Problem of ethnic mentality

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Abstract. The relevance of the problem of ethnic mentality is due to the need to understand and address social issues, understand the specifics of the history of the ethnos, and thus realize yourself. The processes of ethno-cultural revival of peoples, ‘ethnic renaissance’, and the rising tide of interest in historical and ethnic roots, including the constants of the ethnic worldview itself, require careful, objective, and scientific analysis. The modern world affected by globalization is facing new challenges, including threats posed to ethnic identity, leveling of ethnic and cultural differences, the imposition of standards of global culture, and the spread of unified models of lifestyle and thoughts. All these components are important and their common unity determines the ethnos. The modern processes of changing the values and attitudes of ethnic groups in the context of globalization contest the existence of ethnic groups as stable and sustainable social formations. In this case, the study of aspects of cultural life is an objective condition for formation and development of peoples. Anthropological, psychological and symbolic aspects can be employed to understand the mentality of the people. The anthropology of the mentality can be studied from the point of view of two approaches: the paradigm of life and the paradigm of existence. The mentality of the people is steeped in the cultural ritualization of actions. The psychological aspect determines the ontogeny (individual development) and phylogeny of human culture. The symbolic aspect helps understand a reality that is beyond human understanding.

Keywords: ethnic mentality, culture, ethnocultural self-identification

1 Introduction

Heritage is an important aspect of culture. Unlike animal development, education is a key to human development. It is what makes one person Russian and another Mongol, their culture and study of culture, it is what people borrow from the collective interaction patterns of their ancestors. Sometimes these models are physical. Sustaining something small like a family hearth embodies the importance of family ties and responsibilities. Battlefield, on the contrary, may symbolize a nation created from the lives of ancestral groups.

The community of people indicates the importance of certain cultural values. Mythical or historical events are often encoded in mountains, rivers, and other places where ancestors lived to impart the spirit of patriotism to youth. These values can be conveyed through social events. Religious pilgrimages, weddings, funerals, festivals, dances, concerts, cuisines are just some of these events that reinforce and revitalize social bonds.

The loss of cultural heritage can be seen as a consequence of economic and social development. Most countries are trying to balance economic development and preserve cultural heritage. Owing to modernization in developing countries, this balance depends on economic interests. The loss of cultural heritage can be devastating.

The experience of developed countries shows that once you lose your cultural heritage, it cannot be restored. The consequences include the disappearance of old architecture or traditions. In addition, mental heritage is the anchor that holds groups of people together, and its loss causes alienation, feelings of defeat, and loss of will.

2 Problem Statement

The problem of ethnic mentality is relevant in the difficult conditions of modern socio-cultural reality. The complex socio-economic, ethno-political processes in Russia and its regions, including the South of Russia, raise acute problems related to psychology and self-awareness of ethnic groups in inter-ethnic and inter-ethnic relations.

Ethnic diversity and features of ethno-cultural self-identification determine both theoretical and practical relevance of the problem. The Russian multinational state needs modern concepts of socio-political, economic and cultural development. At the same time, formation of a strong, competitive Russian state requires consideration of the interests of its regions with the unique culture.
The study of mental characteristics contributes to the construction of a new model of Russian statehood. Consideration of the cultural aspects is essential for developing effective national policy.

3 Research Questions

As an ideal education, mentality as a phenomenon has a material carrier. In our study, the following «carriers» of the mentality are distinguished: nation (the most global and fundamental «carrier»), nationality, ethnicity, class, estates/castes, labor or educational collective, family (a synthesis «carrier» acting as a microsocium), an individual directly included in all the carriers of mentality. In any society, the individual is not only the central and concrete "carrier" of the mentality, but also its "exponent". In order to become an "exponent" it is necessary to respond with creative thought to the motives and plots, events and customs that take place among one's own people, native culture, and at the same time find both the common universal that is inherent in everyone, and the unique, peculiar that distinguishes one's native culture from another.

To understand the mentality of the people, it is necessary to consider it in three aspects: anthropological, psychological and symbolic.

Anthropology of the mentality of the people can be studied from the point of view of two approaches: the paradigm of life and the paradigm of existence [2], that is, as part of the natural process and the result of one’s own belief.

The psychological aspect determines the ontogeny (individual development) and phylogeny (generic development) of human culture.

The symbolic aspect helps understand the reality, which is beyond human understanding, and expresses the true meaning of the ethnic mentality, which remains inaccessible to the final interpretation.

The anthropological approach identifies a person by the following features: rituals and customs that arise in the history of human culture and are not inherited, each person must learn them by teaching his own tradition. Habit regulates human behavior, due to which either cultural or instinctive rituals appear to become an urgent need of the person and an active stimulus for social behavior. If it is not clear which details of the overall sequence of actions are useful for success and safety, it is best to mimic it. The mentality of the people is steeped in cultural ritualization, and it is forced out of consciousness into unconscious. Manners characteristic of an ethnic group become second nature for a person.

 planets or not, apply it consciously in their practical action. Similar to any objective law of nature, their social nature and will not deprive their objective character. Despite profound differences, customs and traditions are means of stabilizing and reproducing social relations in a series of successive generations. Both of them are mechanisms of 'social inheritance'. mechanisms of generation succession. Customs and traditions perform this function in different ways and means, and at different levels of social relations.

