

Methodological Analysis Of Psychological Theories Of Feeling Loneliness

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Abstract. Loneliness is a complex and usually unpleasant emotional response to isolation. Loneliness typically includes anxious feelings about a lack of connection or communication with other beings, both in the present and extending into the future. In this article is explained the causes of loneliness are varied and include psychodynamic, socio-psychological, interactionist, cognitive, intimate, humanistic, existential approaches, phenomenological perspective of C. Rogers and the humanistic psychoanalysis of E. Fromm. The purpose of the article was in scientific analysis to identify significant differences in the approaches of theories of loneliness.

Key-words: loneliness, inner world of the person, isolation, solitude, psychodynamic approach, socio-psychological approach, interactionist approach, cognitive approach, intimate approach, humanistic approach, existential approach, phenomenological perspective of C. Rogers, the humanistic psychoanalysis.

INTRODUCTION

The scientific and technological progress of the beginning of the XXI century brought the human community many inventions that can improve the communication of people, make communication more accessible and convenient. But did this solve the problem of human loneliness? It is apparently not.

Even a superficial analysis of social networks shows that the feeling of loneliness was and remains an urgent problem of our time. The status of a lonely person in these networks is not something rare and exceptional. And this is at a time when the opportunities for communication have grown both quantitatively (expanding the circle of contacts) and qualitatively (the emergence of digital technologies that make communication more accessible and intense). The communication of people through social networks, where a living person is lost behind a “nickname”, and live communication is artificially replaced by a superficial virtual one, only enhances the feeling of loneliness, thereby exposing the problem of social isolation of the individual.

To be lonely is an easy thing, being alone is another matter entirely. To understand this, first one must understand the difference between loneliness and being alone. To be alone means that you are not in the company of anyone else. You are one. But loneliness can happen anytime, anywhere. You can be lonely in a crowd, lonely with friends, lonely with family. You can even be lonely while with loved ones. For feeling lonely, is in essence a feeling of being alone. As though you were one and you feel as though you will always be that way. Loneliness can be one of the most destructive feelings humans are capable of feeling.

LITERARY REVIEW

The study of loneliness as a psychological phenomenon. There are many theories and concepts devoted to the problem of loneliness. Each such theory helps to consider this problem from different angles, deepening and enriching our understanding of the phenomenon of loneliness. Using only one paradigm for study, we would significantly impoverish the overall picture of understanding loneliness.

D. Perlman and E. Pepló identified eight approaches to the study of loneliness. We will use their structure to get acquainted with the views of various scientists on this problem.

It is worth noting that the division into eight approaches is very arbitrary and the views of some scientists can be successfully attributed to several paradigms on this issue. And some only casually touched on this topic, possibly as part of other more extensive works. Familiarity with these approaches will allow us to better understand the psychological mechanisms of loneliness, various types and features of its manifestation.

The psychodynamic approach

Z. Freud did not give much attention to the problem of loneliness. Here, for example, is a small excerpt from his work, where written of loneliness: “The first phobias in children associated with external conditions are the fear of darkness and loneliness. The first of these often persists throughout life; both are caused in the child by the feeling of the absence of a loved one who is nursing him - say, his mother”. [8]

Anna Freud also believed that the fear of death in children is a symbolic fear of loneliness, fear of being alone. [7] It is interesting to look at the problem of loneliness through the prism of concepts, first introduced by Z. Freud, identification and isolation. The dynamics of personality, according to Freud, is an alternation of processes of identification and isolation - alienation. Identification is the process of unconsciously merging, identifying a person with something (a person, group, system) and accepting other people’s norms, values, ideas into their inner world. At certain stages of development, identification is necessary, as it forms a “super ego”, allows one to assimilate patterns of behavior of “significant others” and develops feelings of ownership and empathy. In the future, identification can serve as a means of psychological protection from internal anxiety and the weakening of internal conflicts.

The process opposite to identification is isolation, the pathological variant of which Freud considered alienation. Separation is the process of a person isolating himself from society, realizing his own uniqueness and soleness.

The mechanism of “identification – isolation” is the main one in the socialization of man. Ideally, it should oscillate like a pendulum from one point to another. If the dynamics are disturbed, then one of the processes dominates, and the person becomes either depend on the social environment (the predominance of identification processes), or alienated from society, feeling its marginality, isolation, disunity from the outside world (the predominance of separation processes). We can see the results of the first on the example of youth groups operating on the basis of ethnic or fan movements. The results of the second are not so noticeable, but no less destructive for a specific person who feels like an outcast in society, “a stranger among his own people”, who is in constant confrontation with the outside world or himself, experiencing a lack of communication and public attention.

