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## THE PRIVATE SELF IN THE CONTEXT OF PRAYER

**Background.** The analysis is based on the thesis that prayer is not only dialogue in the context of man-God relationship but also a kind of mental state characterized by empathy and synergy of both exclusively human and divine. The main prayer's nuance of meaning—appeal, response, insight, on the one hand, form the dialogue as an opportunity to accept the existence of God in the subjective dimension of I-You, and on the other—contribute to transcendence and self-construction of personality. In this prayer process, the perception of self as Other and Other as self is carried out. our study The purpose of the research is to find out Self-Other relationship in the context of prayer, its psychological and religious capabilities, which reveal its functional aspects.

**Methods.** Analysis, comparison, synthesis, generalization and systematization.

**Results.** Prayer, opening the prospects of overcoming existential problems, firstly, satisfies the spiritual needs of man through dialogue with the Deity. Secondly, it forms sensitivity to the Other. Thirdly, it performs the function of centering of consciousness, thanks to which centering individuality is transformed into an integral personality. Attention is paid to the functional relationship of faith and prayer, their role in constructing the prayer experience as a kind of empathic life strategy and as a religious and spiritual space of coexistence of I and Other. Prayer experience promotes forming the basis, life affirmation of a person and contains significant psychotherapeutic potential, as its carrier is aimed at effective and practical overcoming of the finiteness of human existence in the pursuit of eternal, absolute existence.

**Conclusion.** Prayer as a dialogue motivates the activation of a people's essential forces, enriching their experience, personal growth and optimizing spiritual self-transcendence. Prayer intentionally contains the Other in itself, ensures co-involvement with Him. Its intensity depends on the emotional palette, which enhances the dialogue and constructs self. Prayer not only "focuses" consciousness, but also acts as a powerful means of centring it. This ability of prayer, enabling the process of unity of the human and the Divine, contributes to the formation of a harmonious, integral personality. The essence of prayer is most clearly revealed in prayer-empathy when the boundaries of self are overcome and problems, the feelings of the Other find a response in self, a kind of personal overflow takes place. Prayer contains a significant psychotherapeutic potential, helps to overcome difficult life situations and contributes to the improvement of mental health, and during periods of life crises, ensure moral survival and affirmation of a personality.

**Key words:** private self, prayer, dialogue, relationship "Self-Other," centering of consciousness, emotion, empathy, religious faith, prayer experience, psychotherapeutic effect.

**Introduction.** The modern civilization is facing new experience and new issues, when many values of the open world are getting through a rigorous check, rethinking, experience. We should emphasize not only human experience but also one of the possible challenges. War, virus, panic, market collapses, quarantines testify to how vulnerable humanity is. However, at the same time, these challenges raise pressure on the psyche and can cause severe anxiety, hesitancy, confusion and even depression. Panic and fear become a new virus. Paradoxically, we give in to them faster than to biological infections. But panic and fear can be alleviated and eliminated. It is time to ask yourself "Who am I? Can I trust myself? What factors will help me face serious challenges and be responsible for myself and others?"

One of the factors of alleviation the human existential situation is prayer and its opportunities related to the meaning of life. The problem of the meaning of prayer occupies a special place, focusing the search for answers to various questions in determining a people's attitude to life and cognition of themselves. It should be noted that the question of the essence and purpose of prayer is deeply ideological, and includes the most intimate moments of human subjectivity. Prayer is a complex phenomenon. It is quite clear, and there is "no analytically satisfactory typology of prayer has been produced in the 150-year history of the comparative study of religion" (Geertz, 2008, p. 121). That is why our study aims to find out Self-Other relationship in the context of prayer, its psychological and religious capabilities, which reveal its functional aspects. Researchers in theology, psychology and religious studies pay attention to the analysis of various forms of prayer, their semantic characteristics, without showing their life-meaning possibilities.

