Research article

The transformed semantics of the verbalizers of the ethical concepts "Love" – "Mercy" – "Chastity" – "Virtue"

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Abstract. The relevance of the research is determined by the need to identify semantic shifts of ethically significant concepts and their semantic distortion in the minds of Russian language native speakers in order to create an up-to-date picture allowing to understand the level of spiritual and moral values and the preservation of the Russian mentality among modern youth. The purpose of the study is to trace the changes in the meanings of the dominant verbalizers of the ethical concepts "Love," "Mercy," "Chastity," "Virtue" and to determine the impact of these changes on the linguistic and cultural consciousness of modern native speakers. The authors used comparative-historical method, E.M. Vereshchagin, V.G. Kostomarov's method of allocating semantic shares, questioning, cognitive interpretation, etc. The research was conducted on the material of explanatory dictionaries of the Russian language of different periods and the Church Slavonic language, associative dictionaries and data from sociolinguistic surveys. The article defines the ethical semantic shares of these concepts, establishes their connection with the Orthodox worldview. The ideas of modern students about the selected ethical concepts are studied, transformations in their understanding and evaluation are indicated.

Keywords: ethical concept, ethical semantic shares, conceptual sphere, linguistic picture of the world, linguistic and cultural consciousness

Introduction

The spiritual experience of the people, i.e. mentality, a way of understanding the world, is absorbed together with the language and through the language. People's awareness of spiritual experience is the national mentality. Thus, ethical concepts, real ideas about good and evil in the mentality are realized through

language, in where they are "imprinted" and in such a way create a national mentality.

V.V. Kolesov defines mentality as a way of perceiving reality, society and person in the categories of the native language, which is peculiar to the nation. The researcher emphasizes that the Russian mentality is based on the Logos, the Word, it is disclosed in the language in the basic concepts of folk culture, embedded in the national genotype (Kolesov, 2006: 12–14). S.N. Bulgakov[1], I. Ilyin[2], P. Florensky, E.M. Vereshchagin, V.A. Maslova, Yu.S. Stepanov, V.V. Kolesov, V.M. Shaklein, O.V. Shkuran et al. consider the word a keeper and a tool for creating ideas about the world (Florensky, 1991; Maslova, Danich, 2021; Stepanov, 2004; Kolesov, 2006; Shaklein, 2012; Shkuran, 2019). The researchers point out that "...the spirituality of the Russian people is formed and preserved through language, as there are deep transcendental meanings in language, almost inaccessible to rational comprehension, but understood by members of Russian linguistic culture" (Maslova, Danich, 2021).

If we proceed from the works of D.S. Likhachev (Likhachev, 1997), the conceptual representations of the people are formed into a conceptosphere, or, as it is now accepted, conceptospheres, which total form the linguistic picture of the world. The most frequent conceptual representations are investigated within the framework of intercultural communication, where the problems of correlation of specific cultural concepts of different languages are considered (Pan et al., 2021). We are focusing on the most important, central conceptosphere of the Russian language and Russian mentality – ethical. Ethical concepts are the mental constants, the prototype of ethical ideas, the "cultural cast" of the norms of morality in human consciousness. Words, verbalizing ethical concepts, assess the real object, any phenomenon, verbalized in the word, determine the significance of the object, its position in the system of national values. In other words, ethical concepts are vectors dividing the human world into right and wrong, acceptable, elevated and immoral, bringing the person down from the pedestal of "the crown of divine creation," in a broader sense – vectors of good and evil.

Currently there is a distortion of many ethical categories in the modern consciousness, reflected primarily in the semantics of words that verbalize ethical concepts. In addition, many ethically significant words in modern speech are replaced by foreign words that do not have a mental trail, such as "killer" instead of "murderer," and in the word "killer," understood as a professional killer, a "positive-respectful" meaning appears, associated with the presence of the seme "professional" in the meaning. Another striking example would be the fashionable "tolerance" instead of forbearance, whereas there is an ethical "gap" in the meanings of these words. Tolerance is "a disposition to understand and engage in dia-

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[1] Bulgakov, S.N. (1998). *Philosophy of the name.* Saint Petersburg: Nauka Publ. (In Russ.)
[2] Ilyin, I.A. (1998). *The way to obviousness.* Moscow: EXMO-Press. (In Russ.)

logue with the Other, recognizing and respecting his right to be different,"[3] while the ethical-social meaning of forbearance is "a disposition to understand and communicate with the Other," while the ethical and semantic meaning of the concept "Tolerance," the semantic field of which includes both tolerance and forbearance, is defined as follows: "to tolerate suffering wisely, magnanimously, indulgently" (Dmitrieva, 2013). Thus, accepting the other person because of generosity, characteristic of the native Russian mentality in interpreting forbearance, and "conscious suppression of the feeling of rejection of the Other,"[4] characteristic of understanding tolerance, are different notions. The insensitive attitude to the word distorts the motives of a "tolerant" attitude at the behavioral level: from "I do not agree with you, but I respect your view of the world and I demand respect for my values" to "it is the duty of a 'civilized' person to accept everything." And if forbearance to another religion, culture, way of thinking is an attempt to find points of contact, then tolerance erases ethical norms, when any other is accepted because of indifferent attitude to the eternal opposition of good and evil.

