

Revisiting the Values Which Correspond to the Ontological Security

Natalia Vasil'evna Kopteva and Aleksej Yur'evich Kalugin

Perm State Humanitarian-Pedagogical University, Russia, 614990, Perm, Sibirskaya str., 24

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.13005/bbra/1727>

(Received: 30 November 2014; accepted: 17 January 2015)

The system of concepts which describe general psychological continuum of "ontological security-insecurity" is based on the approach of the English existential psychologist Laing. This system is studied in order to clarify and develop it due to the problems of values, their peculiarities and place in the structure of personal motivation. The part of the construct which is available to the empiric investigator is represented by the two methods of ontological security experience diagnostic which have passed psychometric test. This part is additionally validated by means of its comparison with the construct of Schwarz's Inquiry of values which is widely used in cross-cultural investigations.

Key words: being-in-the-world, existential position, ontological security – insecurity, embodiment – unembodiment, false self, experience, needs, values.

The article for the first time turns to the problem of ontological security as one of the dimensions of psychological health of a personality and studies the bounds with the values. In the book by Laing (2010) which is considered to be one of the most "serious" works of the author and at the same time a best-seller (Clarke, 1999, 316, 318) thanks to which he became popular as a person who had comprehended insanity (Reed, 2009, 17) there was an effort to solve a huge task of description of a completely special, personal form of depersonalisation and disintegration which is correlated with ontological insecurity (*uncertainty*) of schizoids and scizophrenes. The British psychologist left for the future investigators the opportunity of solving a huge task of discovering "logical form through which one can clearly understand the cohesion of the personal" (Laing, 2010, 23). He generally defined it as ontological security (*certainty*). However the

literature dedicated to Laing has no signs of turning to this idea as one that should be specially studied. It contains the genres of biography, memories, also it has details of his work, role in anti-psychiatry, it contains the discussion of ontological insecurity concept in clinical sense: Adrian Laing (1994), Burston (2000, 2004 *et al.*), Clay (1996), Kotowicz (1997), Bortle (2001), Szasz (2008); Rutkevich (1985), Kosilova (2002), Vlasova (2012) *et al.*

In Kopteva's investigations (2013) the Laing's concepts with existential meaning (being a phenomenologist he avoided a completed theory) "ontological security-insecurity" were the basis for general psychological continuum construct. Let us study it in more detail. The points of the above mentioned continuum play the role of *existential positions*, which can be correlated with the reliability of structuring of being-in-the-world and its elements: Self (mental self, body) and *non-Self* (other people, the world). Existential positions of security-insecurity are concretized through the other opposition of existential positions of embodiment-unimbodiment. Unembodiment of the mental *Self* (in body) is the result of more or less conscious efforts of a human who realizing a threat to his being, engulfment, petrification and

* To whom all correspondence should be addressed.

depersonalization, implosion separate *Self* from the body available to the outer influences. As a result it turns into the nuclear of the false self system which possesses the interrelations with the world. Embodiment on the contrary means the wholeness of *Self*, human's involvement into actions, deeds, communication, belonging to the world. *The position of ontological insecurity, unembodiment* means breaks of being-in-the-world, absence of reliable support in its space. The unembodied *Self* is characterized by the lack of independence which leads to the extreme limits of isolation and consolidation in relations with people and the world. *Position of ontological security, embodiment* is characterised by the wholeness of being-in-the-world, presence of the support inside and beyond *Self*, independence and binds with people and the world.

The continuum of existential positions which contains between the above mentioned poles is expressed in *global "ontological feelings"*: on the positive pole - "reliability of being in this initial empiric sense", "realization of oneself as a being in one's own right", on the negative pole - "life without the feeling of life", worry, constant threat to one's own existence (Laing, 2010, 42, 185, 40). Their derivatives are *local experiences of ontological security* which create *two levels*. Less differentiated experiences of existential supports are similar for different elements of being-in-the-world, they express their general positive sense for a human. Initially this sense relates to the body feeling of which as a real, substantial, live, valuable one sets reliable personal time and space coordinates. The experiences of personal independence on the one hand and vital contacts with people and the world on the other hand are more differentiated.