**Prayer as Dialogue.** The most common definitions of prayer are "conversion", "conversation", "communication", and "dialogue". They all emphasize the characteristics of prayer as "inwards (self-connection), outwards (human-human connection) and upwards (human-divine connection)" (Puchalska-Wasył & Zarzycka, 2019, paragraph 9) i. e. as personal and interpersonal communication, and the orientation of prayer to God as to a Person expresses the uniqueness of this communication. One of the famous German historians of the religion of the first half of the XX century Hailer (1921) gives the following definition of prayer: "it is a living communication of the pious person with God, who is conceived of as personal and experienced as present" (p. 491). Therefore, the dialogic nature of prayer is widely accepted by scientists (Guilherme, 2012; Niebuhr & Schjoedt, 2019; Predko, 2020; Puchalska-Wasył & Zarzycka, 2019; Widmer, 2004). The addressee of prayer is God, to whom the act of prayer is addressed. Prayer reflects the direction of the consciousness of the one who prays. It contains intentions that open the possibility of the action of grace. In this sense, prayer is the verbalization of what is not verbalized. In prayer, on the one hand, there is a meeting with the Divine essence and on the other – people can find unity with God. "Through praying, through dialoguing with the Thou-God and reflecting upon our lives... we make it easier for I-Thou<sup>1</sup> relations to arise and to encounter the Thou, the spark of God, within ourselves, and others" (Guilherme, 2012). Therefore, prayer is always an appeal to someone, in which the goal-setting of people, their hopes are fixed. However, this appeal is always aimed at the response. Thus, a dialogical insight, its mystery unfolds.

<sup>1</sup> Thou – the same as "You", is often capitalized, when referring to God.

To try to approach the question of understanding prayer as a dialogue, we will identify a few starting points for our further reasoning. First, the central to understanding the dialogue self-Other<sup>1</sup> is the attitude of any person to the Other. Second, there are two contradictory tendencies at the centre of this relation: acceptance, understanding of another person as self-worth, self-purpose and acceptance, understanding it as a means. Third, prayer can overcome this contradiction. This ensures the quality of human development, its humanity.

Attitude to God as the highest sacred value manifests itself, in the categories of personality, conversion and emotionality, expressing a wide range of feelings and experiences of the praying person. Thus, transcending as overcoming the time of formation, and association with eternity, transcending as a transition from the finite existence to infinite being is the basis of communication with the sacred.

Any prayer has a motivation that permeates the entire vital space of a person and is most often associated with desire. This desire is directly related to the essential questions of personality – not only how to live, but also why to live. It is in prayer the pulse of the existential destiny of a person is most deeply felt – to feel connected to the Other, whose communicative space is open for response. This is the greatest value of not only prayer but also life communication.

There are some differences between prayer and internal dialogue. In particular, Puchalska-Wasył and Zarzycka (2019) pay attention to the fact that in the case of prayer, first "the deity is seen not only as an important viewpoint but above all as a metaphysical "Other" with qualitatively distinct features" (paragraph 3) and second "the fundamental principle of prayer is that God is an active participant in the (dialogical) exchange and that it is not possible to hide thoughts or other behaviours from Him" (paragraph 3). Internal dialogue does not have such characteristics. Consistent with this point of view is the speech at the conference by Niebuhr and Schjoedt (2019). They analyzed the phonetic correlates of people's requests to God, real and purely imaginary personalities, while they were alone in the room, and found that prayers to God have dialogue speech markers as opposed to monologue speech in requests to imaginary and real interlocutors. People believe that God in Christianity listens and responds to their requests. Consequently, prayers are regarded as "dialogue acts" (p. 36).

Prayer is a dialogue that includes the following components. First, you need to hear the Other. Secondly, you need to understand the Other by entering into a dialogue. Thirdly, the result of the dialogic nature of prayer is a joint synergistic act of the human and divine realms, which is fixed in the actions, events that contribute to personal growth. In this contact a condition "between" is gasped, where the limit of my *self* expands, overcomes, where *you* is no longer *you*, but not the Other either. It is a kind of moving, mutually flowing, pulsating process, due to which self-affirmation, self-actualization of oneself through the Other take place. Yours, personal and Other merge in such fluidity. This is a contact, which opens a closed system of human self. Therefore, understanding oneself, one's essence "is possible only through such completeness of experience of a special relationship to Other, where Other appears in all self-evident significance and integrity, and not as a thing among things, but as a value in itself.

<sup>1</sup> The "Other" arises when "Self" goes beyond the limits of its identity, when the prospect of a meeting-dialogue with "You", with God, opens up.