Let us note that, according to the Internet, in the modern linguocultural consciousness of the Russians ethical semantic meaning of patience becomes relevant again: in the first place among the synonyms in the Yandex search engine we find *long-patience, multi-patience*, *patience and condescension* stand in one synonymic row, and *tolerance* takes one of the final positions.

In this article, we dwell on the semantic shifts in understanding the lexemes *love, mercy, chastity, virtue* as the names of the corresponding ethical concepts. We consider it important to take into account the historically formed social context characterized by multidimensionality and secularity. In this new space, linguistics tries to find new approaches and methods to study the changes in cultural meanings. Thus, N.S. Naydenova, drawing on the works of Western and Russian scholars (Habermas, 2008; Uzlaner, 2008; Postovalova, 2012), notes that "the polemic on this issue is particularly acute in Russia, where the religious component is an important component of national identity, the idea of which is postulated by secular and church authorities" (Naydenova, 2018).

The aim of the research is to trace the changes in the meanings of the dominant verbalizers of the ethical concepts "Love," "Mercy," "Chastity," "Virtue" and the impact of these changes on the linguocultural consciousness of native speakers at the present stage.

Methods and materials

The data from the explanatory dictionaries of Church Slavonic, Old Russian and Russian language of the 19–20th centuries, the data from associative dictionaries of the Russian language and sociolinguistic surveys became the material of the research.

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[3] Apresyan, R.G., & Guseinov, A.A. (Eds.). (2001). *Ethics: Encyclopedic dictionary* (p. 494). Moscow: Gardariki Publ. (In Russ.)
[4] Ibid.

CULTURAL LINGUISTICS: THEORETICAL AND APPLIED ASPECTS

To achieve the aim of the article the authors used methods of observation and comparison of the semantics of the selected verbalizers in diachronic aspect, methods of generalization and interpretation of language units, comparative-historical method for analyzing semantic differences in verbalizing ethical concepts in different epochs, the particular method of semantic fractions (Vereshchagin, Kostomarov, 1980), the method of continuous sampling when working with associative dictionaries, the method of survey, as well as the method of cognitive interpretation when working with the materials of associative dictionaries and sociolinguistic surveys.

Results

The study has established that the original ethical meanings of the Russian language picture of the world are based on Christian Orthodox perceptions. Over time, some of the ethical meanings of the concepts have been transformed: they have decreased or lost their ethical meaning. However, it is possible to restore their original meaning by referring to the explanatory dictionaries of Church Slavonic, Old Russian and the Russian language of the 19th century.

The ethical concepts "Love," "Mercy," "Celibacy" and "Virtue" – parts of the ethical conceptosphere – are components of the Russian mentality. Originally, they were understood by the Russian people only positively, as inalienable qualities of a believing Orthodox person, and it is evidenced by their meanings in Church Slavonic and Old Slavonic languages.

Over time, however, the meanings of such words as *love, charity, chastity*, and *virtue* began to change. Associative dictionaries and sociolinguistic survey showed a sad picture of transformation of ethical meanings of the concepts "Love", "Generosity," "Virtue" to the degree of anti-ethical cynical notions. The negative evaluation of the verbalizers of the concept "Mercy" is not as frequent as for other words, but also occurs.

Only the fact that the majority of the respondents' answers, as well as the associations in the dictionaries, are close to the original ethical interpretation, is reassuring, although the degree of ethical meaning is significantly reduced.

Thus, the change in the semantic content and associative range of verbalizations of the ethical concepts "Love," "Mercy," "Virtue" and "Chastity" in the minds of modern Russian youth (18 to 25 years) indicates a significant loss of the Orthodox foundations of the original Russian mentality, the main components of which were the spiritual and moral values of the Russian people, which are now distorted and losing their significance.

Discussion

Ethical mental concepts. Analyzing the significant mental concepts identified in the Russian mentality by such researchers as A.A. Zaliznyak, V.V. Vorobyov, V.V. Kolesov, Yu.S. Stepanov, D.N. Shmelev, etc. (Vorobyov, 1997; Zaliz-

nyak et al., 2005), we have identified the following list of basic ethical concepts that constitute the core of the ethical conceptosphere of the Russians: in addition to the macro-concepts *goodness* and *boon*, these are such virtues as *courage* and *mercy*, *wisdom* and *love*, *humility* and *meekness*, *conscience* and *honor*, *chastity* and *holiness*, and *spirituality, faith, hope, collectivity, miracle* and *joy*, and *Truth-Verity*. They all constitute the positive pole of the Russian ethical conceptosphere. This list reflects the concepts that stand out, dominant for the ethical sphere, and does not indicate the micro-concepts included in their semantic field, such as *justice* and *honesty* (the dominant *Truth-Verity*), *strength, heroism* (the dominant *Courage*), etc. All ethical concepts are intertwined with each other by close semantic threads. Let us consider one of the intertwinings *love – mercy – generosity – chastity – virtue*, where noticeable transformations in the meanings of the lexemes are observed.