L.N. Gumilyov notes that the body’s field is its continuation beyond the visible limits, and the body itself is a condensation of field lines to be perceived by our senses. Due to the presence of an ethnic field, parts of an ethnic group torn apart by historical fate (natives and emigrants), retain a sense of unity; this also explains the nostalgia (strange ‘bodily’ longing) of a person living in another ethnic group, even if the environment is quite comfortable [2]. Any super-ethnic system is tuned to the nature of its region, its links and subsystems are connected by harmonious rhythms and occupy a certain ecological niche. If an alien superethnos invades the territory, it is forced to live not at the expense of the landscape, but at the expense of its inhabitants, which is not neighborhood or symbiosis, but chimera. Therefore, L.N. Gumilyov assumes that strong, passionately intense ethnic systems do not admit extraneous elements to their territory [3].

Gnostics, Buddhists, Manicheans, Albigenses, existentialists (K. Jaspers’s concept) support anti-systems and recognize life on earth as a serious disaster that can be avoided by asceticism, renunciation of the temptations of the world, or by ‘life burning’. According to Gumilyov, Jasper’s concept of ‘axial time’ [4] falls under especially dangerous ‘anti-systems’. According to this concept, ‘philosophical faith’ appeared in the ‘axial time’ (800–200 BC) to destroy the barriers between ethnic cultures and establish a spiritual connection between people of different eras and cultures, capable of...
posing ‘last questions of being’ about human mortality, his tragic guilt, and the essence of human existence. Gumilev evaluates the philosophical faith of Socrates, Zoroaster, Buddha, and Confucius as a ‘reflection of a restless person’ who does not accept life and introduces a rational principle. In his opinion, this negative ideology consumes the ethos which was its shelter, and this is a fall into the abyss, service to emptiness, hell.

Freud gave similar explanation to the division into ‘us’ and ‘them’ that is characteristic of every culture: the need to obey the restrictions and follow the rules of one’s circle is psychologically rewarded and compensated by the experience of emotional cohesion and the ‘right’ to despise and hate those who does not belong to the circle. According to Freud, progress in the history of mankind implies a gradual replacement of the external pressure of culture as censorship by internal morality, which determines human behavior. Despite the extremely sober, medical image of a person as a ‘sick animal prone to neurasthenia’, Freud hoped that the ‘Super-Ego’ could become the highest authority within the human psyche and act as a conscience [5].

Gadamer showed the essence of imitation as self-distinction: ‘Recognition is the experience of our increasing assimilation in the world, and all types of our experience are ultimately the forms in which we assimilate in the world. The Aristotelian teaching seems to be completely flawless, since art, whatever kind it may be, is a kind of recognition, and along with recognition, our self-knowledge and confidence in our relations with the world deepen’ [6].

The second most important function of culture (after instinct suppression) is to provide ‘emergency exits’ for antisocial inclinations by sublimating (purifying) instincts and directing lower natural energies to higher goals – various kinds of creativity. Art, according to Freud, creates a compromise between two principles that govern the psyche: the principle of pleasure, and the principle of reality (limiting the ability to live only pleasures). Creativity allows expressing these psychological conflicts, their weakening and even resolution. This function is performed not only by embodied works of art, but also by all kinds of unconscious creativity familiar to every person, especially in childhood and adolescence – dreams, fantasies, and games that create an illusory satisfaction of drives.

Traditions are connected with customs and are based on the latter. The simple relations are fixed by customs and the spiritual qualities formed by these relations, and traditions are a prerequisite and the source material for stabilization and revival of new generations of complex social relations, and socially significant and spiritual qualities. As a baton, as a testament of past generations, traditions convey to new generations samples of beliefs and feelings, and show in the name of what one should live, work and fight.

Customs and traditions are forms of transferring the ways of realizing the developed ideological relations (political, moral, aesthetic, religious) in the class or society supported by the public opinion and unregulated by legal regulations. They are one of the most important components of culture.

Unique ancient cultural monuments are evidence of the birth of traditions, domestic and labor relations, religious and spiritual landmarks, and even peculiar political and nascent economic relations among various peoples.

The analysis of these monuments made it possible to identify the primary foundations of spiritual and moral values and the structure of the psychological makeup of peoples, expressed through dynamic relations between the environment and society, man and the world, while reflecting the socio-psychological behavior of a person, forming his purely individual differences from other peoples mental traits. Religion, myths, epic as the primary archetypal images of the mentality of the people, determined its original dominant, which has come down to our days in essential mental features and in modern ways of their life.

Any public or social relations – moral or political, national or familial – exhibit the most various ways of realizing each of these relations.

