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ЯЗЫКОЗНАНИЕ
LINGUISTICS
РАЗДЕЛ I. ТЕОРИЯ ЯЗЫКА
SECTION I. THEORY OF LANGUAGE

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**The concept of basic human values
in Oriental and Occidental cultures: linguistic representation**

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Abstract. The paper is focused on the lexical means representing the basic human values as perceived by various cultures and religions. Differences between the Occidental and Oriental understanding of "value" are analyzed, along with the English and Russian definition of the term. A system of knowledge and views on human values may be represented as a concept. Its components tend to reflect material benefits in the Western worldview and personal traits and spiritual values in oriental communities. In some cases, the notion of "virtue" is replaced with the "marketing-related" interpretation of "value". In view of a weakening religious influence on the western civilization and a gradual change in morals, behavioral standards tend to be prescribed by statutory acts. At the same time, oriental practices and philosophies gain new followers among western population, as they oppose striving to harmony, purity and love of nature to contemporary anti-values typical of the consumption society. The content of "basic human values" concept and linguistic means used to explicate it are subject to constant adjustment, especially given the changing geopolitical and social reality.
Keywords: Value system; Interpretation; Concept; National mentality; Culture tradition; Behavioral standard

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**Концепция базовых человеческих ценностей в восточной
и западной культурах: лингвистическая репрезентация**

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Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются лексические средства экспликации системы общечеловеческих ценностей с позиций представителей различных культур и конфессий, анализируются различия между восточным и западным пониманием ценностей, трактовка понятия «ценности» в русском и английском языках. Систему представлений об основных ценностях человеческого существования можно представить в виде концепта. Компоненты, составляющие этот концепт, чаще отражают материальные блага в западном обществе, а также личностные характеристики и духовные ценности в восточных цивилизациях. В некоторых случаях отмечается вытеснение понятия «добродетели» (virtue) современным «маркетинговым» понятием «ценности» (value). Ввиду ослабления роли религии в западной цивилизации и постепенного изменения общественной морали нормы поведения и ценности закрепляются в нормативных актах. В то же время восточные практики и философские учения завоевывают приверженцев среди населения западных стран, противопоставляя стремление к гармонии, чистоте и заботе о природе современным анти-ценностям общества потребления. Содержание понятия об основных человеческих ценностях и отображающие его средства языка подвержены постоянным изменениям, особенно в условиях меняющейся геополитической и социальной реальности.

Ключевые слова: Система ценностей; Интерпретация; Концепт; Национальный менталитет; Культурная традиция; Норма поведения.

Introduction

Some trends we face today, such as globalization and global migration, development of consumer society, ethnic conflicts and cultural misunderstandings, AI development and abundance of information, as well as the exacerbation of environmental and social problems lead to a misinterpretation of traditional concepts and changes in value systems. The dominant religion or philosophy could not but reflect on national value systems. Despite the seeming tolerance toward various cultures and beliefs, there are still many misconceptions and misunderstandings which may arouse tension between representatives of various cultures. This research aims at revealing similarities and differences between the interpretation of values in Occidental and Oriental world as represented with English lexemes functioning as part of the "value" concept, and at studying written sources which explicate the value systems under study.

Scholars and specialists in religion and culture studies stress the dwindling role of religion in contemporary society. This is why values and standards may be analyzed using not only the rules prescribed by religious doctrines, but laws and regulations as well.

Russia, just as Belarus and Ukraine, has traditionally been considered as "lands in between", pulled by their language, religion and history towards the west but also towards the former Soviet republics in the east (White, 2010). The Russian concept of value and its constituent components will therefore be analyzed separately.

Main part
Materials and methods

Basic human values have been repeatedly addressed by a number of scholars

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in philosophy, psychology, religion and many others, for instance, Sh. Schwarz (2012), A. Edel (1953), T. Mueller (2009). For the purposes of this research, interpretations of the "value" concept have been compared based on English and Russian sources (Britannica, Webster's dictionary, a Brief encyclopedia of philosophy terms) and descriptions of values typical of Western and Oriental societies. Characteristics of the "value" concept in linguo-cultural research have been studied.