General psychological *types* which are pointed out in the construct and are characterised by different existential positions and spectrum of security experiences are represented by Kopteva (2013). Within the framework of this article let us clarify the peculiarities of their motivation and values, viewpoint of Leontiev (2003, pp: 223-232) on the change of demands and personal values proportion in the course of social genesis as well as on their place in the structure of motives for different people being the basis. In the course of development an individual absorbs sociocultural

values of his/her surrounding which turn into his/her personal values. The vector of this process is directed from the individual structure based on the biological needs only to the structure with dominant social values. One of the unfavourable variants of values formation is hyper-socialization. "If a child in the process of his/her development suffers pressure on his/her needs and the boundary between the inner and the outer is very weak, it breaks due to the pressure of social values which penetrate into the structure of motivations without any resistance and become personal values without transforming. An individual merges with the group but loses his/her personal identity (authenticity), being conformally dissolved in the social whole" (Leontiev, 2003, pp: 232). The above mentioned characteristics of general psychological personal type allow us to consider it as a potentially ontologically insecure one. If such person becomes aware of his/her position, of the fact that his/her *Self* is not his/her own but false and forced one, the difference between it and ontological schizoid (whose way of existence Laing considered as a healthy one in spite of all the tragedy) is almost eliminated. A schizoid is a hyper-conscious which corresponds to the philosophic definition "unhappy consciousness" (Hegel). Creating the false *Self* as a barrier which "stops in oneself" the pressure of the social values, it "gives the body" together with the foreign values. Laing compares it with the effort to get ice by means of boiling water. The values of the «true» *Self* as well as self itself have no objective expression and are not tested by the reality.

Hyper-socialization can also be the source of ontological insecurity formation since a person has to learn who it is being also beyond his/her body: "bodily" self is not an indestructible support that saves from separation by ontological doubts and uncertainties" (Laing, 2010, 68). The embodiment of the mental *Self* in the physical body, confidence taken from the nature of oneself, in satisfaction of one's needs has not enough bases for the existential security. Rejecting the outer regulation and embracing a human "falls out" of the society, stops understanding other people, becomes incomprehensible for them and is taken as a stranger or even an alien and perhaps he/she it is. A well-known example is the main character of the novel "The Stranger" by Camus.

The above described personal types can be compared with *ontologically secure type* as a certain perfect limit. It can be defined in the concepts of the embodied prevail conscious (Marcel, Merleau-Ponty, Mamardashvili). While interacting with the world such a personality defences, preserves or changes oneself. It has relations which were described as existential communication by Jaspers, as a Meeting, dialogue of ME-YOU by Buber, as a dual modus of being based on love by Binswanger. In the structure of motivation of an ontologically secure person the norms of the "highest morality" integrated with the needs are the leading ones. It affirms corresponding values concerning itself, other people, the nature. The body on which it is based is originally cultural Tkhostov (2005), Vasilyuk (1993), Lengle (2002), an inspired body. Such an ideal limit of psychic health, personal maturity Maslow (1971) compares with the self-actualisation, Frankl (1978) - wit the meaningfulness of life, Lengle (2002) - with existential performance.

The offered division for types is of conditional character, an "ordinary" human finds their features to certain extend. The peculiarities of its way of existence, its existential position, heterogeneity of personal composition, wide range of experiences of ontological security-insecurity mean selectivity concerning values, their transformation in the course of assumption, a certain structure of motivation. Let us define a general hypothesis if the investigation: expressiveness of ontological security means "shift" towards: absence of values - infra-human "values" - humanistic values - trans-human values, highest values or values of Being, cosmic values, - which are set by Maslow in accordance with degrees of humaneness (under-humaneness, stop of development - humaneness - trans-humaneness, trans-personality) (1971).

