

Modern and Historical Parallels of Perception of Anomie in Armenian Society

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The characteristics of perception of anomie are revealed both in modern societies and in the historical past. Although the psychological phenomenon of anomie is expressed in thinking specific for various historical periods, the study of historical and modern parallels allows us to see some models of the development of psychological scientific thought and perception of anomie. Anomie is presented as a psychological pattern of perception with certain characteristics such as social apathy, emotional burnout, alienation, normlessness, social isolation and others. The variety of causes and manifestations of anomie requires the search for new ways and strategies for studying human activity and motivation, which will not only reduce the risks of social apathy, but also adapt the individual to the conditions of rapidly changing social processes. In order to do it it is necessary to study the relationship between the various components of perception of anomie and compare modern anomie issues with historical parallels. The identification of modern and historical parallels in the development of the phenomenon of anomie shows the changes of perception of socio-psychological well-being and worldview. In the methodological sense, the comparative method of the investigation of the perception of anomie allows us to reveal and highlight the historical basis of human worldview.

Keywords: perception, anomie, social apathy, emotional burnout, normlessness.

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Современные и исторические параллели восприятия аномии в армянском обществе

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В статье представлены характеристики восприятия аномии, как в современных обществах, так и в историческом прошлом. Психологическое явление аномии выражено в типе мышления, специфичном для различных исторических периодов, следовательно, изучение исторических и современных параллелей позволяет нам увидеть некоторые модели развития психологической научной мысли и восприятия аномии. Аномия представлена как психологическая модель восприятия с определенными характеристиками, такими как социальная апатия, эмоциональное выгорание, отчуждение, безнормность, социальная изоляция и др. Разнообразие причин и проявлений аномии требует поиска новых способов и стратегий для изучения человеческой деятельности и мотивации, что не только снизит риски социальной апатии, но и адаптирует человека к условиям быстро меняющихся социальных процессов. В связи с этим необходимо изучить различные компоненты восприятия аномии в сравнении современного состояния изучения проблемы аномии и исторических параллелей. Идентификация современных и исторических параллелей в развитии явления аномии показывает, как изменяется восприятие социально-психологического благополучия и мировоззрения. В методологическом смысле сравнительный метод исследования восприятия аномии позволяет нам выявить историческую основу человеческого мировоззрения, подчеркнуть ее значимость.

Ключевые слова: восприятие, аномия, социальная апатия, эмоциональное выгорание, безнормность.

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Introduction

Anomie is one of the topical issues discussed in the contemporary scientific literature [15; 21; 24; 33]. Anomie being mostly studied in sociological researches is mainly characterized by absence or uncontrollability of social norms. The purpose of this article is to discuss the phenomenon of anomie in the works of medieval Armenian philosophers and to analyze parallels in the development trends of modern psychological science. As many authors note, various factors may affect the anomie [2; 6; 10; 14; 19; 20]. This article describes such factors as apathy and emotional burnout that may accompany the expression of anomie. The phenomenon of apathy is ac-

tively explored by modern social science, where it is seen as an integral part of postmodern society. According to some scientists, in a developed industrial society, apathy manifests itself through indifference, lack of purpose and meaning in life. Moreover, apathy is a special form of social protest, both as a way of adapting to the surrounding reality, and as a special kind of socialization, and as a synonym not only for tolerance, but also for indifference [16; 17; 36; 43; 44]. However, apathy remains insufficiently explored in the Armenian scientific literature, and is mainly considered in the context of studies on the phenomenon of anomie. Social apathy or indifference is a term used in the field of psychology to describe a mental state in which an individual exhibits a lack of emo-

tion and motivation for social activity. In the modern scientific literature, studies devoted to the concepts of “apathy”, “social apathy” are interdisciplinary and comprehensive [36; 43].

The relevance of the study of the phenomenon of apathy is primarily due to those fundamental, socio-economic, legal and political processes that occur in the modern world, in the context of globalization, the center of which is a person with his inner world and common problems. In modern society, the manifestation of apathy is multidimensional. Apathy can appear as a person’s adaptation to reality, or as a form of protest, and sometimes as a unique form of socialization. In some cases, apathy is a sign of alienation of the individual from society [16].

