



EDITORIAL

Personal Transformation as a Life-Long Trajectory

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In the late 1950s, the founding fathers of humanistic psychology proposed a new set of values to understand human nature as a process, rather than a static object. One highly influential perspective—organismic valuing process (OVP) theory—was formulated by Carl Rogers, who believed in people’s innate inclination toward personal growth, both physical and psychological (Rogers, 1961). Initially, personal growth implies a deeper understanding and connection with the self. Gradually, individuals learn to communicate with themselves, thereby attaining a higher degree of inner security. This process inevitably involves a great deal of comparison with others. Rogers’ idea of a fully functioning person as a central term in the person-centered theory of personality was further developed by humanistic and existential theories. Their brightest representatives are Abraham Maslow with his concept of self-transcendence as the ultimate need of a person (Maslow, 1971), and Victor Frankl with his principle of responsibility toward others and life itself as the essence of human existence (Frankl, 1966).

Deep and thoughtful reflection on the process of personal transformation is one of the most relevant topics for *Changing Societies & Personalities*. Unfortunately, the contemporary reality seems to challenge the optimistic views on human nature shared by the abovementioned authors. The scholars, driven by the post-war enthusiasm, gave insufficient credence to not only the complexity of sociocultural processes, but also the reality of evil in our world. Several articles presented in the current issue of *Changing Societies & Personalities* seek to argue that personal growth can be based on false goals, and that people may not always value the freedom of choice. At the same time, some emerging research paradigms are capable of capturing “minor” ordinary events, including their seemingly insignificant peculiarities, as factors that change the order of things. Eventually, the finitude of our life should not allow us to forget that, as the authors of the current issue note “we are part of a larger universe, and that human life does not stand alone but is closely connected to nature and its environment”.

The ARTICLE *Personality and Society in the Theory of Self-Organized Criticality* by Dmitry S. Zhukov is devoted to the theory of self-organized criticality (SOC), which appeared in the late 1980s and gradually became a new scientific paradigm to address a wide range of problems in various disciplines. The author challenges the widespread notion of an impenetrable barrier separating the mathematized natural sciences, on one side, and the social sciences and humanities, on the other. According to SOC, this difference does not matter anymore. Considering the heuristic capabilities of the SOC theory in social sciences and the humanities, namely the place and role of a person and a human act in society and history, especially in times of social cataclysms, Dmitry Zhukov stresses that “the SOC theory demonstrated the connection of low-level processes with global events. It also described the mechanisms by which system-wide regularities can be generated by a vast array of decentralized and uncoordinated ‘minor’ ordinary events”. He discusses three research questions, which sounds rather fundamental: Is SOC really a ubiquitous property of social reality, or are these claims overly optimistic due to the rapid expansion of the theory? Does the SOC theory substantiate the fundamental unpredictability and inevitability of social catastrophes? What contribution can the SOC theory make to clarifying the fundamental problem of the relationships between chance and regularity and between human will and historical necessity? Answering these questions, the author concludes that “the SOC theory makes it possible to diagnose—not only after the fact, but also in advance—the transformational potential of a social system, from an online community to a social group and the whole of society”.

Andrei A. Linchenko and Bella V. Gartwig in the ARTICLE *Rediscovering Identity: Autobiographical Memory and Media Discourses of Russian-Germans in Germany and Russia* states the specificity of Russian-German migration and cultural transfer among other ethnic groups: “What makes their case particularly interesting, at the same time as difficult to study, is that they represent a kind of ‘double migrants’”. The ancestors of this group moved to Russia during the reign of Catherine II in the 18th century. In the Soviet time, the Volga German Autonomous Republic was established in 1924, followed by the Stalinist repressions of the late 1930s, and mass deportation to Kazakhstan in 1941. Since 1988, after the collapse of the USSR, about 2.5 million migrants of German origin have moved to the Federal Republic of Germany from post-Soviet countries for permanent residence. At the same time, many Russian-Germans remained in Russia and founded themselves in a situation of rediscovering their ethnic identity in the 1990s. Thus, the authors refer to Rogers Brubaker’s notion of the Russian-Germans as a transnational group with a specific “hybrid identity”, whose identification varies depending on the cultural project they are involved in. The article contains a comparative analysis of the narratives of Russian-Germans in Russia and Germany about rediscovering their identity based on the autobiographical memory, personal experience, and the variety of discourses of this ethnic group. The research is based on narrative interviews with people of different ages and in different locations in Germany and Russia, using the methods of narrative psychology and biographical analysis of Fritz Schütze.

The ARTICLE *Origins of Ethno-Religious Profiling: The Jewish Question and Police Surveillance in the Russian Empire in the 19th Century* of Kseniya S. Grigor’eva presents

the results of a thematic study of the issue. The author stresses that the Russian Empire of the 19th century could be described as a “confessional” state, where religious identification served as the most important mechanism for maintaining discipline and obedience among the authorities. At the same time, relations between population groups were increasingly understood in terms of nationalities and classes; thus, the perception of Jews was also highly ambiguous. The author explores the emergence and development of anti-Jewish legislation, and the resulting surveillance practices, and argues that “they were the first and, most likely, the main target of persistent, systemic, and legally recorded social engineering, entailing a particularly ‘nitpicky’ brand of regulation, which birthed a myriad of surveillance techniques that affected a broad variety of activities in daily Jewish life”. The article is based on an analysis of Russian Imperial laws on Jews, reviews of the 19th century legal practice, memoirs, and archival documents. Kseniya S. Grigor’eva also makes parallels with the 16th and the 18th centuries European models of surveillance of the Jewish population, and its roots in the philosophies of cameralism and mercantilism.