These words, acting also as names of concepts, are connected by the unity of ethical semantic content: *love* is compassion, *mercy* for one's neighbor, *generous* help, while *generosity* is originally a manifestation of *mercy*, *chastity* is preservation of divine purity, wholeness by virtue of *love* for God. All of these concepts represent *virtues*.

The concept "Love" and its transformations. In the entry about the constant "Love" Yu.S. Stepanov speaks about chastity, although originally chastity was associated primarily with wisdom. The researcher also writes about the special understanding of love in Russia: "earthly, but pure, earthly, but chaste, earthly, but partial to the divine" (Stepanov, 2004: 437). According to the Old Slavonic and Church Slavonic dictionaries, this is how "earthly" love was represented in antiquity (Dmitrieva, Lintovskaya, 2016). Moreover, the connection between love and chastity, as Yu.S. Stepanov believes, is especially important "for Russian Orthodoxy" (Stepanov, 2004: 438). The inexpressibility of the concept "love" in the Russian language, according to the scientist, is confirmed by the insignificant list of verbs of love. Thus, in popular usage, especially of the past centuries, there were derivatives of the verb "to pity" instead of "to love." However, it seems to us, such inexpressibility can be interpreted differently: the verb "to pity," i.e. to have compassion, to be merciful, conveys the essence of ethical understanding of love and that is why it was actively used up to the 20th century.

In the Russian mentality, the concept "love" is understood in the Christian way, as sacrifice, peculiar to God Himself, who is Love, which is His main ethical meaning. In the old Slavic language love was clearly distinguished into divine love, that is love to God, and earthly, compassionate love to a neighbor, which was understood as connection on a spiritual level with the beloved person. Consequently, the semantic share of the concept that contains the highest ethical meaning can be defined as "God-given good, the ability to do good out of compassion."

The seme "love as a predilection, preference for something" is found in Old Slavonic, actively manifested in Church Slavonic, but in ancient times,

this seme emphasized the moral preferences of a person, helped to divide the virtues (*ljuboblagoutrobnyj* – 'disposed to compassion', *ljubodobrodetel'nyj* – 'loving virtues', *ljubomudrennyj* – 'pious', *ljubostradatel'nyj* – 'loving martyrs') and vices (*ljuboslastie* – 'addiction to treats,' *ljubobrannyj* – 'addicted to war,' *ljubotvorec* – 'the one who indulged in voluptuousness,' *ljuboimennyj* – 'covetous, greedy,' etc.)[5]. This function has almost disappeared in modern usage along with the compound words, while the seme itself is now leading, yielding, according to some dictionaries, only to the meaning "erotic attraction," in which it is also the main one. Therefore, in modern speech, we love, "prefer" sausages, restaurants, perfume, etc., and in the same line we put the preference for some person. Let us remember the funny situation from the story by V. Dragunsky "What Mishka Loves," which taught that affection for the loved ones is more important than "love" for things, even tasty things, that love for grandmother cannot stand in the same line as love to gingerbread and sausage. Now it is not funny anymore, but rather, scary. Obviously, with the loss of such poetically beautiful and highly ethical words as *ljubodarlivyj* 'inclined to generosity,' *ljubomudrennyj* – 'pious,' we have partly lost if not the very capacity for these virtues, then certainly many of the moral national landmarks.

The survey conducted among the first-year students in 2017–2021 showed that in the linguocultural consciousness of modern youth love is primarily a feeling. Among the definitions there were ethically significant ones, which confirm the idea of preserving traditional Russian values in the language (Maslova, Danich, 2021). For example, *sacrificing oneself for the sake of another person; mutual understanding, respect for people; sincere light feeling; the ability to put others' interests above one's own; great high feeling; feeling of empathy; greatly cherishing someone; feeling that warms one's soul*, etc. (meanings are given in descending order of ethical importance).

However, among the answers there is a significant number of those with no ethical component, or those that pass into the category of anti-ethical: *strong attachment to a certain person, character, object; attachment to people, objects, animals that causes emotions; a feeling felt by one person for another; a relationship between a man and a woman; an extended concept that brings suffering and pain to one side; a chemical reaction of the body that causes attachment to another person, animal or object; a chemical reaction in the brain that causes attachment to another person, animal or object.*

Confirming the results of the sociological survey and fixing the ethical meaning and/or its narrowing in the main moral and ethical concepts in the linguocultural consciousness of young Russians are the data of associative dictionaries, created at different times with the help of psycholinguistic methods (first of

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[5] Hereinafter Church Slavonic words and their meanings are quoted from: Diachenko, G. (2009). *Full church Slavonic dictionary* (p. 293). Moscow: Otchii Dom Publ. (In Russ.)

all, the method of free associative experiment). The most representative data of this kind are included in RAS-1 edited by Yu.N. Karaulov (2002)[6], EURAS (2008, 2019)[7], and SIBAS (2011 – up to date)[8]. Let us turn to these materials, selecting those dictionary entries (associative fields), which as headwords (stimulus words) have the ethical concepts that we study and comment on.