The other factor that may accompany anomie perception is the emotional burnout. According to V. Kuzmenkov, apathy and emotional burnout factors have tremendous impact on the anomie of personality [22]. Thus, in social philosophy, the alienation of the individual reveals as the inability to realize oneself in society, to feel part of something big and important generates a sense of the meaninglessness of life and the uselessness of observing social norms [3]. It should be noted, that H.J. Freudenberg is the founder of research on the psychological state of a person who, by the nature of his professional activity, constantly enters into an active dialogue with clients and provides them with professional assistance. He was the first to introduce the term “staff burnout” into professional literature and revealed the concept of emotional burnout. According to H. J. Freudenberger, emotional burnout is a gradual loss of emotional, cognitive and physical energy by a person, which entail symptoms of emotional and mental exhaustion, often physical fatigue, personal detachment and lack of satisfaction with the work performed [5].

Moreover, H.J. Freudenberg emphasized the fact that emotional burnout is also a negative state of a person developing in working conditions, which leads to mental and emotional exhaustion of the individual [5]. In its turn, C. Maslach describes burnout as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do “people-work” of some kind. According to C. Maslach, a key aspect of the burnout syndrome is increased feelings of emotional exhaustion [27].

In Russian studies, this phenomenon was first characterized in the works of B.G. Ananyev and was interpreted as a negative condition that occurs only in people whose professional activities are closely related to interpersonal relationships (“man-to-man”) [35].

It is noteworthy, that in 2022, the World Health Organization has updated the definition of burnout syndrome. According to this definition: “Burnout is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions: 1) feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; 2) increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job; and 3) a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment. Burnout refers specifically to phenomenon of anomie in the occupational context and

should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life” [41].

According to the approach of N.E. Vodopyanova, E.S. Starchenkova, if a specialist is involved in activities that differ in duration and special emotional stress, and cause exhaustion in emotional and mental terms, then he is the most prone to professional burnout, which further affects all spheres of human life [42, p. 24–31]. In its turn, professional burnout is a consequence of changes in value orientations and the meaning of personal life. Moreover, the value of self-actualization is seen as obvious: freedom of self-expression, the right to one’s own choice and one’s own life were in tune with the moods of their time and the ideals of various nonconformist movements.

It is obvious that professional burnout is directly related to the professional stress of the individual, due to which both emotional and energy resources of a person are depleted. So, negative emotions accumulate, which are suppressed, but do not find a way out, thereby not allowing the professional not only to be fully realized, but also to be in a normal emotional state [8; 16].

Historical Background

Historical parallels of perception of this phenomenon lead us to the term “apathy” which comes from the Greek “apatheia” and means absence of feeling, insensitivity, passionless. In the development of philosophy, the term “apathy” does not carry a negative meaning. Thus, this term originally used by the Stoics to signify a condition of being totally free from the pathos, emotions and passions such as pain, fear, desire, and pleasure [7]. Stoics (Zeno of Citium, Chrysippus) understood apathy as an essential property of a virtuous state (wisdom), as a positive ability to overcome the effects that arise as a result of an erroneous assessment of “external” things. In the works of the late Stoics, such as Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, apathy is considered as the ability to dominate oneself, is a sign of wisdom, a peculiar way of adapting to the surrounding reality, chosen by a person, however, out of a sense of hopelessness [7].

From the early middle ages, Armenian theologians and philosophers were interested in the issues of studying the essence of man, his spiritual needs. The main expressions of human life in society were considered as the manifestations of apathy to bodily needs and reflective nature of man. Speaking about the development of ancient thought of apathy, it is necessary to imagine the legacy of David Anhaght (Invincible) (end of the 5th–1st half of the 6th century), an Armenian philosopher, a representative of Neoplatonism. He created a system of logic, expressed a number of ideas in astronomy and mathematics, opposed skepticism and relativism. Considering philosophy alternately as the science of being, the science of divine and human things, as thoughts of death, “imitation of God, committed to the best of human forces”, David Anhaght considered the liberation of the soul from the “dungeon” of the body as an important goal [4, p. 149; 13, p. 140;]. The influence of Aristotle is especially noticeable in the theory of knowledge

of David Anhaght. In the “Definitions of Philosophy” David Anhaght opposes skepticism and relativism, for the effectiveness of the philosophy comprehension of the world. The purpose of philosophy, according to David Anhaght, is the search and indication of ways to avoid evil in order to achieve spiritual perfection. Knowledge is not an end in itself; it should serve as a moral exaltation of a person. In the teaching about the soul, David Anhaght developed Neoplatonism ideas; his logical constructions include dialectical ideas of influence of apathy into body needs and expressions. The system of David Anhaght introduced a secular, rationalist principle to the Armenian medieval philosophy associated with theology. [32, p. 234–235].

