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**THE PHENOMENON OF LONELINESS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE
ONTOLOGY OF A MODERN METROPOLIS**

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The article is devoted to the psychological inquiry of loneliness in the context of the ontological features of the modern urban environment. The focus has been made on the links of loneliness and life in a big city. It has been concluded that the main factors that give rise to a feeling of loneliness among residents of modern megalopolises are: 1) the dominance of information technology in all spheres of public life; 2) the introduction of the network principle of organizing life and the destruction of hierarchical connections; 3) transformation of the communicative experience under the influence of the latest technologies (the main features are anonymity, indefinite identification, fear of direct communication, superficiality, functionality, formalism); 4) destruction of traditional forms of solidarity; 5) an individualistic style of behavior and an emphasis on competition for social positions are expressed; 6) the “market character” of modern urban dwellers forcing them to move away from open communication and strive for total control over emotions. Brought to the limit individuation reveals to a person the need to seek support in social contacts.

Key words: Personality, Loneliness, Existentialism, Metropolis, Communication.

The living space of a modern city dweller is undergoing significant changes under the influence of the development of high technologies. In fact, all the material and technical achievements of modern civilization are a kind of manifestation of the “soul” of the modern information society which uses them to streamline objective reality in accordance with its essence, adapts it to fit its needs. Virtual reality is the only possible form of objectification of the abstract idea of “absolute freedom” of a person. This is the absence of any norms and rules; this is a complete rejection of any style which is replaced by vulgar disharmonious eclecticism.

The aim of this work is to identify the ontological characteristics of a modern metropolis as a factor in the actualization of the existential phenomenon of loneliness.

The problem of loneliness is not new in socio-psychological knowledge. It has been analyzed in works of M. Buber, E. Durkheim, E. Fromm, K.-G. Jung and other authors. At the same time the factor of the megalopolis as an ontological space, which has its own specificity in the aspect of actualizing the phenomenon of loneliness remains practically unexplored although the need for such studies is obvious – modern civilization is, in essence, urbanistic.

The concept of “loneliness in a big city” is gradually included in the system of social and psychological concepts. According to British scientists at Cardiff University [1, p. 105] most of all various psychological problems including the problem of loneliness were found among urban residents. Moreover, the larger the city in which the person lived, the more psychological problems he had. In smaller cities residents with psychological disorders were less common, while residents of rural areas were practically not. At first glance, in big cities, a person is involved in intense daily communication. But according to a study of the loneliness of residents of Moscow and the Moscow region [2, p. 32], almost all

representatives of the younger generation of Muscovites answered that they prefer to communicate on social networks. It is the World Wide Web that is fraught with the danger of loneliness. A young man surrounded by hundreds of friends on the Internet is in fact sitting alone with a computer. The gradual realization of this leads to feelings of apathy and melancholy. The question about the number of friends is also interesting. Many young people were expected to answer this question in the affirmative. The circle of "virtual" friends, measured in hundreds most likely indicates that in real life a person experiences loneliness. 62% of Muscovite respondents answered that they experience feelings of disappointment, apathy and loneliness with an allegedly large volume of contacts, while among the residents of the region, only 37% of respondents gave such an answer.

In a study of S. Trubnikova [3] it was concluded that there were no significant statistically significant differences in the manifestation of the types of loneliness of elderly residents of a large city and a region in two samples. Consequently, this suggests that among urban and rural residents of the elderly, the prevalence of feeling of loneliness is equal. At the same time, the author points out the presence of a specific structure of destructive loneliness in the city and in the region, as well as the fact that the urban environment creates additional factors influencing the experience of negative forms of loneliness [3, p. 89].

An essential socially-cultural factor of loneliness in a big city today is the establishment of the network principle of social life and the destruction of hierarchical structures. It may seem paradoxical but a modern person strives to megalopolises with their maximum population concentration only in order to more reliably isolate themselves from the same as he single individuals.

Information and communication technologies directly and directly affect the daily life of a person defining the specifics and quality of its work, life,

leisure, lifestyle and even thinking. The development of information technology is transforming the entire structure of human communication experience. Anonymity due to the development of mediated forms of human communication allowing ambiguous identification of objects of communication. With the development of information technology, the number of live interpersonal contacts is significantly reduced. At the same time, as noted by psychologists, for a normal state of health, a person needs constant contact with other representatives of a similar in spirit social environment [4, p. 13]. A person who spends a lot of time in cyberspace loses the habit of reality and begins to be afraid of direct communication. The individualization of society under the influence of the development of information technologies leads to the rapid legitimation of social loneliness as the most adequate embodiment of the lifestyle of an individualized personality. Partly to overcome loneliness help special clubs for communication functioning on the Internet. People with a variety of interests can use a wide range of portals such as teen chat rooms, free dating, etc.

