

The mentality of the people as the dominant of its national existence: theoretical and methodological aspect

Irina Vladimirovna Komadorova¹, Evgeniya Vladimirovna Kuznetsova², Gennadii Nikolaevich Tolstuhin¹, Iliya Sergeevich Komadorov¹

¹Kazan Federal University, Mira Avenue, 68/19, Naberezhnye Chelny, 423800, Russian Federation

²The University of Management «TISBI», Tatarstan Street, 10, Naberezhnye Chelny, 423825, Russian Federation

Abstract. Mentality is one of the most significant of each nation, and the authors prove it in their article. There is no agreement among scientists about the matter of essence, nature and character. Different researches look in different ways at the problem of the national character and its cultural-historic importance. Mentality is a dominant constant of a national existence. And today, against a background of globalization integration processes it's especially important to point out this fact.

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Introduction

The reality of today shows that the reasons of many current conflicts often become a lack of knowledge of social history, misunderstanding of their conscious and unconscious directions, which as a rule, are concealed in a mentality of ethnic community. Mentality is one of the most significant attribute of each nation, which is understood as a certain totality of character and behavior traits, which differ from one nation to another.

Man as a person develops under a powerful influence of many social groups, in which he is a part of it and who takes part in achievement of his “inner self”. Sigmund Freud pointed out several times, that every person is a component part of some social community. He and some other scientists noted that every person is a part of a class, church's community, ethnos, state and etc [1]. In the process of socialization, a person forms socio-cultural (including ethno-national) norms, importance and values, as a result of it he gains a national identity, allowing him to consider as a bearer of a certain national mentality [2].

The realization that different nations differ from each other with “its traits of a soul”, happens in a cultural history fairly early and it's due to archetypal dichotomy “friend-or-foe”. Even in Antiquity there were detailed descriptions of moral values of different nations, their lifestyle and character traits. But in Antiquity culture and Middle Ages, knowledge of specific traits of different nations was descriptive, cumulative and had only a practical focus. In Modern Time the situation has changed. In that period, different sciences are developing at high rates, which gave rise to a comparative study of

nations (history, geography, anthropology, linguistics), a deep and comprehensive conclusion of acquired ethnographic information; a new theoretical models appear, which are focused on learning facts about human behavior within the bounds of a historical process.

At the same time there are major modifications in activity of the masses: it was the first time when they started to take part in decision of historical destinies of their own countries, besides, the process of formations of European nations is suddenly becoming more intense. Since that period, it all leads mental differences between nations to a change into a subject of unfailing interest and scientific analysis of many great thinkers. In the twentieth century the learning issues about the character of a nation, its mental structures and form of their cultural-historical realization is changing into a linking research of a national mentality and nature.

It should be pointed out that there is no agreement among scientists about the matter of essence, nature and character. Different researches look in different ways at the problem of the national character and its cultural-historic importance.

L.N. Gumilev thinks that “a national character “is a myth. For every new era the character traits for any ethnos are always transformed according to a real situation, even “during the preservation of an ethnogeny phase sequence “ [3]. So it's incorrectly to regard a national character as a stable, liberal education. L.N. Gumilev cites moving forces of a national character of the Russian ethnos as an illustration, the traits that have been undergone on different historical periods of its existence.

V.K. Trofimov calls such way as a “ methodological relativism in his work “ Russian mentality: origins, nature, sociocultural demonstrations “, so in this case the interpretation of the national character is meant as a period of its historical volatility, but it is ignored the phenomenon of some traits stability [4].

The complexity of the national character and mentality as a subject of research studies leads to an existence of some dominant interpretations of these events in modern scientific literature. A national character is understood in modern scientific literature as:

1. a psychological trait that is inherent in all representatives of a nation, which differs them from one to another;

2. a set of psychologic characters, that most of the nation’s members have;

3. a type of personality which is represented ideal, classic for the nation;

4. typical traits of manners and mentality, which characters differ from a national art;

5. a distinct way of thinking, which is expressed in features of a national character (philosophy, art, etc);

6. a set of values, ideals, persuasion which determines the lifestyle of nations[5].

Such interpretations reflect two types of methodological sets in attitude of a national character, which are ethnopsychological and ethnocultural. Both of types are subjected to a reasonable criticism for its narrow-mindedness. From the point of ethno-psychologists a national character is a historically developed set of stable psychological traits of officials for other ethnic groups, which determines their usual manner in attitude to a social medium, outward things and to its and other ethnic communities. The most important in this conception is that a national character is defined not through the qualities and traits of individual, but through the qualities and traits of a whole ethnical community, which is only inherent in its culture (symbols, customs, traditions). Ethno-psychological approach to an understanding of a national character was many times subjected to a criticism in works of greatest American sociology of Russian origin P.A. Sorokin. He paid attention to characteristic features of an individual, especially under a secondary choice; they are not identical to characteristic features of an organized group and vice versa [6]. The properties of community cannot be reduced to the properties of constitute their individuals: the individual behavior and character of a nation are not identical on the whole. P. A. Sorokin stressed the point, that cultural characteristics of an individual are not inherited biologically, but they are acquired during different

communications with people, where he is born, raised and educated. In the process of cultural interactions a person internalizes specific character traits its national groups. It is known the examples when from childhood the member of one ethnic groups grows, develops in another country with its ethno- cultural surrounding; as a result of it, he considers himself on the language, thoughts, manners of that ethnocultural surrounding.