In the condition of prayer, people try to reach their self to the level of the Other, but at the same time to remain themselves. Therefore, prayer is a certain presentation of a personality, which unfolds as goal setting. However, as Loj (1996) noted, "each goal has its value component; goal (mark) – an image of a proper future, which consolidates the intentional acts of «aspirations, goals»" (p. 34). Thus, the prayer dialogue acts as an obligatory foundation for the emergence of meanings, since the goal is connected with meaning, with the question of "what... for", "why" it is carried out. The goal is derived from values. Therefore, each goal has a value component that plays a role in the construction of meanings. If in this goal-setting process a person loses a value component, ceases to hear the response of the Other, addressed to his unique self, then, in this case, the prayer loses its dialogic nature (Predko, 2020).

**Prayer and Emotion.** Emotiveness is considered as one of the fundamental categories in the representation of psychological aspects of prayer, reflecting the whole palette of experience, feelings and emotions of the prayer person (joy, reverence, anger, despair, etc.). In the absence of an emotional background in prayer, the text would be interpreted not as a prayer, but as an ordinary request. According to the emotional and semantic dominant, these texts, on the one hand, express people's dissatisfaction with their present position, but on the other hand, optimism about the future.

Prayer shows that a person has significant internal resources associated with the ability to feel and to emotionally experience, including empathy, sympathy, support and optimism. Murphy (2008), claims the existence of such a phenomenon as "scientific prayer", which does not require belonging to any religion but presuppose self-belief and the possibilities of the Universe. His scientific prayer should not be learnt by heart, they are free dialogues with the Universe and your inner strength. Moreover, all you need to do is turn negative thoughts into positive ones. Therefore, the more often you think about the good, the more of that good will be in your life.

Prayer experiences are aimed at meaning-making activity and have an intentional character. Therefore, in the deep layers of prayer experiences, there is something "transsubjective", there is a kind of initial appeal of the human heart to God and God's involvement in our appeal. Such a prayer attitude promotes a positive perception of other believers and enhances interpersonal trust (Meijer-van Abbema & Koole, 2017).

Elder Zosima, explaining the monastic way, noted: "Obedience, fasting, and prayer are laughed at, yet only through them lies the way to real, true freedom. I cut off my superfluous desires, I subdue my proud and wanton will and chastise it with obedience, and with God's help, I attain freedom of spirit and with it spiritual joy" (Dostoyevsky, 2016, p. 523). When people achieve "spiritual joy", i. e. envy, dislike for one's neighbour will disappear, social harmony will be established on Earth. Dostoevsky's idea of social harmony is not just a utopian scheme. For him, it is like the Aristotelian form. It grasps and transforms the individual human nature, raising it to the universal gospel paradigm.

The concept of joy is inherent to a personality, constitutes the core of a person's inner nature, but it only needs to be seen. To love life before the life, before realizing its meaning, to build spiritual life based on love for all human, divine and natural, to accept in one's soul the whole world as one's destiny is the first and most important reference point on the way to solving the problem of the meaning of life. Therefore, it is clear why prayer gives the person an avenue of relief that treats both the body and the

spirit, addressing both evolutionary and spiritual needs (Tsakiridis, 2013, p. 906). Also, Sharp and Carr (2017) indicate that prayer helps in managing negative emotions. Personalities use this strategy when they have negative emotions for a long time or when they think about events that trigger negative emotions. This approach may be most desirable to use only in situations when "negative emotions cannot be expressed safely to others because the intensity and duration of these negative emotions are particularly overpowering" (p. 572). The use of prayer practices to manage negative emotions can be beneficial in anger management programs or pastoral counselling.

Prayer is designed to activate and motivate the understanding of the relationship "man-God". Moreover, in the prayer process a Self-image, attitude, and comprehension of one's mental acts and conditions change. A whole range of religious experiences accompanies this prayer process. After all, prayer "sprouts" from strong emotional shocks. It can be expressed in passionate appeals to God and is part of the inner experience of person, a manifestation of his deep excitements, moods, feelings. "For instance, intercessory prayer may generally evoke feelings of reverence, respect, awe, or humility because one is approaching and communicating with a powerful supernatural being. These emotions may similarly fill up their respective resources and spill out into other areas of life. Individuals who pray, particularly those who believe they are praying before an all-powerful, holy supernatural being, might experience more humility because these prayers lead to the amplification of this and similar emotions. This proposed mechanism... affects emotion itself and amplifies the emotion in such a way that it is intensified in other unrelated situations" (Greenway, 2020, p. 24).

Thus, prayer affects the emotional sphere of personality, contributes to the formation of its emotional culture. In this sense, prayer is a mental state that unfolds as an emotional and feeling process, which arises from people's inner need to share their experiences, their feelings that emerge when they turn to supernatural forces to meet their own needs, aspirations or to indicate some intentions.