METHODS

The aim of the empiric investigation is to check the above mentioned definitions and to continue the validation of the developed construct in the part which is compared with the experiences of ontological security (OS). It comprises the initial point of previously carried out empiric investigation (Kopteva, 2013) and was the basis for *diagnostic*

methods as a theoretic model: built on the principle of semantic differential "OS (SD)" (with scales: *confidence in one's own Self, body, world, people, something significant as an individual value*) and psychometric "OS (PM)" (with scales: *independence, vital contacts with the world, people, false Self*, as an expression of ontological insecurity). The guides for the creation of such methods were two conditional methods of Laing's description of ontological security-insecurity: with the help of a set of definitions related to the experience of being-in-the-world in general and its individual elements as well as by means of finished statements.

In the course of development of the psychometric test of the tools the ability of operationalisation of the above mentioned levels of ontological security experiences and their reliable psychodiagnostic measurements was proved. There was set the two-levelled construct of ontological security as well as there were discovered the similar logic of general indices connections of the both methods with the range possible relative empiric constructs, which speak for the psychic health and well-being. Ontological security in the union of its levels can be defined as the experience of the wholeness of a human's being, independence and at the same time belonging to the world, other people, having of similar nature with them, experience of existential supports in one's own *Self* and in the elements of non-*Self* as the "resource" feeling which is opposed by the experience of the foreign false self.

The task of the preliminary orientation i values connected with the ontological security was solved with the account to the existing tools. On this stage the Schwarz's approach to values was the prevailing one. Schwarz understood values as the convictions and grouped them according to the commonness of motivational goals. His "Inquiry of values" was created within the framework of the International programme for study the universal values in different cultures. Russia joined to the countries involved in this programme. Schwarz's method was customised and standardised for the Russian-speaking selection by Karandashev (2004). We used the part of the inquiry "Person's profile" aimed for the diagnostic of individual value priorities which depend on sociocultural environment and are expressed in definite deeds of a person.

Body

The general investigation hypothesis can be described in four individual hypothesis about the existence of the general selection: 1) direct bounds of ontological security with the cognominal values of security (*Security*), which mean the stability of the society, relations and oneself and humanistic which make transpersonal and universal values closer (values of *Universalism*); 2) reverse values of conformity or direct values with the measurement of ontological insecurity - *false Self*; 3) contradictions between values and experiences of ontological security on the one hand and contradictions in the structure of values which correspond to the ontological insecurity on the other hand; 4) selective similar bounds of the both levels of experiences of ontological security with individual values.

The selection comprised of 125 persons (the students of extension departments of Perm higher educational establishments) of both genders aged 21-45.

Empiric investigation meant several stages of mathematical-statistical processing. On the first stage we carried out the test for the normal distribution and cleaning of the summary table of the data for incomplete and incorrect observations as well as extreme indices (“exhausts”) by means of shift of indices to the permitted limit (3 standard deviations). After it the selection was reduced to 116 persons. On the second stage we carried out the investigation of interrelations within the frameworks of the traditional correlation design (correlation and exploration factor analysis). The results of the parameter correlation analysis of Pearson between the indices of ontological security

Table 1. Interrelations of the levels of ontological security indices with values which comprise personal profile (n = 116)

Indicators		Conformity	Tradition	Benevolence	Universalism	Self-Direction	Stimulation	Hedonism	Achievement	Power	Security	
Ontological security	OS (SD)	In the significant	0.06	-0.04	0.14	-0.05	-0.02	-0.03	0.03	0.12	0.05	-0.04
		in Self	0.07	-0.10	-0.09	0.26*	-0.18	-0.08	-0.09	-0.03	0.19*	0.33***
		in body	0.00	-0.20*	-0.05	0.18	-0.13	-0.01	-0.08	0.00	0.13	0.18*
		in people	0.03	0.04	0.01	0.09	-0.02	0.00	0.01	-0.03	0.03	0.13
		in the world	0.02	0.15	0.09	0.31***	-0.10	-0.23*	-0.15	0.03	0.24*	0.41***
	OS (PM)	General index	0.04	-0.02	0.04	0.22*	-0.13	-0.11	-0.08	0.02	0.19*	0.29*
		vital contacts with the world	-0.11	-0.10	-0.04	0.07	0.07	0.05	-0.01	0.10	0.26*	0.21*
		vital contacts with the people	-0.11	-0.05	0.09	0.42***	0.06	-0.02	-0.04	0.09	0.26*	0.37***
		independence	-0.16	-0.12	-0.23*	0.37***	0.03	-0.24*	-0.28*	-0.16	0.16	0.37***
		false Self	0.09	0.23*	0.04	0.01	-0.13	-0.04	0.13	0.00	0.10	0.06
General index	-0.16	-0.19*	-0.08	0.27*	0.11	-0.05	-0.17	0.01	0.17	0.27*		

