

The traumatic experience of repressed persons as the psychological basis of forming the satiated values

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Abstract

The work deals with the problems of repressed people's experience in psychology showing the experience and its understanding these falsely accused and convicted people as well as the highest values of life created as a result. The average length of confinement in the forced labor camps in Siberia was 15 years. This suffering experienced by our nation is a reality that influences also the social processes of the present life. Therefore it is necessary to comprehend the view of history, reflected in the testimonies of the repressed. Its goal is the widening of the human contiguity and multicultural information.

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The experiences of the deportees in the various Soviet forced labor camps are now fairly well documented by eyewitness accounts(e.g., in Latvian: Latvian National Foundation, 1982; Vairogs, 1986; Vidnere, 1997). Human response to extreme stress has been studied (Goldberger & Breznitz, 1982, Van Der Kolk, Van Der Kolk, McFarlane & Weisaeth, 1996; Van der Kolk & Frankl, 1978, 1987; Wilson, 1989). Most of these studies deal with prisoners of war, Vietnam veterans, and survivors of the holocaust. Dreadful as these experiences were, their duration was shorter than those of the inmates of the Soviet forced labor camps. The average length of confinement in the Soviet forced labor camps in Siberia of Latvians who survived and eventually returned home, was 15 years, and the threat of persecutions spanned a period of 50 years.

Method

Participants

At the time of data collection, the ages of the ~ ranged from 60 to 95; the majority (75.5%) of the respondents were below the age of 65. Respondents below the age of 60, in most cases, were persons whose mothers were either already pregnant when arrested, or they were born in Siberia. To analyse the traumatic emotional experience of politically repressed people, an ethnogenetic approach was used. Findings: Reasons for Arrests, Imprisonment and Deportations. It appears that the Soviet authorities pursued deliberate genocidal policies by slating for persecution members of specific national and socio-economic groups. On the basis of the compiled materials from the interviews and discussions, the archive material was compounded (documents, testimonies,) and a questionnaire prepared to send out to respondents. The instrument was a three-page mail questionnaire containing 16 questions (Vidnere 1997), and space was provided for additional comments. A total of 2500 questionnaires were distributed. By October 1995, 750 questionnaires were returned and analysed.

Results

As testified by the materials compounded by the conference “The Practice of the Communistic Totalitarianism and Genocide in Latvia”, Latvia had lost 564,800 of its citizens in the period from 1940 till 1953. According to another research, the loss during this time was 720,000 or 36% of the total population of Latvia in 1940. If these figures could be proved by documents, then Latvia would be in the first place in the world by the percentage of lost population.

The processes of destructivity in society and in the mutual human relationships determine the peculiarities of the forming of especially negative, abnormal emotional experiences. In the research, the essence, political motivation, and forms of repressions are revealed.

Each form of repressions had its particularities in the organizational, social, and psychological aspect. It was essentially influenced by the characteristics of the concrete time when the deportation or incarceration took place. From the total number of the interviewed repressed persons, more than a half have been deported. 35% have been in GULAG camps, 16.6% in settlements, 1.2% in filtration and concentration camps. The results of the interviews also let to speculate about the motivation of the incriminations, such as “traitor of the country” according to law, and “enemy of the people” according to the attitude in the social environment. The responses to the questionnaires indicate that the status of legionnaire in the German army or a former member of the Latvian national army was seen on the following chart, more than 35% belong to the above.

The social, economical, and moral discrimination against the repressed, executed by the communist regime, was universal. It was expressed in many different ways and nuances by all ranks of administration or other officials submissive to the regime. The degree of it depended on each individual's activity, imagination, and releasing of primitive instincts, and it was supported by the official political position.

The ways of repression and discrimination, compiled from the responses on the questionnaires, emerged as a complex in each individual case. It has to be understood that these ways can appear simultaneously as a chain of persecutions, closely related to each other.

The spectrum of the forms of discrimination divulges first of all that the tyranny, unleashed the former politically incarcerated and deported, expresses the most widespread violations of human rights, completely ignoring the rights and duties of Soviet citizens as was written in the constitution of Soviet Union and of Latvian SSR.