P.A. Sorokin thought that attitude to a personality and nation is an individual case of a single and general dialectic, individual and origin. Certainly, a person has traits, which characterize the nation on the whole. More or less of a great number of individuals have specific national character traits.

E. Fromm tried to understand a dynamic nature of a national character, its relation with characteristics of a socio-cultural existence in his works. He explained many changes in a social transformation through discovery of a social potential of a national character [7]. Particularly, he used the concept of a national character in a process of understanding the reasons of Nazism coming to a power in Germany. From his point of view, for German nation is inherent such qualities as love to a strong and hatred to a weak, limitation, stinginess in feelings and moneys. These qualities have formed that «social and human foundations», which became a favorable condition to an increase position of Nazism.

But national character cannot be only reduced to the ways of behavior; it’s a complex, common mechanism of a nation adaptation to one or another natural, social condition of its existence.

Many scientists point out that a national character is a “ set of some traits of a spiritual character of a nation, which appears in its own traditional forms of a behavior and the perception of the environment “[8]. In the interpretation of F.Boas, a national character is a common and personal elements and structures of any cultural traditions, which provide common or (its dominant) forms of a worldview, behavior and mentality. A national character is the most complex socio-cultural phenomenon, which is developed in different kinds of cultural activities. But for the last ten years, the term a “ national character “ is substituted for “ mentality “ [9]. Representatives of a historical school in France have made a significant contribution to the research of mentality category. J. Le Goff distinguishes two kinds of reality as a material reality and the idea of this reality (mentality). Mentality is an independent and very important part of a historical process, but it is interpreted ambiguously: as a group view and manners; as modes of thought and sensation; as ethical codes and symbols.

For A.Y. Gurevich mentality is a “ live, changeable and for all that a detecting stable constants of life directions and manners, which depends on deep zones, inherent in that community and cultural traditions “. Mentality reflects and realizes the picture of the nation’s world, inherited from the previous generation and its life aspects which underlie them [10].

The variety of mentality is a national mentality, original, modern equivalent of the term “soul of nation “. In social philosophy there is a term «national mentality», as well as the terms “ soul of nation “, “ national spirit “, they are synonymic and used for description of cognate to its own inner world of spiritual and social aspects of ethnos and nations’ life.

The analysis that we have made, let us draw a conclusion that the concept mentality is close to its meaning as an archetype and ideology. In particular, by comparing mentality and archetype, it should be pointed out what have in common is that they represent a group idea of people, an unconscious level of conscience. But archetypes, inherited by people from their ancestors are all same of individuals and social groups. Mentality is more dynamic and has a differentiated character. Like ideology, mentality is connected with the interests of special social groups and has an influence on conceptualization of events of a political, economic and socio-cultural character. But if in ideology, the social community realizes its interests and can formulate them as a theoretical contraction, but mentality is an unconscious level of a spiritual life and cannot be entirely expressed in rationally theoretical forms.

Different determinants can be pointed out during interpretation.

Naturocentrism orientations appear in exaggeration of natural climatic causes in the formation of a mentality. For example, the theory of C. Montesquieu can be related to it; who is a representative of the geographical determinism about a decisive climate influence on people’s character or O. Bauer’s views on an inherited mechanism of essence of a nation.

Theocentrism is in an acceptance of a dominant role of a religion. In particular, P.Y. Chaadaev explains some traits, which are inherent in Russian nation as a (submission, incapacity to persistence, indifference to kindness and evil, truth and lie) by the influence of Orthodoxy [11].

Sociocentrism overemphasizes socio-economic determinants in formation of the mentality. There is a methodological basis of this approach in Marxism. As regard this, F. Engels writes that

English workers and bourgeoisie was completely different people [12].

Anthropocentrism notes that there is a meaning of upbringing in the understanding of a mentality. E. Erikson calls Russian soul as «a twisted soul». He notices that in Russia a tight child diapering is connected with an unconscious need to convey the feeling of “ a tight hand “ [13].

Each of the means of philosophism mentioned above it is necessary to take into account to estimate the most completely and adequately, what prompted these traits in the mentality [14]. But the exaggeration of any of them can lead to ridiculous conclusions in the case of any nations, because the mentality is a complex issue, which needs the integrations of approaches, theories, which are the parts of anthropology, psychology and ethnology. From our point of view, the aim of philosophy is in integrated theoretical analysis of the essence of a mentality. Philosophical research suggests a community of many methods for learning and distinguishing clear principles of analysis.

Mentality is a dominant constant of a national existence, and today, against a background of globalization integration processes, it’s important to define correctly mental traits each of nations and determine the reasons, that have caused specific traits to avoid possible cross-cultural conflicts. We should remember that the mentality of each nation is a unique and there are no good and bad nations. According to conditions, the same mental nature can be strong, weak and weak points of ethnos conscience.

A modern socio-cultural situation makes its demands to learn the mentality issues, and today it’s very important how a mental traits or set of traits can define behavior of people and have an influence on acts its separate representatives, what is role of the mentality of an ethno- national community in its today’s interaction with other ethno- national communities.

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Komadorova Irina Vladimirovna
Kazan Federal University
Mira Avenue, 68/19, Naberezhnye Chelny, 423800,
Russian Federation

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