**Prayer and Empathy.** Prayer is a person's appeal to God. It is a multilevel act of human interaction with the realm of transcendent, expresses their interpersonal connections and is dialogical by nature. Prayer is a dialogue during which people address their requests to God and seek to receive an answer in the form of grace, which is a real subjective feeling of divine help, consolation and joy.

Manifestations of prayer at the interpersonal level make intersubjectivity as a condition for interaction and transmission of feeling experience. Intersubjectivity captures the connection between self and Other. In this connection, we can distinguish, on the one hand, projection of experiences of self into Other, and on the other – compassion to Other, experiencing with Other his state of mind, which make empathy at the same time. By the way, this connection we can see in the intercessory prayer, in which compassion for the Other is expressed in the context of the "Other in me". "Praying individual is praying for or on behalf of another person. The purpose of such prayer is to petition or ask God or gods for some action, generally for the benefit of someone" (Tyler, 2020, p. 67). Consequently, it is quite appropriate to agree with the thought that prayer at the interpersonal level is characterized by empathy.

The most holistic understanding the content of empathy is understanding empathy as a process that includes

cognitive (understanding the mental state of the Other without changing one's state), emotional (not only understanding the states of Other but also compassion and sympathy to Other) and active (is the highest form and final phase of the empathic act. It is expressed in action, active support by the personality of the Other) components (Powell & Roberts, 2017). Therefore, it is understandable why the empathic nature of prayer expresses interpersonal identification, which has not only mental, emotional and praxeological nature but also forms the spiritual quality of a person. We fully agree with the opinion of Jankowski and Sandage (2011) "forgiveness requires an empathic response rather than a self-protective or aggressive response to internal representations of the other. Empathy requires the capacity consistent with secure attachment to care about others without being overwhelmed by emotional distress or remaining entrenched in defensive postures" (p. 118).

Why does compassion arise, what is the mechanism of its occurrence? We agree that this phenomenon can be explained by "mirror neurons" (Ferrari & Coudé, 2018; Praszkiar, 2016). They were discovered by a group of neurophysiologists at the University of Parma in Italy led by Giacomo Rizzolatti (1996). There are two types of mirror neurons: motor, or so-called action neurons, and emotional mirror neurons. They respond not only to movements but also facial expressions and are especially extremely sensitive to eye movement. They help us subconsciously, seeing only facial expressions and gestures and without any mental analysis, to understand the emotions of another person. Observing other people's facial expressions and gestures, we involuntarily begin to experience other people's emotions (Fabbri-Destro & Rizzolatti, 2008; Bastiaansen, Thioux & Keysers, 2009; Ferrari & Rizzolatti, 2014). There is the interesting process takes place: thanks to mirror neurons, a person simulates a certain feeling that is inherent in another person. Perhaps this is where the problem of understanding the mechanisms of the ability to empathize is hidden, thanks to which the feeling of loneliness is overcome, and individuals have a greater ability to forgive (Vasiliauskas & McMinn, 2013).

Prayer-empathy, as a process, includes cognitive, emotional and behavioural components: understanding by the subject of empathy the emotional state of another person; compassion and sympathy for Other; providing support to Other using, but not limited to, verbal and non-verbal communication. Undoubtedly, religious feelings play a significant role in prayer-empathy. Therefore, we agree with the opinion of D. Ye. Predko (2018): "Empathy of religious feelings is their ability to emotional contagion, the essence of which lies in the predominantly unconscious process of transferring emotional states from one person (group) to another person (group) that are in direct visual and (or) verbal contact" (p. 83). Thus, religious feelings enhance the empathic aspect of prayer, contribute to emotional contagion in the self-Other relationship.

**Prayer as the Centring of Consciousness.** An important element of human consciousness is the so-called centre of attention, "focus" of consciousness or intentionality of consciousness. We will try to consider prayer experience of Saint Teresa of Avila in this context. She regarded prayer as a dynamic process of the spiritual ascent of a person who, having passed through seven stages, all of which correspond to a certain degree of prayer, reaches the centre or as she calls it "the palace". This incredibly beautiful palace shining with diamonds is our spiritual inner world (Ribot, 1896).