The analysis of only two associative fields (from two direct – stimulus-reaction – associative dictionaries – EURAS and SIBAS, created during the last decade) distinguishes in this material several semantic zones (gestalts), which reflect two types of conceptions of modern Russian young (from 18 to 25 years) people: with a high positive moral-ethical content, evaluating this concept as a feeling, which illuminates human life and gives it deep meaning; and something low, beyond moral and ethical standards and man's true divine purpose.

Here are the results of the analysis.

1. *Positive evaluation of LOVE as a feeling*: *happiness, mutual, eternal, pure, big, real, huge, bright, joy, harmony, beautiful feeling, it is beautiful, devoted, selfless, purity, miracle, it is good.*

The place of LOVE in human life: *family, purpose of life, meaning of life, children, child, home, wife, husband, parents.*

State of mind of loving people, feelings accompanying LOVE: *trust, friendship, joy, kindness, mutual understanding, selflessness, mercy, self-giving, generosity, harmony, goodness, God, icon.*

2. *Denial or negative evaluation of LOVE as a feeling*: *no, fiction, doesn't exist, absent, myth, madness, evil, dependence, momentary weakness, impermanent, paid for, for money.*

Lack of moral and ethical understanding of LOVE: *pleasure, bed, sex, making love, affair, drug, chemistry, for money, paid.*

Spirits and feelings accompanying NOT-LOVE: *selfishness, jealousy, anger, torment, suffering, pain, cunning, conflict, death.*

The data presented in the form of semantic gestalt allow to draw some conclusions about reflecting the most important ethical meanings of the concept "Love" in the linguocultural consciousness of modern young people, which, in general, coincide with the data of the sociolinguistic survey. We are gratified to note that the most frequent and statistically significant are the traditional positive ideas about the concept "Love" in the Russian linguistic consciousness. However, some moral and ethical transformations in the semantics and pragmatics of this core concept are alarming and worrying. They are manifested in an increase

[6] Karaulov, Yu.N., Cherkasova, G.A., Ufimtseva, N.V., Sorokin, Yu.A., & Tarasov, E.F. (2002). *Russian associative dictionary*. Moscow: Astril Publ. (In Russ.)

[7] Ufimtseva, N.V., & Cherkasova, G.A. (2018–2019). *Russian regional associative dictionnary (European part of Russia)*. Moscow: Moscow International Academy of Arts. (In Russ.)

[8] Shaposhnikova, I.V., & Romanenko, A.A. (2008–2020). *Russian regional associative database*. (In Russ.) Retrieved September 12, 2021, from http://adictru.nsu.ru/

in the proportion of verbalizations with negative moral and ethical, rather, amoral and anti-ethical "meaning," attracting negative life energy and denying the high, divine, content of the concept "Love."

Charity, mercy as active love. The next word in our chain – mercy – implies not only selflessness and kindness, but also compassion for a person, active love and the good that a person does in general. Charity is not just helping one's neighbor, or active love for him, but it is first of all "striving for perfection, holiness."[9]

The word "charity" in Church Slavonic, which established Orthodox ideas in the Russian mentality, has significantly fewer verbalizations than, for example, love, good, boon. However, according to G. Diachenko's dictionary, the word "charity" and its derivatives in this period reveal several important ethical meanings. Firstly, "entrusting oneself to mercy, to intercession;" secondly, "entreaty, request" and "to show mercy, to regret, to be touched by something" in the word "*milovati*." The closest to the semantic component of the concept "love" is the word *miliy* "dear," meaning "close to the heart, causing complicity, mercy, pity."[10] The significance of the concept increases sharply in Old Russian, where there is an expansion of the word-formation nest to 28 derivatives, and an increase in the semantic components, the main of which remains the seme "love." For example, the meaning "compassion, benevolence, love" in the lexeme *milost'* mercy.[11]

The high ethical meaning of the word and its semantic closeness to the Christian Old Russian understanding is noted in the dictionary by V.I. Dal – "kindness, sympathy, love in action, readiness to do good to everyone; pity, soft-heartedness."[12] At the same time, the word *miliy* "dear," now understood as pretty, attractive, pleasant, is still interpreted close to the original: "the property of a loving person; condescending love; cordial disposition, desire to do good to anyone in deed; forgiveness, mercy; favor, giving honors to whom; reward."[13]

In the 20th century, almost all dictionaries define the meanings of the single-root lexemes of mercy, preserving the ethical meaning, but not indicating the Christian origin of these concepts. Thus, mercy is understood as active love, service to people, readiness to help because of compassion. The word-formation nest includes only a few derivatives, the semes of which – "inclined to mercy,"

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[9] Apresyan, R.G., & Guseinov, A.A. (Eds.). (2001). *Ethics: Encyclopedic dictionary* (p. 263). Moscow: Gardariki Publ. (In Russ.)