The experience in life threatening situations create heavy emotional traumas. As a result a human being often loses the emotional balance that has to be restored. The uniqueness of an emotional experience is revealed in the comprehension of the emotional experience. If this is achieved, it prepares the grounds for the psychological direction of the whole future life and the philosophical quests for the meaning of life situations. The search for a way out actually is the result of the quests for the meaning of life. At the same time a self-evaluation, screening of values and a possible change of one's viewpoint takes place.

To summarize the theoretical interpretation of an emotional experience we must emphasize that a LTS requires quite a different inner action; various reactions emerge as the ultimate activation of a personality's inner resources in order to survive and later to find the opportunity to realize one's life goals. The comprehension of an emotional experience is closely connected with the inner system of values in a personality. The stability or changes of the value system depends of the "satiation" of one's life values.

The level of satiation is determined by interaction - the objective and subjective attitude towards a value by a human being, as well as by the individual and social significance of a value. This situation can be reflected in the following process: dividing the values into instrumental (I) and terminal (T). Instrumental values are forming a terminal value ($I_1 + I_2 + \dots + I_n \rightarrow T$); this in turn, relating to a higher terminal value, becomes an instrumental value. This process of interaction determines the satiation of values that can be depicted schematically as follows:

Value

O		S
I - OO	II - OS	
III - SO	IV - SS	

Person

S

In this process of value satiation we distinguish four phases:

I - OO - the phase of recognizing a value. A Value is something meaningful, sensible - that does not yet exist but be, is worth striving for. In this phase the process of forming and recognizing a value takes place; a person is aware of the value being there.

II - OS - the phase of values satiation that determines the symbolic significance of a value - a value is essential as an idea, a manifestation or a slogan. The reflection of a value in a human conscience as something meaningful, essential is connected not as much with the individual as with the society's conviction or even a requirement. In the transition to the third phase the forming and recognizing the value in oneself takes place - a person has to work with oneself, recognizing the values as the means to fight the circumstances.

III - SO - the subjective significance of values - touches the moral relationships in a society and is connected with a person's choice and convictions. The value becomes a satiated idea to the individual. The stability or changes of one's value system is determined by the objective value of a person's subjective (intrapsychic) value system. In this phase the value system is open to certain changes - where the development of the existing personality structure is submitted to a continuous integration into a higher level. As the human being begins to recognize the direction one has to take, the seeming contradiction between the objective conditioning of one's behaviour and one's subjectively felt freedom of choice is erased.

IV - SS - satiated value - is a value that has been materialized in the reality, formed in the process of value integration when our own conceived value (satiated idea) has gone through a series of real circumstances - remaining unchanged when tested in the life circumstances - becomes satiated, i.e. tested by a life experience. It depicts one's positive action in any circumstances. This has been proved by people that have gone through the tortures of deportation and GULAG camps, crystallizing and preserving in themselves the principal life values.

This has been proved by people that have gone through the tortures of deportation and GULAG camps, crystallizing and preserving in themselves the principal life values, who was realizing **Holy Pain** in process of sublimation deep emotional experiences.

Under such circumstances we come in contact with phenomena that are fundamental for the comprehension of a human being. It is the expression of its essence, individuality, determined by the consent of those values that attest the common sense, the ability of orientation in life and responsibility. It is the ability to find in oneself new opportunities after a break-down of one's life, the ability to see the beauty and the testimony of life along with the violence and death, ability to forgive as a way of releasing oneself from the suffering, ability to search for the meaning and a creative significance in the ongoing injustice.

In the synthesis of an emotional experience the creativity is assured as the basis of an unique empiric process, as the possibility of a creative process in a life experience where the highest principles of life come forth.

Conclusions

Under such circumstances we come in contact with phenomena that are fundamental for the comprehension of a human being. It is the expression of its essence, individuality, determined by the consent of those values that attest the common sense, the ability of orientation in life and responsibility. In the synthesis of an emotional experience the creativity is assured as the basis of an unique empiric process, as the possibility of a creative process in a life experience where the highest principles of life come forth. A great mathematical processing of the empiric material and an analysis of results have been accomplished that allows to comprehend the essence of interrelations of the comprehension of the emotional experience and the forming of satiated values.

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