It is no secret that David Anhaght’s works are still relevant today. Although the ideas of the Armenian genius have been repeatedly studied, psychological and cultural aspects of his works have not been sufficiently analyzed. Meanwhile, the comparative and psychological analysis of David Anhaght’s scientific heritage gives us not only an idea of the spirit of his time, the linguistic thinking, but it also introduces the ideas of the famous Armenian philosophy to theoretical psychotherapy.

It is necessary to highlight the importance of the ideas of David Anhaght in the world’s recognition and worldview process. In particular, the subordination of idealistic ideas and the objective reflection of the world was the basis for the formation of further moral and socio-legal norms and the development of Armenian scientific thinking. “Border Wisdom” and “Commentary Analytical Aristotle” are the vivid examples of structuring medieval written speech in attempt to present judgments about the world in the form of definitions. Not only the linguistic features of the cognition theories can be found there, but also the national grounds for linguistic terminology can be created.

David Anhaght ideas about mental phenomenon are extremely important when topics such as the continuity of life are explained not only by God’s existence, but also through personal qualities, character, emotional world and language thinking. This is where the Armenian philosopher comes to the language and logical idea of the “elementary system”, to the development of a person’s ability and worldview. David highlights, that an anomic (or chaotic) perception of the world is a result of the atomization of a phenomenon, i.e. one should be able to describe a phenomenon or a concept by describing its parts. The better one can verbally describe a concept by describing its elements, the more ordered are his thoughts. The understanding of analysis and synthesis is practically based on the medieval understanding of anomie. It was not only an attempt to describe abstract thinking, but also the methodological approaches to the theoretical and further psychological thought, as the methodological components of the analysis of the mental vocabulary.

It is impossible to study the national roots of psycholinguistics without analyzing the psychological aspects of Grigor Narekatsi’s (circa 950–1003) philosophical and cultural heritage. It is no secret that Grigor Narekatsi’s popular work, the poem “Book of Lamentations” has

gained great popularity in both his contemporary and modern societies, often bearing the name “Narek”. Researches about the psychological impact of “Narek” have different emphases, but we think it’s important to refer it to the perception of anomie.

In the history of literature, Narekatsi was the first to use a lot of alliteration, which gives a special sound to the entire poem. The use of that method had a great psychological impact and was widely used by later poets [32, p. 409–410; 34; 40, p. 45–55]. Such skillful use of consonants certainly had an art-therapeutic significance as well combining poetic and musical elements in one work to emphasize the idea that the author wanted to convey to the reader. It should also be noted that during the psychological experimental research containing elements of art-therapeutic mental healing, which was carried out by us in order to reveal the reflection, discharge and self-esteem of the person, after reading Narekatsi’s Book, the test subjects said that they understood the poem in a different way or in a new way. Often the subject’s response took on an imperative to interpret the poem, to valorize it with manifestations of “copyright”. These results undoubtedly testify the strong psychotherapeutic potential of the poem, the systemic possibility of influencing the inner world of a person. Data on affective consistency were collected with the help of content analysis, comparing individuals’ verbal responses and evaluations of the poem. As a result, the fact of listening to the poem was interpreted not only as “I read the poem” but also as “I heard it”, “I enjoyed it”, “I heard it like a song”, “I had different feelings at the same time”, “I saw colors imagined” and so on. We can state that the art-therapeutic effect of Narekatsi’s poem is due to the simultaneous activation of different senses, the formation of a new perception as a result of their combination, when ordinary words seem to convey a new type of information, and sounds heard like a melody acquire new word meanings. It is no coincidence that Manuk Abeghyan considered Narekatsi to be the first psychiatrist, and his poem was the first book on psychiatry [1, p. 121; 351].

Another feature of the art-therapeutic effect of Grigor Narekatsi’s works is the reflection of the person, the formation of world perception and the development of self-awareness through introspection.