[10] Diachenko, G. (2009). *Full church Slavonic dictionary* (p. 305). Moscow: Otchii Dom Publ. (In Russ.)

[11] Sreznevsky, I.I. (1902). *Materials for the dictionary of the old Russian language in written monuments* (vol. 2, p. 136). Saint Petersburg. (In Russ.)

[12] Dal, V.I. (2011). Explanatory dictionary of the living great Russian language (vol. 2, p. 326). Moscow: Drofa Publ., Russkiy Yazyk-Media. (In Russ.)

[13] Ibid (p. 325).

"showing mercy" – are not devoid of ethical significance, although its essence is not revealed in the dictionary entries of the words related to mercy.

Another feature of mercy, since the Old Russian period, is the seme "generosity." Thus, *milovati* means "to show generosity, to bestow," *milovaniye* is not only readiness to help, to show mercy, but also to bestow, *milost'*, as in the modern Russian language, means to give[14]. This semantic fusion of mercy and generosity is especially noticeable in the meanings of derivatives with the root *schedr-* ('generous').

In Church Slavonic, *schedry* ('generous') means a *compassionate*, pious person. The word *schedrolyubets* has the basic meaning "inclined to mercy, merciful," *schedrotno* means "graciously," the seme "mercy" is found in the words *schedrotstvo, schedrotatstvo*, and the word used in modern Russian language *schedrost'* ('generosity') and others. Interesting from the point of view of the ethical meaning is the lexeme *Schedritel'* ('generous giver'), God himself, as interpreted by G. Diachenko[15].

V.I. Dal's dictionary records meanings close to the ethically significant semes, indicated in Church Slavonic and Old Russian languages. Thus, "schedry" is primarily "gracious, merciful for help, for gifts," the word "schedrota," lost in the modern language, means "mercy, condescension, generosity, beneficence."[16] V.I. Dal notes the common seme "to show mercy" in the lexemes "schedry" and "schadny." During the Soviet period, the word "schedry" lost its high ethical meaning, perhaps due to the unpopularity of mercy as a "priest word" (The Vayner Brothers "The Age of Mercy"). D.N. Ushakov defines the word "schedry" as follows: "voluntarily giving aid in money, property" and "mercy, generous gifts."[17] Mid-century dictionaries note the same decline in ethical meaning, such as "lack of greed,"[18] "generous gifts."[19]

In the 20th century, derivative words with the root "schedr-" are understood in a tangible sense and the ethical meaning contained in the seme "mercy" practically disappears, for example, "considerable in value" or "large in size," or

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[14] Bogatova, G.A., Malkova, O.V., Smolitskaya, G.P., & Shimchuk E.G. (Comps.) (1982). *Dictionary of the Russian language of the 11–17th centuries* (issue 9, p. 155). Moscow: Nauka Publ. (In Russ.)

[15] Diachenko, G. (2009). *Full church Slavonic dictionary* (p. 838). Moscow: Otchii Dom Publ. (In Russ.)

[16] Dal, V.I. (2011). *Explanatory dictionary of the living great Russian language* (vol. 4, p. 652). Moscow: Drofa Publ., Russkiy Yazyk-Media. (In Russ.)

[17] Ushakov, D.N. (2010). *The explanatory dictionary of the modern Russian language* (p. 486). Moscow: Dom. XXI vek Publ. (In Russ.)

[18] Ozhegov, S., & Shvedova, N. (2003). *The explanatory dictionary of the Russian language: about 80,000 words* (p. 903). Moscow: Azbukovnik Publ. (In Russ.)

[19] Evgenieva, A.P. (Ed.) (1988). *Small academic dictionary of the Russian language* (vol. 4, p. 514). Moscow: Russkii Yazyk Publ. (In Russ.)

"abundant in anything."[20] The meaning of "helping with money"[21] has an ethical seme "willingly," but it is still very different from understanding mercy in the Russian mentality, or the currently widespread understanding of a generous person as "not stingy."[22]

According to the results of the sociolinguistic survey, many modern speakers "feel" and know the ethical meaning of the word "mercy." The seme "sense of self-sacrifice, kindness, and compassion" was the most frequent among the answers of the respondents. In addition, students, both boys and girls, understand mercy as *a manifestation of compassion for another; desire to help those in need; assistance to weak people, animals in need of support; manifestation of a sense of kindness, unselfish assistance; compassion for some living being, nature; ability to forgive; consequence of love; human quality that allows forgiveness*. Generosity is understood by the students both ethically, such as *kindness; readiness to give somebody's last to someone who really needs it; the ability to share with others; the ability to give those things that one needs oneself*; and with a reduced ethical meaning: *to give something to someone; lack of greed; showing kindness due to weak or strong chara*cter, where we must assume that generosity is also seen as a weakness, perhaps close to cowardice.