The intuition of value is perceived by the deepest center of the personality, the heart, and this value, which seems to exist only in the human imagination, is capable of transforming life and becoming reality. At its heights, art passes into prayer, psalm, liturgy; it creates a chain of images, symbols and visions that have a powerful force capable of sublimating the chaos of the subconscious.

Modern analytical psychology is aware of its closeness to religious practice and recognizes that the most powerful suggestion known to mankind comes from religious images and symbols.

Jung showed that the unconscious is not individual (as Freud believed), it is historical and includes all the components, images and ideas that have ever arisen in history; it also absorbs new impressions, suggestions, and thereby prepares shifts in consciousness. This is the collective unconscious present in the psyche of every person that consists of several layers expanding in depth: the layer of the family, social group, nation (ethnos), and group of nations [7].

V.S. Solovyov offered his ‘historiosophical’ interpretation of the complex of these problems. His concept was a trigger for creativity and the basis of the worldview of the Russian symbolists of the Silver Age. The concept was deeper, more thoughtful and integral (though sketchy) than the views of most modern idealists.

Strict standardization of behavior in the system of customs eradicated the instincts in relations between members of primitive society and excluded zoological individualism. Since the emergence of human society, the system of customs developed by each tribe had been an essential feature of its life forming moral, artistic and religious relations in accordance with the production activity that the tribe was engaged in under the specific conditions of its natural environment [8].

The word ‘tradition’ means ‘transmission’. It is necessary to clearly understand how assessments, views, and mentality are transmitted from one generation to another. These provide a holistic approach to the
problem of ethnic mentality and understanding of the 'technology' for reproducing the spiritual image of new generations in accordance with the previous patterns.

Thus, mentality as a social phenomenon cannot function regardless of the interconnection and complementarity of the three main components (its components). All three components of the mentality (socio-cultural, psychological and civilizational) they interpenetrate and closely interact with each other, forming a national matrix of the phenomenon "mentality". All components are interdependent and the transformation of at least one of them cannot but cause changes both in the other components and in the whole matrix of the phenomenon "mentality". But a special comprehensive role belongs to the spiritual component, which permeates all components of the mentality, being the central element of this phenomenon.

Three types of mentality can be distinguished: Western, Eastern and Russian, following the long-standing tradition of distinguishing between three types of society (West, East, Eurasia). Through the comparison of three types of mentality as matrices of three types of society, there are grounds to draw the following conclusions: the mentality of each nation (people) is associated with the geopolitical and natural conditions in which these societies are formed, the peculiarities of everyday life, traditions, rituals, the foundations of which are in ancient times.

A particular type of mentality has spiritual origins rooted in religion. The most ancient sacred texts contain a great spiritual charge for the peculiar development of an entire nation. Different mentally are different types of ideal reality (Western, Eastern, Russian), the originality of which corresponds to the specifics of three types of societies and civilizations (West, East, Eurasia), the originality of the civilizational sociogenesis of these regions.

4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to designate semantic contours for solving the problem of mentality formation.

5 Research Methods

The methodological and scientific significance of introducing the concept of «mentality» into the structure of categories of social philosophy is of great importance, since there is still no single philosophical methodology for the study of this phenomenon in its concreteness. The most frequently used are either historical or sociological methods of studying this phenomenon, which, to a very limited extent, can be applied in the field of social philosophy. With their help, it is impossible to reveal the essential meanings of the concept of "mentality", to pose the problem of the genesis of mentality.

The choice of a methodology (methodological approaches) depends on the goals set in the study and implies the obligatory consideration of the nature of mentality.

We argue that the scientific approach based on a dialectical vision reveals the essence and significance of mentality in the modern conditions of globalization in an internally contradictory integrity, in connection with and in interaction with the basic realities of modern society.

Similar to comparative historical, axiological and epistemological methods, dialectical methodology cognizes the essence of the people’s mentality.

6 Findings

Mentality can be characterized as a cultural phenomenon that reflects the system of components of spiritual life, worldview, the deep psychological layer of social communities formed under the impact of historical realities, socio-cultural and religious institutions, and the natural environment, and it determines the system of values, cultural practices, spiritual creativity, and practical activities.

7 Conclusion

A significant drawback of the status of the problem of mentality is that its study does not imply an integrated approach and is carried out in parts. Every author studies one feature of the mentality, and not the tradition as a whole. In fact, the information-descriptive and research works consider only ritual as cultural peculiarity.

In other works, mentality is understood as the spiritual qualities inherent in a number of people. The issue of the place of social relations in the mentality has been poorly studied.

All this triggers the study of the structure of mentality. In our opinion, this structure includes the following components: 1) links of ideological social relations that are not regulated by legally; 2) the ideological content of ideological relations (political views, rules, norms, moral principles, art representations, provisions of religious beliefs); 3) actions (deeds) that reveal the spiritual qualities of a person required by a certain system of economic relations – political, moral and religious beliefs, interests and needs, emotions and feelings in all their forms (moral, aesthetic, religious, intellectual), simple and complex habits; 4) ritual as part of customs and traditions established in public life.

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