Note: * - $p \leq 0.05$; ** - $p \leq 0.01$; *** - $p \leq 0.001$

of the both levels and values according to Schwarz are represented in Table 1.

According to the expectations ontological security on both levels (experience of being supports and independence and at the same time connection with people and world) means first of all cognominal values of *security* as well as values of *universalism*. Less close bounds of the indices of ontological security levels can be found with the values of *power*.

Motivational goal of the *safety* values is determined by Schwarz in the statements close to the bases of ontological security “safety of other people and oneself, harmony, stability of the society and interrelations” (Karandashev, 2004, pp: 30). These values relate to the collective safety while expressing to the great extend the goal of the safety for the person (social order, safety of the family, national safety, mutual sympathy, mutual help, clarity, feeling of belonging, health). Due to

this fact Schwarz points out one generalised type of value for the group and individual levels (safety of the country, stability of the government, absence of threats from the environment, and threats for health).

The values of *universalism* more closely relate to the ontological security in its mature expressions which are mentioned above. Motivational goal of this type of values is considered by Schwarz as a derivative from the need of survival of the group and individual which become necessary when contacting of the people with someone outside their environment or when broadening of the initial group. Schwarz also connects it with the “understanding, tolerance, protection of the well-being of all the people and

nature” (Karandashev, 2004, pp: 29). The scale contains statements of equality of people in the world, necessity of giving them equal rights, fair attitude, importance of environmental protection etc. The values of universalism correspond to the global nature of ontological security, its distribution of positive experiences of one’s own Self concerning the world, other people, something that is significant, experiences of connection based on the harmony of *Self* and non-*Self*. Perhaps the experiences of ontological security not only reflect the presence of values, motivational goals which can lead to the achievement of existential position of ontological security but also help to implement these values.

Table 2. The structure of levels of ontological security experiences and values which comprise personal profile

			Factors		
			1	2	3
Ontological security	OS (SD)	in the significant	0.396	0.081	-0.066
		in Self	0.708	-0.109	-0.046
		in body	0.608	-0.047	-0.158
		in people	0.411	-0.026	0.030
	(OS (PM)	in the world	0.576	-0.169	0.284
		vital contacts with the world	0.666	0.109	-0.196
		vital contacts with the people	0.651	0.062	0.026
		independence	0.616	-0.247	-0.114
Values (level of individual priorities)		false Self	-0.309	-0.058	0.388
		Conformity	0.072	0.192	0.717
		Tradition	-0.127	-0.214	0.800
		Benevolence	-0.097	0.301	0.567
		Universalism	0.416	-0.064	0.550
		Self-Direction	0.077	0.699	0.023
		Stimulation	0.035	0.829	-0.126
		Hedonism	-0.003	0.709	0.076
		Achievement	0.191	0.826	0.127
		Power	0.657	0.354	0.161
		Security	0.602	0.075	0.596
		Eigenvalue	3.778	2.799	2.514
		Total variance, %	19.9	14.7	13.2

Values of power which are connected with the functioning of social institutions and differentiation of status according to Schwarz, are expressed in combination of indices of domination-dependence which are characterised by interpersonal relations. “Central goal of values of this type consists i achievement of social status or goodwill, control or domination over people and means (authority, wealth, social power, preservation

of one’s own social image, public recognition)” (Karandashev, 2004, pp: 27-28). They are combined with the values of *achievement* (success, ambitions) with the help of “focus” on social respect; they defer from these values due to the fact that the values of power concentrate on the set or keeping of the dominant position, and the values of achievement are combined with them by means of active expression of competence in direct

interaction. The values of power (depending on its basis) - unlike the values of universalism and safety - can come into discord with the “ideal form” of experiences of ontological security, derived from cognominal existential position. The connection, discovered in the course of investigation, reflects the reality of the society where the dominant position often is the guarantee of security and safety.