The analysis of the associative fields of the word-stimulus "mercy" in the dictionaries EURAS and SIBAS (direct and reverse) allows, summarizing these data and distributing the word-reactions by semantic gestalt, to present their cognitive commentary.

Positive evaluation of the concept: *good, boon, kind, generosity, mercy, humane, understanding, indulgence, generosity, goodness, nobility, divine, dignity, soulfulness, from the heart, responsiveness, decency, joy, cordial, humanity, pure-heartedness, virtue.*

Participation in the divine, spiritual activity: *church, God, virtue, in church, faith, icon, monastery, monk, nun, orthodoxy, religion, Christians, cross, Virgin Mary.*

Subjects having this quality: *people, human, doctor, Mother Teresa, person, women, mother, mothers, nurse, philanthropist, orphanage; Red Cross, UN, organization.*

Objects to which mercy is directed: *to the poor, to the helpless, to one's neighbor, to others, to animals, to the injured, to man, to everybody.*

Means of manifestation: *almsgiving, charity, giving, forgiveness, sponsoring.*

Negation and negative evaluation: *weakness, delusion, foolishness, stupidity, not always good, not peculiar, failure, poverty, handout, vice, losing, rare, rarity, weakness, for losers, dope, is over, false.*

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[20] Evgenieva, A.P. (Ed.) (1988). *Small academic dictionary of the Russian language* (vol. 4, p. 418). Moscow: Russkii Yazyk Publ. (In Russ.)

[21] Ibid.

[22] Efremova, T.F. (2006). *Modern dictionary of the Russian language* (vol. 3, p. 839). Moscow: AST Publ., Astrel Publ., Harvest Publ., Lingua Publ. (In Russ.)

The presented material easily shows two poles of evaluating the concept "Mercy" – the traditional perception of this phenomenon in Russian culture and its denial or negative assessment. Especially alarming are such reactions as: *stupid, losing, weakness, for losers, lying*. They reflect the cardinal changes in the consciousness of Russians in recent decades: the loss of the moral and ethical qualities peculiar to Russian people, assessed as kindness, generosity, readiness for compassion and help.

Changes in the semantics of the verbalizers of the concept "Chastity." In Church Slavonic, *celomudrie* is interpreted in a Christian manner and contains ethical meaning: "prudence; purity of thoughts and bodily purity; chastity."[23] Note that in this period purity is perceived as moral purity, as sinlessness. Thus, the semantic components "purity, spiritual and bodily purity" and "prudence" are the main ethical parts of the concept "chastity."

In Old Russian, according to I.I. Sreznevsky, bodily purity is emphasized in the meaning of the verbalizers of the concept. For example, in the words *celomudrie, celomudriti, celomudryj*.[24] In the 19th century, this emphasis on carnal, bodily purity is preserved, but the ethical meaning of concept verbalizations is also preserved, as bodily purity is put on a par with spiritual purity and chastity. The word "chastity" is denoted by V.I. Dal as "carnal purity, chastity; strict morality."[25] The chaste is first of all, the one who has preserved virgin (marital) purity, the one who is characterized by "high morality" and "mental purity."[26] In addition, V.I. Dal defines chastity as "whole-mindedness, integrity, soundness of mind, prudence."[27]

It seems surprising that D.N. Ushakov's dictionary indicates in the meaning of the word "chastity" such ethical semes as "severity in moral attitude" and "virtue" proper.[28] Further, dictionaries of this century fix in the first meaning a narrow understanding of chastity, that is, virginity, or, as the dictionary says, "concerning people who have not had sexual intercourse."[29] However, the semes "strict morality, purity," "mental purity," increasing the degree of ethical significance of derivatives are noted by the authors of dictionaries in the second, figurative sense (Ozhegov, Small Academic Dictionary, Efremova).

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[23] Diachenko, G. (2009). *Full church Slavonic dictionary* (p. 806). Moscow: Otchii Dom Publ. (In Russ.)

[24] Sreznevsky, I.I. (1912). *Materials for the dictionary of the old Russian language in written monuments* (vol. 3, p. 1608). Saint Petersburg. (In Russ.)

[25] Dal, V.I. (2011). Explanatory dictionary of the living great Russian language (vol. 4, p. 578). Moscow: Drofa Publ., Russkiy Yazyk-Media. (In Russ.)

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ushakov, D.N. (2010). *The explanatory dictionary of the modern Russian language* (p. 484). Moscow: Dom. XXI vek Publ. (In Russ.)

[29] Ozhegov, S., & Shvedova, N. (2003). *The explanatory dictionary of the Russian language: about 80,000 words* (p. 873). Moscow: Azbukovnik Publ. (In Russ.)

Thus, the concept "Chastity" includes in its semantic field ethical ideas going back to the Christian notions of purity not only of the body, but, above all, of thoughts and feelings, of purity and sinlessness.