The research required an analysis of reviews and publications provided by development centres, academic journals and mass media, including data provided by Carnegie-Tsinghua centre for global policy, ABC news, the New York Times, The Daly Guardian and so on.

Methods used for the research included theoretical analysis of academic sources, generalization, analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction.

Results and discussion

According to B.K. Jayanti, "The greatest cause of unhappiness is our inability to act according to our values" (Jayanti, 2020). Throughout many centuries of human development, the interpretation of values and the components of the value system have changed. The technological progress contributed to a stronger appreciation of tangible assets. This trend sometimes collides with traditional religious and moral commandments. Besides, the perception of values in the Occidental and Oriental cultures has always differed significantly.

On the one hand, globalization, travelling opportunities and the accessibility of information enables people to learn more of other cultures and even adopt their traditions, attitudes and philosophical views. The need for native population to coexist with migrants in a number of states has also required that we should pay attention to the cultural differences and moral values of other nations. Among the manifestations of the desire of peaceful coexistence is the

"tolerance" concept which has already displayed both its positive sides and "overdoing" policies. Still, there appears to be a significant gap in the way "values" are understood in the West and in the East.

In linguistics, a **value** may be represented as a specific concept. The latter is described by V.M. Maslova as "a comprehensive unit of consciousness showing us the way our knowledge of the world is structured", therefore, "a concept also includes knowledge located beyond the linguistic meaning" (Maslova, 2011). According to the scholar, values are the core of cultural concepts, as people are "not only interested in the truth which represents an object as it is, but rather in the significance of this object *for an individual*" (Maslova, 2011). The idea that "the specifics of an individual consists in their axiological attitude to the world" (ib.) appears very logical. In fact, we may speak about values "every time when something important, sacred, preferable, dear, perfect is concerned", when we "praise and criticize, admire and resent, admit and deny" (ib.).

The concept of "value" may be represented with various components, depending on the nation, cultural traditions, development stage, correlation between state and religion and other factors. Values make an integral part of national mentality, and the latter, in many cases, was taking shape during centuries. A difference in the interpretation of values in English-speaking countries, in Orthodox and in Oriental culture should be considered.

Sh. Schwarz argues that values should be "distinct from attitudes, beliefs, norms and traits" (2012: 17). On the other hand, A. Edel says "a man's values may refer to all of his attitudes", "preferences and avoidances", "approvals and disapprovals, his criteria of taste and standard of judgement" (Edel, 1953).

In the English language, "value" is described, first of all, as "the monetary worth of something", a fair return or equivalent in goods, services, or money for something exchanged", "relative worth, utility, or importance, something intrinsically valuable

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or desirable" (Merriam-Webster, 2021). The economic perception of "value" typical of the Occidental civilization is confirmed with the description of western political values in Encyclopaedia Britannica, where "capitalism" is among the core ones: "human rights, democracy and capitalism" (Henders, 2010). The Western perception of values is based on Sh. Schwarz's system including self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, universalism (Schwarz, 2012). Among other, hedonism is frequently seen as "the least attractive feature" of Western life philosophy (O'Shaughnessy, 2002) and a manifestation of a consumer approach.

In the Russian language the primary meaning of «ценность» (formal equivalent of "value") is "a philosophical category denoting socially contingent meanings of tangible and spiritual phenomena which define the meanings of human and societal being" (Kikel, 2008). Examples of values in Orthodox Christian society include faith, hope and love (according to 1 Corinthians 13:13, "three things will last forever: faith, hope and love"), and "their observance gives birth to justice and nobility" (Maslova, 2011). Another traditional value is labour, which is "both a concept and a value being among the core value orientations in the Russian culture" (Maslova, 2011). Historically, Russians, like many nations, depended on land processing, crops cultivation, and therefore, the value of labour was closely connected with respect for the nature. According to A.V. Reprintsev, "nature was not a workshop, but a temple in Russian traditional culture" (Reprintsev, 2019). In the philosophical concept of Russian life, "labour was everything – the essence, the value, the content, the happiness and the result" (ib.).