There exist also separate (mostly negative) connections of measurements of both levels of ontological security with the values of *tradition* to which we will turn on later, as well as *stimulation* and *hedonism*. The two latter types of values are combined by Schwarz and Bilsky (1990) in the group of such which express the interests of an individual together with the value of power.

Table 2 contains data of the factor analysis (method of the main components, varimax-rotation), which revealed the structure of 47.8% of the total variance of the variables which is based by the levels of ontological security experience with values as motivational types.

The first factor includes sub-structure formed by the indices of both levels of ontological security. Here the experience of the being support in the embodied *Self* (the factor has the *confidence in mental Self*, nuclear of the factor and *confidence in body*) and beyond it (in the world, people and something significant as individual value), it means *vital contacts with the world and people* as well as *independence*. *Vital contacts with the world* mean satisfaction with life, experience of one's own world as a reliable one. Metaphorical images of the corresponding experiences can be found in the works by Binsvanger - “firmly keep both feet on the ground”. Fromm “feel oneself at home with oneself and other people” (1964). *Vital contacts with people* mean interest for people, satisfaction from the communication, experience of oneself “together with the other people in the world” (Laing, 2010), experience of dialogic communication. Independence means human's perception of oneself as an independent person able to make independent choice. The structure of measurements of the ontological security of both levels formed general pole which consists of the previously studied three types of values: *safety*, *universalism*, *power*. Such a combination of values should be considered as contradictory one.

According to Schwarz's classification the values of universalism and power not only belong to different groups - self-transcendence and self-enhancement respectively - but also are polar and incompatible. If there are no significant contradictions between the adjoining values of power and safety which are of conservation values group, the values of safety and universalism have different vectors according to their motivational goals.

Schwarz and Bilsky (1990) divide values into such that express interests of the group and individual who allows to state another one contradiction: contradiction between the values of universalism and safety on the one hand and “individualistic” value of power on the other hand. Value of power which according to our data occupies the central place in the structure of motivations corresponded to the ontological security, comes in conflict with it. Ideally the values of *independence* which are compared with autonomy are the closest ones to the ontological security. Thus the factor has contradictions both between values which are the part of the motivation structure that corresponds to the ontological security and between experiences of ontological security and values which are connected with them. This factor can be named as “Complete structure of measurements of ontological security of both levels and its value bases”.

Due to the fact that the second factor did not reveal any significant connections of values and ontological security we shall not discuss it in this article. However we should note that it perhaps characterises values of “self-realisation in the world” which is expressed in independence, perception of oneself as a source of activity and action, feeling of the “zest for life”.

The nuclear of the third factor is the values of *tradition*, which motivation goal is connected with the acceptance of customs, rituals, ideas of one's own culture (respect of traditions, humbleness, devotion, modesty) and following them. They are completed by the values of *conformity* and *kindness*. Motivational goal of conformity is considered by Schwarz as an inhibition and prevention of actions, skills and motives for actions which can cause harm to the other ones or do not correspond to social expectations (obedience, self-control, politeness,

respect for parents and older people). Conformism is connected with the kindness as a narrower type of values compared to universalism by means of “pro-social” character. Motivational goal of the kindness is the preservation of well-being of relatives (usefulness, loyalty, condescension, honesty, responsibility, friendship, mature love). Generally the values of this factor including those of *safety* and *universalism* which can also be of “pro-social” sense are compatible with *false Self*. It is characterised by ontological insecurity, unembodiment, subtraction, experience of the break between one’s own inner essence and a mask, role, disunity with people and the world, emptiness, distance from one’s own body and actions. The corresponding mental outlook is expressed in the following imaginative statements: “world - prison without grates” (Laing, 2010), “walking on the thin ice” (Binswanger, 1963). Let us define this factor as “Values of false Self”

Report

Ontological security in its everyday expressions means the following as a priority values which express group interests: cognominal values of safety and humanistic values which tend to transpersonal ones - values of universalism. The contradictions of this structure of values are reflected in antagonism of values of universalism which mean self-transcendence and power for self-exaltation. The interests of an individual are represented by the value of power which comes into conflict with ontological security. The values of independence close to autonomy correspond to ontological security.