In this case, the survey confirmed the idea that moral values are preserved in the language. Thus, among the answers of the respondents the following are found: innocence, purity; harmony in the inner world; clarity of mind, purity of thoughts; wisdom. Among the student responses there often were statements about not knowing the meaning of the word "chastity," with many respondents noting that it is something good, intuitively determining the place of the concept among the ethical concepts of the positive pole of the conceptosphere. However, there also were interpretations showing that the Soviet atheistic propaganda and the modern propaganda of "free love" have not been in vain: *the right understanding of these or those things; the ability to make thoughtful decisions not guided by emotions; the unknown direction that requires not trying sexual life all your life, adding other prohibitions for yourself; the feeling of a person becoming smarter, based on experience; abstaining from lust*.

Unfortunately, the materials of associative dictionaries also do not allow to be confident about preserving the positive semantic components of the concept "chastity" in the linguistic and cultural consciousness of young Russians. In EURAS and SIBAS the verbalizer of the concept "Chastity" is absent in the list of stimulus words – the headwords of the associative fields. This means that this lexeme and the concept it denotes are not part of the core of the linguistic consciousness. And only in one of the reverse dictionaries (EURAS) in the dictionary entry is the reaction *chaste*, received on the word-stimulus *girl*, which confirms that the Christian spiritual component of this concept is almost completely lost. Understanding chastity only as bodily purity, we have lost many ethical and spiritual meanings and corresponding derivatives.

Semantics of virtue. The lexeme *dobrodetel'* ('virtue') in the Church Slavonic language included the following semes "deed," "good quality," as well as "valor," "greatness," "glory," and "perfection,"[30] uniting them not only with each other, but also with the main ethical virtue – holiness. In comparison with the modern terminological meaning, these interpretations reveal the high ethical significance of the concept of virtue.

In the Old Russian language, the word *dobrodetel'* includes in its semantic field "kindness," "good deeds," "deeds," "benefactor," "well-wisher."[31] I.I. Sreznevsky gives an even more pronounced ethical meaning of "jewel, ornament."[32]

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[30] Diachenko, G. (2009). *Full church Slavonic dictionary* (p. 147). Moscow: Otchii Dom Publ. (In Russ.)

[31] Bakhilina, N.B., Bogatova, G.A., Smolitskaya, G.P., Shalamova, A.N., & Shimchuk, E.G. (Comps.) (1977). *Dictionary of the Russian language of the 11–17th centuries* (issue 4, p. 262). Moscow: Nauka Publ. 1977. (In Russ.)

[32] Sreznevsky, I.I. (1893). *Materials for the dictionary of the old Russian language in written monuments* (vol. 1, p. 677). Saint Petersburg. (In Russ.)

Examples given by the author show that virtue in this case is adornment of the human soul, spiritual virtues. Thus, in the Old Russian period the word develops two basic semes: "quality, the property of man" and "producer, bearer of this quality." Let us also note that valor, glory, greatness, exploits, which were understood under virtue in this period, unlike in modern times, are not so much military feats, but feats of faith, the glory of holiness.

In the semantics of the word "virtue" there are spheres "divine" regulating relations between man and God, "ethical" defining relations between people, and "material" referring to the interaction of man and nature, man and surrounding reality, man and the world of things. This connection of the most important spheres is due primarily to the fact that medieval man correlated with the divine laws of all life, not only relations with his neighbors, but also relations to the material world (Vendina, 2002). And both meanings of virtue were transmitted, unlike in modern language, in other words with the root "dobro-" ('good') as well. The meaning "virtuous person" was assigned to the word *dobrotvornik*, i.e. a person doing good, bestowing wealth, good. The meaning "disposition to goodness," in the modern interpretation "high morality," was peculiar to the word *dobroizvolenie*. All derivatives of this period accurately expressed the ethical meaning, for example, *dobrodetel'stvovat'* – to be an ascetic, to lead an ascetic, good life, *dobrodetel'no* – according to the rules, morally, peacefully, amicably, etc.[33]

The word *dobrodetel'* retains a high degree of ethical meaning in the language of the 19th century as well, but V.I. Dal does not fix the seme "producer of action." The dictionary specifies the meanings: "inclination to good, as a quality of a person."[34] The dictionary indicates the meanings: "tendency to the good, kind-heartedness, benevolence"[35] and "prowess, any praiseworthy quality of the soul, active aspiration to the good, to avoid the evil."[36]

It should be noted that in D.N. Ushakov's dictionary, the lexeme *dobrodetel'* is also not correlated with doer, moreover, the meaning is formulated abstractly, for example, "a positive moral quality of a person" or "based on virtue."[37] Such definitions do not deprive the word of its ethical meaning, but its perception becomes less "lively" and effective, which moves the verbalizer of the ethical concept into the category of terms of ethics as science, where "virtue" is a generalized name for any moral quality of a person.