Among the followers of Z. Freud, Zilburg was one of the first to publish a detailed work on the psychology of loneliness [3]. He suggested that the emergence of human loneliness is influenced by the presence of certain personality traits: such as narcissism, megalomania and hostility. Zilburg proposed to distinguish between solitude and loneliness, considering the first “normal and transient mentality” arising from the absence of a specific person. And loneliness itself is a constant, irresistible feeling of abandonment, forlornness. Like all psychoanalysts, Zilburg believed that the roots of adult loneliness are in childhood.

G. Sullivan [2, 3] held to the same point of view, who proposed “the need for human closeness” as the main driving force. For the first time, this need manifests itself in a child in a desire for contact with an adult. At a later age, the child seeks close relationships with peers. If a child does not have this need, then in the future this will most likely lead to a deep feeling of loneliness.

Another interesting researcher, a follower of Harry Sullivan, who wrote an interesting work “Loneliness”, Frida Fromm-Reichman [2,3]. She worked in the field of clinical psychology and considered loneliness an extreme condition. “The type of loneliness that I mean is destructive ... and it ultimately leads to the development of psychotic states. Loneliness makes people ... emotionally paralyzed and helpless”. Like Sullivan and Zilburg, Fromm-Reichmann searched for the roots of loneliness in her childhood, especially emphasizing the harmful effects of “premature excommunication” [3]. Fromm-Reichmann argued that there were no hopeless patients, and, very importantly, the establishment of close trusting relationships with patients. “We run from loneliness and feel guilty,” she wrote. She also believed that at the heart of almost all mental illnesses was loneliness. The main reason for loneliness, she considered the lack of need for intimacy. Frustration of this need can lead not only to mental, but also somatic diseases.

Summarizing the above positions of psychoanalytic theories, and especially emphasizing that in their analysis of loneliness they proceed from their clinical practice, we can say that loneliness is most likely seen as pathology, as something purely negative, rooted deep in childhood.

The phenomenological perspective of C. Rogers.

Carl Rogers is one of the leaders of humanistic psychology. His analysis of loneliness is based on the “self-theory of personality”. Rogers wrote that society forces a person to act in accordance with generally accepted patterns that limit his freedom, lead to a conflict with the inner true “I”. The fulfillment of only social roles, the impossibility of following one’s inner nature, makes a person deeply unhappy and forces him to be “closed in his loneliness”. In other words, in loneliness, a mismatch between the idealized and the real “I” is manifested. A man, being sure that his true “I” will be rejected by others, closes in his world, hides behind the facades of social roles. If a person who has reached an understanding of his true “I” decides to embark on the path of self-knowledge and self-acceptance, relying on the truth of his “I”, ensuring full communication with other people, he risks becoming a “victim of loneliness”. Here’s how to accurately and succinctly expressed this himself Rodgers “Loneliness ... more sharply and painfully evident to those individuals who, for one reason or another have camping, being deprived of their usual protection - weakness, scared, alone, but possessing the true “I” and confident that they will be rejected by the rest of the world ” [6]. The disruption between the real and ideal “I” leads to a weak defensive reaction, “... namely, loneliness”.

Rogers identified two types of loneliness. The first is the alienation of the individual from himself, from his life experience. This is due to a violation of the processes of perception and assimilation of stimuli and prevents the development of the body. The second type of loneliness is the assessment of the quality of relationships with people around and the person’s acceptance of himself.

Like proponents of psychoanalytic theories, Rogers builds his theory on the basis of clinical observations. But must not forget that Rogers is the first to replace the concept of “patient” for “client” thereby emphasizing the person’s ability to solve his own problems. And the psychotherapist establishing equal relations, only supports and guides the client. Rogers believed that the reason for loneliness is inside a person, but, unlike psychoanalysts, he did not allow the possibility of early childhood influence on the formation of loneliness, believing that the content of loneliness is made up of the current situations that a person lives. And loneliness is only a weak adaptability of an individual.

Socio-psychological approach.

Bowman [3], a representative of the sociological approach to loneliness, in his short article suggested three forces leading to loneliness in modern society.