Contemporary lifestyle and the new value system we have adopted together with the western worldviews bring about a loss of traditional values. As a result, "It is not the morality of creation, but the morality of

consumption that rejoices today" (Reprintsev, 2019).

Speaking about the values of Oriental societies, Confucianism principles still exert a strong influence in China, according to the Carnegie-Tsinghua center for global policy (Lihua, 2013). It is said that "the traditional cultural values that influence the psyche of the Chinese people are harmony, benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom, honesty, loyalty and filial piety" (Lihua, 2013), where harmony means proper and balanced coordination between things and encompasses rationale, propriety and compatibility, benevolence extends form the importance of familial ties, righteousness refers to justice and correctness, courtesy stresses modesty and prudence, wisdom requires that one distinguish right from wrong, honesty refers to trustworthiness, integrity and credibility, loyalty stresses service to the motherland, and filial piety means "respecting and supporting the family's senior members", "caring for the old and nurturing the young" (ib.).

The above components of the Chinese value system have a lot in common with other Oriental doctrines. J. Diaz (2018) analyzes Buddhist values in various oriental countries from the sociological perspective. Though the data obtained vary from state to state, they display a general trend toward a conscious approach to the environment. "Buddhist views and actions toward others are seeds of peace and environmental sustainability" (Diaz, 2018). The scholar finds that Buddhists "do not consider violence against others justifiable", they "tend to do things for the good of the society" (ib.).

Though Indian Ayurveda is frequently perceived as a system of knowledge in medicine, in fact, it comprises philosophical ideas, teaching a specific attitude to life and to the environment, both social and natural, and suggests the right practices (mantra, prayer, asana practice) to keep body and mind in good condition. For instance, C. Kessler and others have studied the perception of Ayurveda by therapists and patients with

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"predominantly Western background" (Kessler, 2013). Even in healthcare studies on the efficiency of Ayurvedic medicine, scholars stress that 80% of respondents (and 87% of therapists) relate Ayurveda to a philosophical system".

The moral code of Yoga, known as Yama, specifies the following moral principles: non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy, non-possessiveness, purity etc. (Sharan, 2015). Thus, we can see that some of the ayurvedic values coincide with Confucianist ones.

In fact, the so-called "enchantment of the world" typical of Ayurvedic approach is supposed to "overcome the separation of matter, mind and souls" (Kessler, 2013), that is, provide balance and harmony which are so necessary in contemporary high-tech and high-speed world, especially in the western society. C. Kessler states that Ayurveda is being used by a predominantly well-educated, urban and female clientele (Kessler, 2013). The growing popularity of Oriental practices among Western nations may have various grounds: "curiosity for novel things" and frustration with modern medicine" (Kessler, 2013). In any case, by pursuing Oriental practices people cannot but perceive respective value system.

An increasing amount of studies of Buddhist values and Ayurvedic principles is now witnessed in western academic papers. This may be an attempt to repair the damage caused to the humanity by an irrational mode of life and consumer attitude to the environment and nature resources, that is, by wrong values. In fact, the "high-tech" western civilization may have grown tired of the "consumer society", "supply and demand" principle, overproduction, pollution, information overload, deadlines, artificial products, 24/7 operation and other "civilizational benefits". B.K. Jayanti specifies "the original qualities of love, peace, happiness, wisdom and purity" as "the core values of the self", stressing that relations should become "a give and take with happiness and love, rather than expectation

and demand", emphasizing the need to "respect ourselves, others, the laws of the world and the laws of nature" Jayanti, 2020). This is probably a true interpretation of value as something which is important above any imposed requirements and tangible objects, something which helps us develop spiritually and move on. "Value gives us an understanding of a different paradigm from which to operate, rather than the materialistic, consumer society" (Jayanti, 2020).