Modern Parallels

A brief overview of the Armenian medieval literature shows that the harmony of the inner world of the person and the transition from the sensual to the abstract are important characteristics of mental health. To achieve this goal, expressive means are especially important – rhyming words, studying world phenomenon through their elements, distinguishing apathy from emotional exhaustion. Apathy for life difficulties, as well as earthly pleasures and needs, is not an end in itself, but a means of removing from secondary things, a sign of the greatness of human soul and mental health. The medieval understanding of apathy is opposed to emotional exhaustion and becomes a kind of modern psychotherapeutic instrument. In this context,

the main key to the understanding of the anomie in the works of Armenian medieval philosophers is the issue of emotional exhaustion, which is perceived as inability to abstract from secondary things, the impossibility of controlling their own emotions and thoughts. In general, we can say that the medieval perception of anomie is considered as an uncontrolled state of mind.

Modern studies of anomie indicate a certain dynamics in perception. The social component of the anomie becomes paramount. Anomie is mainly characterized by the categories of social isolation, social and cultural alienation and the lack of social norms. Anomie is not a manifestation of an imbalance of the inner world of a person yet, but a characteristic of society, the signs of which are the uncertainty of social norms and the inferior functioning of social institutions. The state of emotional exhaustion or emotional burnout is a consequence of the variability of the values of the personality in the conditions of periodically changing social norms of behavior. The concept of emotional burnout is identified with the professional activity of a person – in other words, with the field of human relationships with the social environment. The understanding of apathy is also transformed. As a sign of anomie, apathy is perceived negatively and is expressed in the disadaptation of the individual to the social environment. Apathy is often identified with the categories of social alienation and social passivity. It is no coincidence that many researchers indicate that the contemporary psychological sign of anomie is the loss of the meaning of life [9; 11; 25; 31; 34; 38; 39].

Methods

Taking into account the above mentioned there is a need for rethinking and a new vision of psychological term of anomie. Modern scales for measuring anomie are considered by us through a comparative analysis of the historical heritage of Armenian thinkers. The use of this method allows linking contemporary psychological term with the historical roots and filling it with the cultural-historical meanings. We analyzed H. McClosky, J. Schaar Scale [28], D. Dean Scale [12] and R. Middleton Scale [30] measuring anomie variables and emotional burnout assessment method [25].

According to McClosky and Schaar Scale anomie variables are normlessness, isolation and meaninglessness. Middleton Scale offers additional variables of powerlessness, social and cultural estrangement and estrangement from work. And finally, Dean Scale is focused on the variables of normlessness, social isolation and powerlessness.

The sample of the study was provided by the volunteers (N=200). Participation was anonymous and was based on the informed consent of the participants. All participants were 20–30 years old (N=100 men and N=100 women). The purpose of the study was investigation of modern anomie perception before and after reading some fragments from the medieval Armenian sources. We were interested to know whether participants may change their attitude to the Self and surrounding world after reading and discussion of these fragments.

Firstly, we measured anomie variables among all participants. Then we offered to read some fragments of the historical heritage of Armenian thinkers. After this we discussed whether the participants found anything interesting or useful for themselves in these readings. Our task was to reveal any parallels in the thoughts of Armenian philosophers with opinions of the participants about main anomie variables. The results of the study are presented below.

Results

Based on the results of the study, it was revealed that among the participants the most pronounced were the variables of meaninglessness (34% of participants), normlessness (20%) and social isolation (35%). These results were registered before the discussion phase of the study. After that, during the discussions the study participants tried to find in the medieval texts parallels with their thoughts about anomie and interpret them. As a result of discussions, the participants highlighted the most useful thoughts which help to overcome anomie. The psychotherapeutic effect of discussion and interpretation method was shown by retesting of the participants. According to the results of retesting, the degree of meaninglessness was estimated as a variable by only 21% of the respondents, and the level of social isolation decreased to 17%. The level of normlessness was the most constant and was expressed at 18% of participants.

The results of the study showed that the interpretation of historical and modern thoughts, along with the use of modern psychological diagnostic methods, open up new prospects for studying the mechanisms of overcoming anomie in modern society, make it possible to focus on a person's attention on valuable attitudes and the fundamental issues of perception of Self and the surrounding world.