The first stage is reached by oral prayer, which directs the scattered consciousness in a certain way and where



centration occurs. The second stage is a mental prayer where the inner concentration of thought is strengthened. The internal language replaces the external language. The third stage is the prayer of recollection when consciousness moves from a discursive to an intuitive form. Thinking is replaced by love. The prayer of quietude introduces the fourth point when the soul comes to a higher state of contemplation, and the truth suddenly appears before it. The fifth abode is the prayer of the union, which fixes the beginning of the ecstasy. However, it is still unstable. The fixity of consciousness is imperfect. It still shows fluctuations and temporary deviations. The sixth stage is the prayer of rapture when consciousness reaches ecstasy. The last abode, the seventh, is reached by the expansion of the mind when union with God occurs. "This is accomplished suddenly and violently... but with such force that we should strive in vain to resist the impetuous onset" (Ribot, 1896, p. 90–94).

The prayer experience of Saint Teresa of Avila can be considered as a variation of Centering Prayer. Centring prayer, its essential characteristics were first developed by William Meninger, M. Basil Pennington, and Thomas Keating. It is a modern form of the ancient Christian tradition of contemplation. Centring prayer consists of the following characteristics: "(1) it allows the individual to get in touch with his or her centre of being; beyond logic and reason, (2) it offers the individual a simple and effortless form of prayer, and (3) it helps the individual to relate differently to his or her thoughts" (Johnson, 2018, p. 2294). The benefits of this type of prayer are increasing love, receiving God fully, shedding the false self, releasing the tension, reducing loneliness, people can act more consciously rather than automatically and clients can react more objectively to their experiences (Knabb, 2010; Johnson, 2018; Siegel 2007, as cited in Blanton, 2010).

Prayerful spiritual ascent is achieved through the centring of consciousness, the concentration of thought, loving contemplation, complete calm, the beginning of ecstasy, a sense of delight and union with God. This psychological unfolding of prayer makes it possible to trace how consciousness ascends to a higher degree of the union with God. The above stages of prayer increase depending on how the moment of concentration of individuality in the most integral personality occurs. The act of prayer is man's way to God, his way of spiritual insight. This path is endless and constantly open. By the way, for a believer, life itself is a constant condition of prayer, which is quite dynamic. The intentional specificity of prayer is closely related to a potential opportunity – hope, a presentment of the desired. However, prayer is not only a manifestation of hope but also a manifestation of love. All this range of feelings has a certain vector of direction – the sphere of the divine, which is possible through both concentration and centring of consciousness.

**Psychotherapeutic Effect of Prayer.** There are currently differing views among the scientific community on the impact of religion on human health. Religion, especially prayer, has positive health outcomes. Praying or meditating at least 1-6 times per week has a positive effect on the mental health of individuals: greater emotional processing and expression, a greater sense of mission, greater volunteering, greater forgiveness, fewer lifetime sexual partners and lower likelihoods of drug use in adolescence (Chen & VanderWeele, 2018). Prayer intervention leads to "an increase in life expectancy in patients with cancer" (Eilami et al., 2018), has a positive influence on psychological well-being through attachment to God, but

not directly (Bradshaw & Kent, 2018). It also has positive outcomes for personalities who have depression and anxiety, even one year after the intervention (Boelens et al., 2012; Johnson, 2018). Individuals who perceive God as helping and protecting being may choose health-promoting behaviours according to their religious practice or insights received through prayer. In contrast, some personalities pray but do not believe that God will help them in times of need. Therefore, they may experience a decline in mental health (Bradshaw & Kent, 2018). However, constant prayer may be associated with problems in physical health. It may be explained that people who already have the disease are more likely to pray (Chen & VanderWeele, 2018). Nevertheless, prayer can alleviate boundary situations (incurable diseases, depression, crisis, etc.), gives hope for recovery and improves the person's mental health.

Prayer may be beneficial as one of the components of the psychotherapeutic process, especially for existential and social psychotherapy (Larivee & Echarte, 2017). It provides support for a personality and relieves internal stress. It may act as a motivator. So, it also acts as a psychotherapeutic factor, supports the inner strength of a person, which is necessary for further activities and to overcome difficulties. Guilherme (2012) states that prayer can be considered as "a sort of self-applied psychotherapy" (p. 375). It becomes a communicative source for the formation of a kind of subjective reality of believers. Therefore, prayer sets their style of life and thinking. The following study states about the need to incorporate prayer into counselling practice: "82 % of clients desired audible prayer in counselling; they preferred that therapists introduce the subject of prayer; they had strong expectations that prayer would be included in counselling; they wanted counsellors to pray for them outside of session; clients with prior Christian counselling had higher expectations of prayer than did clients without" (Weld & Eriksen, 2007, p. 328).