In studying the perception of Ayurvedic principles by Westerners, C. Kessler concludes that "spirituality, not religion, is the preferred self-categorization within the field of Ayurveda. The results pose the question whether individual references to traditional Christian values might have become weaker due to a loss of confidence in established western religious institutions" (Kessler, 2013).

Religious leaders do address their congregations trying to promote traditional values, kindness and tolerance. For instance, the Pope in his recent address to US citizens mentions "promoting mutual trust and fostering reconciliation and peace" (Povoledo, 2021)). However, it is a question whether religious leaders can influence political events and contribute to changes in the system of values shaped for the benefit of product manufacturers. Tim Mueller studies religiosity and attitudes towards the involvement of religious leaders in politics (2009). The scholar stresses that "levels of religiosity are lower in countries with higher development and democratization levels" (Mueller, 2009: 11), "younger as well as higher educated persons are less religious" and "higher income has a negative effect on religiosity" (ib., p. 15). These findings coincide with C. Kessler's results, according to which more educated and well-off people in western states tend to choose alternative religions and philosophical movements rather than rely on traditional ones.

In fact, many philosophical movements and religions share ideas and values. Ideas of benevolence, non-stealing and other ones coincide with some Christian commandments

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("thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not kill") and with the rule of giving to charity in the Five pillars of Islam. But generally, values adopted in traditional oriental philosophy and religions appear to be more focused on harmony, self-discipline and righteousness. In the West, "values" in their economy-related meaning have displaced **virtues**. Peter Harrison (2018) stresses that "for much of its history, Europe was focused on virtues rather than values", explaining that at some point, the focus "shifted from the personal moral qualities of the individual to a focus on acts, or <… > rules" (Harrison, 2018).

We will therefore attempt to analyze the correlation between the concepts of "**value**" and "**virtue**". As this research is focused on linguistic means, we would like to provide the definition of "virtue" provided by Webster's Dictionary. In the English language, "virtue" is described as "conformity to a standard of right (morality); "a particular moral excellence", "a beneficial quality or power of a thing, "manly strength or courage; "a commendable quality or trait (merit)" et cetera (Merriam-Webster, 2021). These definitions, namely, the lexemes "moral", "quality", "trait", "standard of right" correspond to the axiological interpretation of the concept under study, as they enable us to differentiate between good and bad, proper and improper.

Based on the study by P. Harrison, we can suggest that the scholar interprets virtues as "personal moral qualities". This definition coincides with other philosophic interpretations of this concept. For instance, R. Hursthouse (2018) describes the concept of a virtue as "the concept of something that makes its possessor good: a virtuous person is a morally good, excellent or admirable person who acts and feels as she should" (Hursthouse, 2018).

The correlation between values and virtues arose scientific interest many decades and even centuries ago. According to R. Perry (1914), "If Socrates were here, he might say: "Now I want to tell you whether values if one whole, of which virtue and beauty and wealth are parts; or whether all these are only the names of one and the same thing" (Perry, 1914: 143). Thus, it remains arguable whether these are two independent concepts, or if "virtue" is only a part of a more comprehensive "value" concept, while the latter "consists in the relation of harmony or fitness" (Perry, 1914: 145).

Based on the study of various author approaches and opinions, we suggest that, for the purposes of this paper, a value should be interpreted as the core of cultural concepts representing characteristics, things and phenomena which are important, sacred or preferable for respective nation or culture. This is a generalized view of the concept under study, while its components may vary in different cultures. "Value" may be considered a more comprehensive concept than "virtue". The latter may be represented by traits of character enabling a person to conform to standards of righteousness and morality. Thus, we consider it logical to interpret "virtue" as a component of a bigger "value" concept.