Svetlana N. Kostromina and Maria V. Makarova in the ARTICLE *Quasi-Development as an Illusion of Personal Growth* discuss a widely acknowledged opinion that global civilizational changes require individuals to transform their ways of interacting with the world in order to maintain personal sustainability. The authors define the current context as the “change of changes,” in which “traditional processes of adapting and maintaining stability (homeostasis preservation) are becoming less relevant. Instead, pre-adaptive processes that encourage diversity, universal readiness for change, and generate new forms of life... are becoming more important in responding to these changes”. They view development as active transformation of oneself and the surrounding world characterized by internal orderliness and connectedness, as well as a persistent drive to move forward despite external influences and personal limitations. Opposed to that, quasi-development is a phenomenon observed in adults where change is pursued without a clear purpose or direction. This phenomenon is also characterized by a lack of correlation between a person’s life experiences and their life history. The conclusions of the article are drawn from semi-structured interviews with representatives of two distinct groups, one comprising individuals with psychological education, and the other without.

In the ARTICLE *Exploring Anchor Personality and True Meaning in Indonesian Young Adults*, Annisa Ardi Ayuningtyas and Bagus Riyono put forward an original concept of true meaning, which tries to endue it with the status of objectivity. According to the authors, the theory of true meaning includes some characteristics that limits subjectivity, motivating individuals never to give up. They argue that “the main element that allows humans to reach true meaning is the freedom to choose”, which is based on human nature, and oppose their approach to previous theories of meaning, which emphasizes subjectivity, especially concerning advantages for individuals and communities. The authors believe that the implication of human nature in the true meaning theory makes it applicable to everyone. The second important term proposed by the authors in the article is Anchor Personality. The anchor, which is something that individuals rely on when dealing with problems, includes four dimensions: “materials (material objects such as money or technology), self, others (other parties, both individuals and groups),

and virtues (universal principles of life)". The subjects of study are Indonesian citizens (212 in total), males (30.66%) and females (69.34%) aged 18–34 years, obtained by non-probability sampling using a snowball sampling approach. The True Meaning Scale constructed by Bagus Riyono was used as a research instrument.

Natalya L. Antonova, Sofya B. Abramova, and Viktoria V. Polyakova in the ARTICLE *Reframing Bodies: New Coordinates of the Body Image* stresses that the question about changing attitudes to the body during the pandemic remains largely underexplored despite such attitudes were highly affected by the imposed restrictions. The authors note that contemporary social studies of the body image tend to view the body from the perspective of its correspondence to cultural norms. The authors' analysis has two main vectors, which also determines the methodology of the empirical study: the body as an aesthetic object with such qualities as sexual attractiveness; the body as a process seen in the light of its functional characteristics. The study aims to investigate the perceptions of the body and its representations shared by inhabitants of large cities in the Sverdlovsk region. Based on the data from their sociological survey, the authors analyze the perceptions of the desired body type (both male and female) and the factors that affect those perception. The sample comprised 1077 completed responses in the electronic database. The survey was conducted in 2022 and covered working-age people from 18 to 60 years old living in the Sverdlovsk region.

In the ARTICLE *Where am I Now: Symbols Used in Manggarai Funeral Rite, Indonesia*, Hieronimus Canggung Darong, Erna Mena Niman, and Stanislaus Guna stress the increasing recognition of the value of local knowledge concerning human behavior and relationships with God, others, and nature, which have a crucial role in determining how people live their daily lives. Local wisdom has different ways to express itself in symbols, which are culturally defined in accordance with the beliefs of the people to whom they belong. The authors "seek to elucidate the significance and moral lessons found in one of the indigenous traditions of the Manggarai ethnic in Indonesia, particularly the death rites", and underline that while previous studies have described the funeral rite and its cultural significance, little attention has been paid to the use of symbols, their meanings and values. They argue that "as an effort to maintain the existence and sustainability of the role and function of local culture, this study is very important to provide new perspective to the existing literature of local community in today's interconnected world". The authors study the pre-, during, and post stages of the Manggarai ethnic's burial ceremony, which has social (an attempt to maintain a sense of kinship and family unity), religious (Manggarai ethnic belief in the human soul), philosophical (the view that human life does not stop after death), and cosmological (humans as part of a larger universe) meanings. In the research, three different methods were used: observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The major informants were three spokespersons and three senior villagers who were more knowledgeable about the Manggarai culture.

The BOOK REVIEWS section includes a review by Natalia A. Chernyaeva of Christina Weis's book "Surrogacy in Russia: An Ethnography of Reproductive Labour, Stratification and Migration", 2021. The book under review, as the author notes, is the first monograph devoted to the institute of surrogacy in Russia in its complexity and breadth.

Discussions around the topics raised in the present issue will be continued in the subsequent issues of our journal. In planning to introduce new interesting themes, we welcome suggestions from our readers and prospective authors for thematic issues, debate sections, or book reviews.

For more information, please visit our journal web-site: <https://changing-sp.com/>

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