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[33] Bakhilina, N.B., Bogatova, G.A., Smolitskaya, G.P., Shalamova, A.N., & Shimchuk, E.G. (Comps.) (1977). *Dictionary of the Russian language of the 11–17th centuries* (issue 4, p. 262). Moscow: Nauka Publ. (In Russ.)

[34] Dal, V.I. (2011). Explanatory dictionary of the living great Russian language (vol. 1, p. 444). Moscow: Drofa Publ., Russkiy Yazyk-Media. (In Russ.)

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ushakov, D.N. (2010). *The explanatory dictionary of the modern Russian language* (p. 156). Moscow: Dom. XXI vek Publ. (In Russ.)

According to our survey, most students define virtue grammatically incorrectly, referring to a person doing good, which is ethically correct. Let us remember that in Old Russian *dobrodeyatel'* is someone who "brings light to the world," "do, creates good." Let us compare: *the change of man's spiritual world to a kinder one by deeds of kindness to someone; the quality of a person who does good deeds for the surrounding world; the deeds of people who are ready to altruistically help another person even to their own detriment; all actions and words for good*.

The data of the EURAS and SIBAS associative dictionaries about the concept "Virtue" cause rather sad thoughts: this concept, as well as "Chastity," remained outside the core of language consciousness and therefore was not included in the lists of stimulus words in the associative experiments. It is included only in the SIBAS reverse dictionary as a response to the following stimulus words: *virtue* ← *mercy 3; generous, hospitality, kindness, goodness, evil, politician, help, ally, happiness, talented, cunning, generosity* **1**; *15+13*.

The fact that derivative reactions with the root *dobro-* are richly and frequently represented in the associative-verbal network of modern Russians can be consoling: *dobrozhelatel'nyj* ('benevolent'), *dobrodushnyj* ('kind-hearted'), *dobrovol'nyj* ('voluntary'), *dobrota, dobroljubie* ('kindness'), *dobroporjadochnyj/ dobroporjadochnost'* ('upstanding'), *dobroserdechnyj* ('kind-hearted'), *dobrosovestnyj* ('conscientious'), *dobrosovestno* ('conscientiously'). In addition, in the associative field of the word-stimulus **dobro** ('goodness'), the most frequent reactions are *mercy*, as well as such words with an ethical component, as *virtue, kindness, pity, compassion, generosity*.

Conclusion

Language is the indisputable guardian of moral values. The view of the world of the modern generation depends primarily on the ability to understand the deep conceptual meanings embedded in the words of our language, primarily in the words that verbalize the basic ethical concepts of the Russian mentality.

Transformation of the semantic ethical meaning for the past period demonstrates a decrease in the ethical significance of the words-verbalizers of the concepts "Love," "Mercy," "Chastity," "Virtue." The original ethical semes of some of them are established only by philological analysis, which inevitably affects the consciousness of native speakers, the formation of the system of values. Reconstruction of the relevant fragments of modern young people language consciousness is possible with the help of sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic methods: in our article it is the data of the sociolinguistic survey and associative dictionaries.

One of the main tasks today is not simply to preserve the original ethical conceptosphere of the Russian mentality, but to make it "readable" for modern and future generations. This article, the subject of its research is not limited to these concepts, serves this purpose.

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Трансформации в семантике вербализаторов этических концептов «Любовь» – «Милосердие» – «Целомудрие» – «Добродетель»

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Аннотация. Актуальность исследования определяется необходимостью выявления семантических сдвигов этически значимых концептов и их смысловой искаженности в сознании носителей русского языка для создания актуальной картины, позволяющей понять степень сформированности духовно-нравственных ценностей и сохранения ментальности русского народа у современной молодежи. Цель исследования – проследить изменение смыслов доминантных вербализаторов этических концептов «Любовь», «Милосердие», «Целомудрие», «Добродетель» и определить влияние этих изменений на лингвокультурное сознание современных носителей русского языка. Данная цель может быть достигнута с помощью междисциплинарного подхода к исследовательским методам. Так, в работе над материалом использовались сравнительно-исторический метод, частный метод семантических долей (Е.М. Верещагин, В.Г. Костомаров), методы социолингвистического опроса, когнитивной интерпретации результатов ассоциативных экспериментов и др. Соответственно, материалы исследования неоднородны по своему онтологическому статусу: это данные толковых словарей русского и церковнославянского языков, ассоциативных словарей и социолингвистических опросов. Определены этические смысловые доли указанных концептов, установлена их связь с православным мировоззрением. Изучены представления современной студенческой молодежи о выбранных этических концептах, указаны трансформации в их понимании и оценке. Предлагается не ограничиваться простой констатацией выявленных семантических сдвигов в семантике исследуемых вербализаторов этических концептов, но оценить создавшуюся ситуацию в контексте современных цивилизационных процессов в постсекулярном мире.

Ключевые слова: русский язык, этический концепт, концептосфера, языковая картина мира, ассоциативный эксперимент, лингвокультурное сознание