However, several ethical problems that can be found in the process of treatment. The use of prayer in counselling intervention can restrict client freedom. It can be practised outside the limits of one's competence. In this case, prayer is a way to enhance the psychotherapist's power. Prayer may be used as a defence or for avoidance. In addition, it may change the way the psychotherapist is perceived. Sometimes prayer is used routinely or with psychopathology cases. Prayer does not always match client's agenda: if there is a cultural pressure to pray or if the prayer method does not match to the client (Gubi, 2009; Magaletta & Brawer, 1998). Considering these issues, counsellors may advocate for a reduction of the use of prayer in interventions "but that their concern over potential ethical issues is not of sufficient strength to override their therapeutic use of prayer if facilitated with due care" (Gubi, 2009, p. 115).

Prayer is usually associated with faith. It gains strength through faith, which gives it not just the status of a request, but a strong emotional colour. Due to the power of faith, collective prayer can enhance the psychotherapeutic effect and perform a cumulative function –involving a person in religious activities. Moreman and Kerr (2020) studied how faith (in a physical and spiritual resurrection, heaven, hell, reincarnation, etc.) is related to the fear of death. Scientists found that fear of death is unaffected by type or intensity of afterlife belief in a Jewish population. However, the research results of Nichols and his colleagues (2018) show that Buddhist monks of the Tibetan tradition are afraid of death even more than other groups. In addition, the monks

were less altruistic, choosing a hypothetical extension of their lives over the lives of another stranger, more often than members of other groups do. The results of this study raise many questions and require new scientific evidence. Probably everyone is afraid of the annihilation of self, and Buddhist monks better aware of it and try to have time to do more good deeds and save more beings. Undoubtedly, only certain hypothetical assumptions are possible. However, in any case, further research is needed, not limited to Tibetan Buddhism and using other methodological guidelines.

However, if we take a closer look at this discourse, we will notice that it moves in the direction of assessing the situation, although it should be reduced to searching for the basis for this assessment in this area: What influence faith, as the basis of prayer, has on a person? In general, one of the variants of this approach to the problem of the criteria of religiosity is the recognition of faith as a specific feeling inherent only to religious people. Nevertheless, it is possible to give arguments that do not allow to consider faith as a criterion of religiosity: faith as a criterion automatically excludes some Eastern religious traditions from the discourse of religious studies. It is not clear what to consider as a criterion of faith (various confessional approaches). There are no specific psychophysiological indicators for distinguishing the state of believer's consciousness from other consciousness states. Therefore, there are problems with determining the direction of faith. In our opinion, a more promising approach is based on an attempt to distinguish among the mass of human experience a prayer experience. It, in turn, is based on the mystical experience. Accordingly, a person can be considered religious if he or she has this type of experience. Of course, this experience is not just information; it has a unique impact on the lifestyle of the personality. As Wach (2019) wrote, "religion as an inner state or as a subjective experience cannot affect reality until it has objectified itself into a concrete mood, atmosphere, and attitude or form... The religious experience itself stimulates the development of characteristic attitudes. These, in turn, are concretized in thought and action" (p. 47–48).

Person, constantly practising prayer, acquires experience, actually an experience of prayer. It encompasses all the variety of its main manifestations. In particular, includes a feeling of reverence for the mystery of human destiny; relief associated with the experience of divine forgiveness; a feeling of the presence in the world of an invisible order or force through to which any individual life acquires value; feeling of oneness with God and overcoming the egocentric self. Prayer experience has a range of meanings. First, it includes not only those religious experiences that the transcendent reality evokes in a person but also the person's response, positive or negative to the experience. Second, each religious tradition has special forms of comprehension, perception and transmission of this experience, associated with certain religious traditions.

Prayer experience, integrating the contact of self and Ultimate reality, constructs a world of spirituality, which largely depends on the degree of religious devotion. Therefore, prayer experience has a practical component, which includes an imperative, a certain obligation, which motivates a person to act.