The investigation started in this article can be continued in several directions: study (in particular by means of case study) of values of personal types, different in character and expression of ontological security, including those that come close to its highest expressions; comparison of values on ontological security with those characteristic for other forms of psychic health, personal maturity (for example with being values which are implemented “beyond” self-actualization); turning to the other empiric constructs of values (may be several) for clarifying of the results presented in the article.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The article is prepared with the support of the Programme of strategic development of PSHPU, project F-27.

REFERENCES

1. Laing, R.D., *The Divided Self. An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*. Penguin Books, 2010.
2. Clarke, L., Ten years on: the abiding presence of R.D. Laing. *Journal of Psychiatric & Mental Health Nursing*, 1999; 6(4): 313-320.
3. Reed, A., Revisiting R.D. Laing: the role of nurture. *Mental Health Practice*, 2009; 12(6): 16-19.
4. Laing, A., R.D. Laing: a Biography. London: Peter Owen, 1994.
5. Burston, D., *The Crucible of Experience: R.D. Laing and the Crisis of Psychotherapy*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000.
6. Burston, D., R.D. Laing and the Politics of Diagnosis. Retrieved August 5, 2014 from www.janushead.org/4-1/burstonpol.cfm, 2004.
7. Clay, J., R.D. Laing: A Divided Self. London, 1996.
8. Kotowicz, Z., R.D. Laing and the Paths of Anti-Psychiatry (Makers of Modern Psychotherapy). New York, 1997.
9. Bortle, S., R.D. Laing as Negative Thinker. Janus Head. Special Issue: The Legacy of R.D. Laing, 2001.
10. Szasz, T., Debunking Antipsychiatry: Laing, Law, and Largactil. *Current Psychology*, 2008; 27(2): 89-101.
11. Rutkevich, A. M., *From Freud to Heidegger: critical essay of existential psychoanalysis*. Moscow: Politizdat, 1985.
12. Kosilova, E. V., *Culturological analysis of the scientific paradigm in psychiatry on the example of anti-psychiatry and philosophy of R. Laing*. PhD thesis. M., 2002.
13. Vlasova, O. A., *Ronald Laig: Between philosophy and anti-psychiatry*. Moscow: Publishing house of Haidar Institute, 2012.
14. Kopteva, N. V., *Ontological security*. PhD thesis. Ekaterinburg, 2013.
15. Leontiev, D. A., *Psychology of sense*. Moscow: Sense, 2003.
16. Tkhostov, A. Sh., *Subject and body. Psychosemiotic of corporeity* (pp: 10-29).

- Moscow: Kom Kniga, 2005.
17. Vasilyuk, F. E., Structure of the image. *Questions of psychology*, 1993; **5**: 5-19.
 18. Längle, A., Meaningful life. Logotherapy as a life help. Herder. Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 2002.
 19. Maslow, A.H., The farther Reaches of Human Nature. Penguin Books, 1971.
 20. Frankl, V.E., Will for sense. The selected reports for logo-therapy. Bern: Huber, 1978.
 21. Karandashev, V. N., Method of Schwarz for studying personal values: concept and methodological guide. St. Petersburg: Speech, 2004.
 22. Schwarz, S.H. & Bilsky, W., Toward a theory of the universal content and structure of values: Extensions and cross-cultural replications. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Reprinted in H.Inoue, 1990; **58**: 878-891.
 23. Binswanger, L., Being-in-the-world; selected papers of Ludwig Binswanger. New York: Basic Books, 1963.
 24. Fromm, E., Man for himself. An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. New York, 1964.