Auschwitz concentration camp, who was characterized as a responsible person since his childhood and also demonstrated high level of responsibility in ruling this concentration camp [6]. A really responsible person must think about possible consequences of his activity. As J.-P. Sartre pointed out, the man should, before doing something, think over such a question: what will happen if everybody acts in the same way [10]? The development of subjective responsibility should be, in our opinion, the main aim of responsibility education. But at the same time it should be noted that no responsibility is possible without the association with society. In existential literature we meet characters which understand that they should act responsibly, but they fail to act in such a way, because they are isolated from society and its values.

The identity of a man is an important factor, which influences the level of responsibility. The behavior of a person depends on the awareness of belonging to something. But the mechanism of this awareness development is not quite clear yet. There are only general schemes of this process, and it is impossible to apply them for purposeful development of self-awareness. The level of education, adequate knowledge about the world are important, but they do not guarantee that person's decisions will be correct and responsible.

The correlation between the level of personality's development (the ability to make adequate decisions) and the degree of responsibility of a certain person is also an important problem. It is necessary to remind the reasons of irresponsible behavior. The reasons on the personal level are: low prosocial orientation of a personality, low level of civic consciousness, predomination of achievement motivation, etc. The reasons on the intellectual level are: low level of planning habits, the absence of necessary knowledge, etc.

We can distinguish such elements in the structure of integral responsibility of a person who makes important decisions: 1) responsibility of a person for his/her duties; 2) responsibility of a person for careful planning of his/her decisions, and for taking into account all possible variants of future events; 3) responsibility of a person for his/her decisions implementation and the results of them. The ability to resist undesirable influences is also an important aspect, because it is the main basis of the responsibility for the decision consequences. Let us study more thoroughly the above mentioned aspects of responsibility. A responsible person must estimate the volume of responsibility for himself/herself. As for the first point, it should be noted that society, as P. Sorokin writes, provides means of people selection for higher scales of social hierarchy [13]. And, according to principles of L. Vygotsky, we can assume the probability of such mechanisms internalization into the psyche of a personality. The personality should have mechanisms, which can affect man's choice of his place in society and the level of complexity of duties, which are required by his/her social status. The self-esteem of man (and in the broader sense self-reliance of man) is the manifestation of these mechanisms. Though we now rather sufficiently understand these mental structures we still do not have the answer to a very important question: what factors force people to choose positions which do not match their abilities? As it has been already pointed out, self-awareness of person's place and role in the structure of society is highly important for the responsible behavior, and it is especially significant for the person who acts as a leader.

Besides, it is important for us to create a mechanism which can counteract this phenomenon, and it will require significant changes in social institutions and people's minds. Irresponsibility in the process of planning and implementing decisions is mainly caused by professional incompetence and personal immaturity of the person who makes the decision.

G. Skovoroda remarked that if man's occupation corresponds to the inclinations of his soul, it will insure his true happiness and it will lead to the approximation of the person to his essence [12]. So, the absence of this correspondence is not only irresponsibility towards others, but it is also irresponsibility towards oneself, since it separates a person from one's true self.

The person is also responsible for planning one's own activity. If certain alternatives and possible consequences of the decisions are not taken into account, it will cause, in many cases, disasters. Due to the limits of human mind man is incapable to take everything into account, but one should try to elaborate the most complete picture of reality. On the other hand, the situation may require quick action without well-thought out plans. This is especially typical for extreme situations like war. B. Teplov points out that the person should have a great store of well-thought variants for immediate application [14]. H. A. Simon proposes the strategy of searching not for the best, but for an acceptable decision of the situation in which one finds himself [11]. There is still the problem of training leaders for actions in extreme situations. As it can be seen from modern history, leaders are often irresponsible and cannot act adequately, which leads to material and human losses.

Responsibility can be also revealed at the stage of decision implementation. Clarity, thoroughness and sequence of actions are the preconditions of the aim achievement. The function of control is also an important manifestation of responsibility at the level of decision implementation, and this function means surveying the process of decision implementation, identifying markers, which require changes in the action strategy. It is significant to reveal psychological peculiarities of the mentioned processes, factors, which influence the thoroughness



of decision implementation, peculiarities of control functioning in different kinds of activity, etc.

The problem of responsibility for the decisions results is also very important, and it is especially significant for politicians and military commanders during situations of crisis. B. Teplov indicates that a most important quality of a military commander is the ability to act responsibly for the implementation of certain military operations, to risk in order to achieve the result [14]. Unfortunately, not every person can act responsibly in an extreme situation. It is influenced by many factors: cognitive (the speed of thinking, the balance of analysis and synthesis, the practicality of thinking, etc.), the properties of nervous system (strength, balance), high level of self-regulation ability, but the most important factor is the availability of certain value ideals and identification of a person with these ideals. In our opinion, the last factor is mostly important for making a responsible act possible. But at the time being we can only state the influence of the mentioned factors, while their interrelation remains underinvestigated.