The fact that these notions become interchangeable in some papers may be explained with national differences: in the Russian mentality, the general concept of "human values" contains moral characteristics (that is, virtues), traditions and "sacred things", while in the Oriental one it is represented with personal moral traits (i.e., virtues) and conformity with standards, and in the West mentality this concept contains such components as achievement, power and economic worth. P. Harrison mentions the shift in the Occidental value system from personal traits to more self-centered and practical approach. Among other, it may be explained with the weakening role of religion in the Western states and a rising focus on tangible benefits.

Apart from virtues, the "value" concept may include other components, such as rules, commandments, codes, behavioral standards and so on. For instance, ethical and moral

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codes, life rules and recommendations are usually contained in respective religious texts. With religion gradually losing its influence in the West, moral values and commandments are replaced with codes, standards, rules and regulations, which is in line with the above findings by Harrison. In earlier times, behavioral standards used to be prescribed in holy texts or taught by word of mouth, today they are expected to be seen in conventions and laws. The European Convention on Human rights provides for the right to life, liberty and security, fair trial, freedom of thought, conscious and religion, the right to respect for private and family life, protection of discrimination etc. for all people (2010). Similar rights and freedoms are prescribed in Cairo declaration on human rights in Islam: free movement, the right to work, privacy and security, the right to own property, family as the foundation of the society, children's right to nursing education and materials, hygienic and moral care; protection of old, women and children in the war conflicts (1990). The above enables us to conclude that human life, family, freedom, work, mercy remain among the basic human values.

Thus, value systems may differ in various nations depending on people's religion, traditions, life standards, education level and age. "Value" may be represented as a concept, its components including human virtues (the concept under study is represented with lexemes denoting values or virtues (honesty, integrity, righteousness, nobility, wisdom), processes (labour) or phenomena (justice, harmony). They are explicated in the form of religious commandments, laws, conventions and so on. The value orientations in the Occidental and Oriental cultures are different, though share a few components.

Conclusion

Analysis of the theoretical resources, statutory documents and culture-related data allows for specific conclusions to be made. First, the Occidental and Oriental cultures display a persistent difference in understanding of basic human values and virtues. The former tends to be more egocentric and focused on tangible assets, while the latter remains more traditional in attitudes to people, life and the environment. Russia is perceived as the middle between the east and the west, undergoing the influence of the consumer society on the one hand and commitment to spiritual tradition, on the other.

The meaning of the term "value" differs in English and Russian. The English interpretation of "value" has actually displaced that of "virtue". Just the opposite, Oriental value system is mainly focused on human virtues. In this paper, "virtue" is interpreted as part of a more comprehensive "value" concept and denotes conformity to a standard, moral excellence or a commendable quality or trait (merit).

In the Oriental world, values include the original qualities of love, peace, happiness, wisdom and purity, something which is important above any imposed requirements and tangible objects and which helps us develop spiritually, giving us an understanding of a different paradigm from which to operate, rather than the materialistic, consumer society. In this case, the concept under study is explicated with such lexemes as "harmony", "benevolence", "righteousness", "courtesy", "wisdom", "honesty", "loyalty", "piety", "trustworthiness", "integrity", "credibility". Contemporary Occidental axiological system is mainly based on S. Schwarz's research. The human values concept is mainly represented with such components as self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence and universalism. The concept content partially coincides in the Eastern and the Western interpretation, for instance, in terms of the "benevolence" and "tradition" components. Besides, the growing interest toward Oriental culture in Europe (as is the example with Ayurveda) may bring about another shift in values.

Besides, cross-disciplinary studies reveal that religion is losing much of its

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influence in the west, as people either switch to new culture or rely on statutory acts. The situation is changing rapidly, and a number of scholars argue that younger generations and especially migrants from Asia and the Middle East are likely to become "westernized". The linguistic aspect plays a significant role in the process, as translated versions of holy texts belonging in various religions become accessible to wider audiences, thus making the world more transparent, attracting new followers and changing the distribution of congregation in various parts of the world. Besides, the semantic meaning and content of "values" differs in many cultures, which requires a detailed linguistic and cross-disciplinary analysis. The study findings may be used in further research into axiological concepts or contemporary English religious discourse.

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