Modern megacities have lost their traditional forms of solidarity and support only an individualistic strategy of behavior. At the same time, it is known that in periods of general uncertainty in society, the cognitive need for community increases. As I.V. Aster [5], individualism as a psychological feature of modern society is not the result of choice. This phenomenon is a direct consequence of the disappearance of the importance of collective identification and differentiation of individuals in a society of abundance when people are forced to dispose of the possibilities of the granted autonomy and their existence. The latest data from opinion polls indicate that the current 15–19-year-old youth have revised traditional human values and are ready to use any means to achieve their goals including breaking the first commandment – “Thou shalt not kill” [6, p. 302].

So, everyone is forced to take direct responsibility for creating its own identity. But finding oneself is possible in the only way – by comparing one's own identity with others. Some people advocate whatever the cost the value of family roots and cultural principles passed down from generation to generation but these ideas do not always allow them to successfully adapt to modern realities. Others try to define their identity through playing various professional roles and social statuses. Finally, still others invest material resources in order to psychologically “get away” from solving the problem of identity. But, neither the first, nor the second, nor the third are immune from collision with an obstacle in their path – loneliness – a phenomenon of all modern megacities.

For those who have found loneliness nothing seems to be taken for granted. The family inheritance is completely useless for them to understand and create the surrounding reality. The institution of the family is considered by many to be too precarious to consider it as a place of realization of personal ambitions. Just look at the dynamics of divorce in the 20th century: at the beginning of the 20th century there was one divorce per 100 marriages, in the mid-1950s each of the 15 marriages ended in divorce; in the 1970s and 1980s – one out of three, in 1990 – one out of two, in 2000 for each marriage – almost one divorce [7].

The lack of employment does not provide an opportunity to play certain professional roles. The presence of material means does not protect against the awareness of the emptiness of one's own existence. As a result of the division of labor and the institutional separation of work from the sphere of leisure the individual is faced with the problem of organizing his free time. As a result the rules that govern society lose all meaning for the individual – isolation sets in not only as a result of the historical development of society but also because of the desire of society to renounce, get rid of some of its members. Having neither status nor social

role, unable to abstract from the problem of the goal of their own life individuals fall out of an integrated society and face a choice: either to eliminate the instance that creates problems, that is, to self-destruct or to resist society or to plunge into the very depths your inner world to achieve an understanding of your own identity [8, p. 112].

Solitude presupposes a conscious act of a person: a departure from society in which he exists in conditions of constant publicity and therefore, emotional tension as a result the need for solitude is actualized. A person “leaves” in the pursuit of self-knowledge to analyze reality, to determine the meaning of life, to gain freedom. In the cultural aspect “solitude” can be understood as a kind of technique, a way of thinking, an opportunity for creativity, concentration on one’s microcosm – an expression of the macrocosm [9, p. 169].

A separate individual finds psychological support precisely in social connections, in witnesses. It is impossible for a very long time to be someone exclusively for you. “Personality is not self-sufficient; it cannot be content with itself. It always presupposes the existence of other personalities” [10, p. 33]. The role of the witness is to carry out the task of support, to give more importance to the life events of the creator, to demonstrate to the individual that he is not only alone in his creations, but also participates in a divisible reality and therefore can consider himself to belong to human society.

Without solitude we would not be able to learn anything about communication. One cannot exist without the other. This essential unity of opposites is convincingly shown in Gestalt psychology. According to its provisions we can be aware of any object only in its relation to the contrasting background [11, p. 12]. For example, light is a light shape against a dark background. And if it were not for darkness, we would never be able to perceive light. Light and dark are two aspects of the same gestalt

of perception. Likewise, we cannot perceive communication except in relation to solitude. Thus, having passed through the darkness of exile the individual receives an exceptional gift – the inner light of liberation. From now on he is able to perform acts without gaining any benefit. In search of peace of mind, such a person no longer manipulates some, opposing them to others. Having learned to create himself, he becomes truly happy, as he can transfer his skill to others, deprived of support in the modern cruel urban reality. Communication is necessary for a person to manifest himself as a person, thereby realizing the need for social or spiritual success.

It is difficult to disagree with M. Buber who believed that two prerequisites are necessary for the possibility of dialogue – the ability to distance and to enter into a relationship. Awareness of oneself as an inner wholeness and opposing this wholeness of the world as an independent being is an act of distance. Detachment from “living relationships” only leads to alienation from oneself. Of course, at the same time a person is able to categorize, analyze and evaluate the surrounding reality, but it does not have the opportunity to enter into a dialogue since it does not immerse itself in communication in full, without a trace. For such a person others are exclusively an object of manipulation, a means of achieving some goals, a solution to personal problems, that is, they are “It”. Entering into a relationship with “It” a person leads a “monologue disguised as a dialogue” [12, p. 150].