**Conclusion.** Prayer reveals relationships in the context of the "man-God" dialogue. At the same time, a dialogue is ensured by a two-way connection in the "appeal-response"

system. Thanks to this, the process of transcending takes place as an introduction to the sacred, as the intervention of self into the Other, and the Other into self. Prayer as a dialogue motivates the activation of a people's essential forces, enriching their experience, personal growth and optimizing spiritual self-transcendence. In the prayer process, a kind of dialogue unfolds, in which personality overcomes the boundaries of his or her own self towards the One who will respond to his or her expectations and appeals. Therefore, prayer is a factor due to which going beyond personal is carried out. Prayer intentionally contains the Other in itself, ensures co-involvement with Him. Its intensity depends on the emotional palette, which enhances the dialogue and constructs self. Prayer not only "focuses" consciousness, but also acts as a powerful means of centring it. This ability of prayer, enabling the process of unity of the human and the Divine, contributes to the formation of a harmonious, integral personality. The acquisition of the prayer experience consolidates the emotional and feeling sphere of a personality. It is reflected in the orientation of the consciousness of a religious person as spiritual and existential. The essence of prayer is most clearly revealed in prayer-empathy when the boundaries of self are overcome and problems, the feelings of the Other find a response in self, a kind of personal overflow takes place. Prayer contains a significant psychotherapeutic potential, helps to overcome difficult life situations and contributes to the improvement of mental health, and during periods of life crises, ensure moral survival and affirmation of a personality.

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## ОСОБИСТІСНЕ "Я" У КОНТЕКСТІ МОЛИТВИ

**Вступ.** Значення молитви неможливо переоцінити, а надто – у складних життєвих обставинах. Аналіз здійснено, виходячи із тези, що молитва – це не лише діалог у контексті стосунків "людина – Бог", а й своєрідний психічний стан, який характеризується емпатійністю та синергізмом як суто людського, так і божественного. Основні смислові нюанси молитви – звернення, відгук, виникнення, з одного боку, формують діалог як можливість прийняття існування Бога в суб'єктному просторі "Я – Ти", а з іншого – сприяють трансцендуванню, самоконструюванню особистості. У такому молитовному процесі здійснюється сприйняття "Я" як "Іншого", а "Іншого" як "Я". Мета дослідження – з'ясувати відношення Я – Інший у контексті молитви, її психологічні та релігійні можливості, які розкривають її функціональні аспекти.

**Методи.** Використано методи аналізу, порівняння, синтезу, узагальнення та систематизації.

**Результати.** Доведено, що молитва, відкриваючи перспективи подолання екзистенційних проблем, по-перше, задовольняє духовні запити людини через діалог із Божеством; по-друге, формує почуттєвість до Іншого; по-третє, виконує функцію центрування свідомості, завдяки чому концентрувальна індивідуальність перетворюється на максимально цілісну особистість. Наголошено на функціональній спорідненості релігійної віри та молитви, їхньої ролі в конструюванні молитовного досвіду як своєрідної емпатійної життєвої стратегії, як релігійно-духовного простору співбуття "Я" та "Іншого". Розкрито, що молитовний досвід слугує основою життєздатності, життєствердження людини та містить значний психотерапевтичний потенціал, оскільки його носій націлений на дієво-практичне подолання кінцевості людського існування у прагненні до вічного, абсолютного буття.

**Висновки.** Виявлено, що молитва як діалог мотивує активізацію сутнісних сил людини, збагачуючи її досвідченість, особистісне зростання та оптимізує духовну самотрансценденцію. Цей феномен інтенційно вміщує у собі Іншого, засвідчує співчасність та співпричетність з ним. Його інтенсивність залежить від емоційно-чуттєвої палітри, яка не лише підсилює діалог, а конструює "Я". Отже, молитва не лише "фокусує" свідомість, а й виступає могутнім засобом її центрування. Саме ця здатність молитви, уможливлюючи процес єднання людського та Божественного, сприяє формуванню гармонійної, цілісної особистості. Обґрунтовано, що найяскравіше сутність молитви розкривається у молитві-емпатії, коли долаються межі "Я" та проблеми, почуття "Іншого" знаходять відгук в "Я", власне, відбувається своєрідне особистісне перетікання. Молитва, вміщуючи в собі значний психотерапевтичний потенціал, допомагає подолати складні життєві ситуації та сприяє покращенню психічного здоров'я, а в періоди життєвих криз забезпечує моральне виживання і ствердження людини.

**Ключові слова:** особистісне "Я", молитва, діалог, відносини "Я – Інший", центрування свідомості, емоція, емпатія, релігійна віра, молитовний досвід, психотерапевтичний ефект.

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