Discussion

Summing up several standpoints of social apathy definitions we can underline that perception of apathy mainly refers to social passivity, lack of life meaning, complete or partial loss of interest and indifference to public life changes. Cultural historical and psychological studies of personal development show that the system of values of members of society and their ideas about social well-being often do not coincide with the institutional structure of society that has been formed over the past decades. There are various factors which have a negative impact on the social well-being of the population and lead to the desire to escape or reject reality. As a result, social apathy is manifested negatively in the personalized modern society and heightened as a defensive response to rapidly changing social reality [26; 29].

The manifestations of the growing personalization of modern society are:

– the priority of individual freedom over public interests,

- depreciation of moral standards
- decrease or atrophy of the sense of social responsibility,
- manipulative behavior.

Modern trend in the development of social apathy is saturation with material goods, which boosts a subjective condition, which some scientists call “happy apathy”. Among the features of a consumer society we can list the actual restriction of freedom, the individualization of social norms and values, the egocentricity as a priority, the reduction of public well-being to the behavioral scheme “production-consumption” [18].

The content analysis of the “definition of anomie” given by David Anghaght shows the distinction of the components of the needs of the person, who, to be satisfied needs a situation where he can speak through brief and accurate definitions, reporting the sense of the word. It does not allow the word or phenomenon to fully represent their sense during communication.

All the philosophy of David Anghaght is based on moral and psychological perspectives. He describes in details the personal qualities, indicating the most important features and the process of the transmission of the philosopher, all of these has some personal qualities, such as the manifestation of public behavior, making judgments, the ability of overcoming the cultural and social estrangement and so on.

According to opinion of a well-known Armenian scientist H. Manandyan, David Anghaght’s works are as creative and unusual as works of many members of the Greek philosophical school, they seem inaccessible or incomprehensible to specialists in the field. Some scientists say that David Anghaght was trying to create a certain meta-speaking of a scientific thoughts to target the readers in early Middle Ages. Most of the works, being bilingual, in Armenian and Greek, were approaching at the same time the Armenian-speaking and the Greek-speaking society, which gives an interesting turn to a spiritual significance of the scientific activity of the Armenian philosopher [1].

After deep studying national roots of psycholinguistics, using the works of David Anghaght and Grigor Narekatsi, we can conclude that it is advisable to enrich the modern art-therapeutic methods and techniques with samples of traditional literary works on the national language, having previously developed certain methods of their application and decoding methodology. In particular, the psycholinguistic study of David Anghaght’s works allows us to put forward the methodological technique

of “definition of environmental phenomenon”, which allows us to form a certain attitude and to understand the world through brief logical formulas. Further evaluation of those definitions along with musical, painting and other art-therapeutic methodical techniques will provide an opportunity for full multilateral understanding of the studied phenomenon.

On the basis of the results of the study of Grigor Narekatsi’s works can be created another methodological technique, in particular, art-therapeutic works aimed to understanding of the phenomenon and one’s own Self. It becomes possible to apply such methodologies that will allow to combine different scenarios and carry out appropriate psychotherapeutic works [23; 37; 40].

Conclusion

The results of comparative analysis of modern and historical parallels of the perception of anomie show that the basic indicators of the modern meanings of anomie are normlessness, meaninglessness, social and cultural estrangement and powerlessness. Comparing these indicators with the historical parallels we came out with the meanings of the reflection of the person, the formation of world perception through the development of self-awareness, self-observation and introspection. Comparing these indicators with the basic concepts of medieval Armenian thinkers, we see that the term *anomie* becomes more communicative. The connection of the individual with society, the awareness of social isolation comes to the fore. In other words, over time the perception of anomie changed from the definition of the concept using internal factors (moral qualities, self-perception, self-observation, introspection) to the use of external factors (the degree of socialization, the activity of social ties, sociability, knowledge of social norms, etc).

An analysis of modern and historical parallels of perception of anomie in Armenian society opens up new opportunities for further research on this issue. In particular, it seems necessary to develop methodological approaches in order to develop mechanisms to overcome anomie in modern society:

- Modern interpretation of thoughts of Armenian medieval philosophers using psycholinguistics methods,
- The transformation of the negative manifestations of social apathy into the positive constructions of the perception of Self and the surrounding world.

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