As it can be seen, responsibility is a complicated phenomenon, which can manifest itself differently in various kinds of activity. It would be advisable to create a classification of responsibility manifestations in order to study the variety of individual manifestations of this phenomenon and the creation of responsibility profile of a concrete person.

It is also important to study the phenomenon of avoiding responsibility and shifting it onto others. The investigations of defensive mechanisms, lies and social influence are significant for better understanding of this sphere. It is necessary to study the strategies of shifting responsibility onto others, the perception of this process by other people and their reaction on it, the peculiarities of mentality, which determine such reaction, etc.

Further investigations are still needed for differentiation of true responsibility, which is based on person's value priorities, and imposed responsibility, which causes false sense of guilt and allows one to manipulate a

person. It is still underinvestigated how imposed responsibility is felt by a person and how it influences one's decisions, health, etc.

It is known that the responsibility contributes to the efficiency of activity only when the level of responsibility is not too high. Excessive thoroughness of actions, search for the ideal solution in an extreme situation can impair reaching the goals. The negative influence of responsibility on activity and decision making can be seen from examples of certain some psychiatric disorders (psychasthenic psychopathy, etc.). A high level of responsibilities can negatively affect the psychosomatic health of a person. In addition, as excessive responsibility blocks aspiration and wish to achieve success, it can create excessive anxiety that prevents a person from fully realizing himself/herself, from taking new heights and revealing his/her potential in a particular activity. And, as we can see, the problem of optimal level of responsibility remains underinvestigated.

The accepting of a certain social role influences the formation of man's responsibility. But, unfortunately, it is not sufficient: appropriate internal conditions are required for the performance of one's role. This problem is underinvestigated, we can only say that these internal conditions require the existence of relevant meanings, which provide proper execution of a social role by a person. The problem is rather complicated because a person plays different social roles in various spheres of his/her life, and this circumstance sometimes leads to irresponsible behavior which is not typical for a given person. In this regard, the question arises about the possibility of forming a holistic value-semantic sphere of personality. Speaking about responsibility we should also pay attention to changes in the world caused by man. But we still have the underinvestigated problem of mechanisms of one's influence upon different systems with which he/she interacts.

One cannot ignore the influence of the system on a person. We know from the studies of P. Zimbardo and other social psychologists how great this influence may be [17]. The following questions arise: How much can the situation influence one's responsibility for his/her actions? Has the person really had the freedom of choice and has been able to regulate his/her actions? The answers to these

questions are important for legal procedures, for example, when one deals with the cases of totalitarian sects or some types of fraud. It is the task of psychology to outline the limits of human responsibility. We must admit that these limits depend on individual peculiarities of a person and also on the situation. Unfortunately, the differentiation of responsibility is still carried out rather roughly. Only age indices and pathology indices are taken into account, though person's actions are influenced by innumerable other factors. The influence of man on the world is efficient, if there are necessary preconditions for it. Complicated systems, which are widespread nowadays, are very often instable, and it leads to significant influence of random factors. In the moment of instability a random action of a person can greatly influence its further functioning and development. This is why the awareness of human actions is so significant, and it is also an underinvestigated problem. In the period of system stability the actions of an individual have an insignificant influence on system state, and in this case the person is only partially responsible. But even during the stable period of the system individual's actions are significant because they can at least accelerate the onset of instability period. Further research is also needed for a better understanding of the problem of the interaction between a personality and stable system, personality's experience of responsibility for processes in the system, including ones which are not dependent on his/her activities.

### **Conclusions**

1. It is necessary to concentrate on responsibility studying in concrete kinds of human activity. Special emphasis should be placed on the study of person's responsibility in extreme situations, which is significant for decision making in the situation of crisis. It is important to investigate the connection of responsibility with the processes of decision making, including the investigation of responsibility forms manifestation at all stages of planning and implementing the decision.

2. It is of high importance to form man's sense of subjectivity as the basis of true responsibility formation. The man should always consider

himself/herself a source of one's own actions, not succumbing to the temptation to reduce the tension by transforming himself/herself into a mere executor of the will of some external forces. This problem is especially relevant in the times of socio-political instability.

3. It is also significant to investigate the phenomenon of avoiding responsibility attempts at various levels of human activity, from avoiding responsibility at the level of concrete actions in the situations which threaten a person physically or can lead to negative consequences for somebody in a social sphere, to existential aspects of responsibility, which manifest themselves in the form of person's avoiding the purpose of his/her being and the phenomenon of existential guilt.

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