Only going beyond the limits of object relations into the sphere of “awareness” (including one’s own essence) the dialogue “I – You” allows one to penetrate into the true being of social reality. There is no burden of tradition over modern man but he is constantly faced with the need to make a choice. As Jung noted, “a person ... does not succumb to the panicky feeling of horror that those who are just beginning to understand their consciousness succumb to, for such a person has left all fears behind. She

is able to stand on her feet in an era of change, and therefore unconsciously and involuntarily becomes a leader” [13, p. 199].

A natural question arises: Why are typical representatives of megacities so afraid to be alone with themselves? Because when you find yourself face to face with yourself you are convinced that you are an empty and stupid person filled with feelings of guilt and anxiety” [14, p. 13]. Those who manage to muster the courage to treat themselves with criticism, realistically, identifying all the advantages and disadvantages come to terms with the inner world.

Getting the upper hand over the general social trend is a challenge which implies the need to find your only path and constantly overcome the pressure of those who are also driven from the path to ordinary sources of identity. For example, most of our contemporaries imagine happiness only together [15, p. 72]. Never before has a couple been the subject of such emotional and cultural attention as they are now. It is rather explainable: harmony, poise, sexual, intellectual and cultural communication. As a result, representatives of modern urban civilization strive not for autonomy but for closeness, for “abandonment” in the hands of another, for bodily pleasure, for a sense of fusion, common destiny and loyalty. The age of those entering into sexual relations is decreasing; young people are trying to find the reliability that they did not find in themselves. It is no coincidence that the term “loneliness together” appeared in psychology – a condition arising from love addiction.

Relationships “are now no more than a random and fragmentary character since they are based on global experience, and not on the specific perception of one subject by another”, – writes C. Lévi-Strauss, noting the mediated nature of communication in modern society (through documents, administrative apparatus) as opposed to direct communication in traditional society [16, p. 325]. Many letters on dating sites conceal the

motive of self-preservation, survival, the purpose of contact is to achieve conditions that enable a woman to “live a normal life”, that is, to try to adapt to the modern aggressive environment of a large city [17, p. 225].

Having traced the mercantile motives of the search for survival tools we note that financially independent women are mostly focused on building a family. In this context the search for a real man often becomes an end in itself, a search for an archetype, a kind of abstract “prince” [3, p. 11].

It should be noted that the language of modern Internet users has acquired atavistic features. Illiteracy, negligence and aggressiveness are a consequence of the economy of effort and the loss of traditional communication rituals. As a result, communication between people becomes simpler and ruder.

The awareness of the safety of communication in social networks and the possibility of endless variations devalues the idea of a vital need for communication. Lack of motivation for discovering social reality in all its versatility, fear of a modern person, born and raised in confined spaces, lack of need for physical, energetic, spiritual communication ensures the degradation of this natural function, thereby disrupting the natural course of the development of relations between a man and a woman [18, p. 154].

It cannot be argued that the inhabitants of megacities do not want to learn to communicate. Trainings of communicative competence, effective business communication are very popular, those wishing to master the pickup technology (dating and seducing a girl) line up. A typical representative of modern Western urban culture lays out on the counter his virtues (youth, beauty, intelligence) and in return acquires social and psychological benefits (status, friendship, authority). With the development of market relations people’s attitude to the world has changed. The essence of it is alienation. Total alienation is characteristic of the industrial society of the second half of the 20th century which gave rise to a type of personality

that is indifferent to the world around and does not take into account the past and the future, does not have an internal orientation, principles and is not capable of solitude. "His relations with his brothers, in each of whom he sees as a possible competitor, acquired the character of alienation and hostility; he is free – it means he is alone, isolated, he is threatened from all sides... Paradise is lost forever; the individual stands alone, face to face with the whole world, limitless and threatening. New freedom inevitably causes the feelings of uncertainty and powerlessness, doubt, loneliness and anxiety" [18, p. 62]. But the Stoics also noted that wisdom consists in knowing what the Self can and what the Self cannot do, and only on the basis of such wisdom freedom is given to the individual.

Therefore, a modern metropolis is a socially-cultural environment that forms in its inhabitants numerous social and ontological contradictions, in particular, the contradiction between ultimate individualization, the desire for maximum autonomy, fear of communication and loneliness on the one hand, and the search for communication on the other. The main factors that give rise to a feeling of loneliness among residents of modern megalopolises are: 1) the dominance of information technology in all spheres of public life; 2) the introduction of the network principle of organizing life and the destruction of hierarchical connections; 3) transformation of the communicative experience under the influence of the latest technologies (the main features are anonymity, indefinite identification, fear of direct communication, superficiality, functionality, formalism); 4) destruction of traditional forms of solidarity; 5) an individualistic style of behavior and an emphasis on competition for social positions are expressed; 6) the "market character" of modern urban dwellers forcing them to move away from open communication and strive for total control over emotions. But individuation taken to the limit reveals to a person the need to seek support precisely in social connections (which

largely explains the popularity of communication trainings and courses in big cities).

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