1. The weakening of bonds in the primary group – This refers to the weakening of interpersonal relationships in the family. Weakening understanding between generations. Such a problem has always existed, an increase in the pace

of life leads to its exacerbation, an increase in the gap between generations. When even the next generations do not understand and do not accept each other. All this is due to too rapid a change in social values and moral ideals.

2. Increasing family mobility – The institution of marriage has undergone great changes. The ability to easily create and also easily break family ties leads to superficial (and even irresponsible) relationships. The mixture of role-playing family functions (when there are no stable ideas about the roles of men and women in family life), as well as the possibility of creating non-binding time relationships leads to the absence of close, trust-intimate relationships, and leads a person to a sense of abandonment and loneliness.

3. Increasing social mobility – Huge socio-economic and political changes lead to human instability and disorder. Not everyone has time to rebuild after these changes. Man becomes a toy in the hands of fate. Very often a person is busy looking for work in order to feed himself and his family, not even thinking about self-realization, about finding his Way. And in these conditions, a person, crushed by external circumstances, experiences a feeling of helplessness, loss, abandonment and a deep sense of loneliness.

A very interesting concept was developed by D. Riesman in his monograph “The Lonely Crowd” [2, 3]. In it, he studies the social nature of man and analyzes the satisfaction of human needs by society. D. Riesman deduces three types of social character of a person: traditionally oriented, externally oriented and internally oriented. A lonely crowd (or rather, a crowd of loneliness) consists of outside oriented people. These people are in great need of the approval of others and are actively adapting to the circumstances in order to earn this approval. Such people rebuild their behavior like a weather vane and are very isolated from their true “I” (recall Rogers theory). Such people are very concerned about the lack of attention to themselves and often, due to too high expectations, their need remains unfulfilled, which leads to general dissatisfaction, increased anxiety and a feeling of loneliness.

Another representative of the social approach of loneliness Slater [2, 3] considers the problem from a different perspective. The reason for the disunity of people and the resulting feeling of loneliness is individualism. “Individualism is embodied in the desire to reject the reality of human interdependence. One of the main goals of American technology is to “free” the need for coordination, submission, dependence or control from others. Unfortunately, the more we succeed in this, the more we feel disunity, boredom and loneliness”.

In contrast to psychoanalysts, representatives of the social approach consider society responsible for the emergence of loneliness. Another difference of this approach is the emphasis on the greater significance of events of adulthood and not of a person’s early childhood. Formulating their concepts, both Riesman and Slater were based on fiction and the media.

Interactionist approach.

The main representative of this approach is Weiss [1]. He identified two aspects of loneliness: personal and situational. That is, a personal predisposition and certain social situations provoke a feeling of loneliness. Based on this, Weiss defines two types of loneliness: social and emotional. Social loneliness results from a lack of communication. When a person lacks communication with someone specific, he lacks intimate communication, then this is emotional loneliness. If a socially lonely person feels like a black sheep, then an emotionally lonely person will feel like a small child abandoned by all. Weiss called loneliness a normal and natural state, and that “of the two approaches, the situational seems to be the most attractive”. Thus, he considers the situational factor as the main factor in the formation of loneliness.

Cognitive approach.

E. Peplo [5] also studied loneliness among ordinary “normal” people. In its theoretical formulations, empirical data was very important. The main characteristic aspect of her approach is that she emphasizes the role of cognition, which leads a lack of sociality to a feeling of loneliness. Loneliness, according to cognitive scientists, can occur when there is a discrepancy between the desired and the achieved social contacts. A. Beck wrote that when the internal “human reality does not correspond to external reality, this can lead to emotional disorders: depression, anxiety and a feeling of loneliness”.

E. Peplo emphasized the important role of low self-esteem in the formation of a feeling of loneliness. When a person begins to feel lonely, this state of loneliness began to acquire real features and intensify, summing up under himself, building “evidence” of a possibly not existing problem. Accordingly, therapy should follow the path of ridding the individual of “wrong”, destructive attitudes. In this approach, particular importance is attached to the theory of attribution.

The intimate approach.

The main idea of this approach is the assertion that a person strives for a balance between the desired and achieved levels of social communication. American researchers V. Derlega and S. Margulis [3] introduce such definitions as “intimacy” and “self-disclosure” for a deep understanding of the phenomenon of loneliness. A man needs intimacy, depth in communication. This depth or intimacy promotes self-disclosure of personality. If a person lacks such depth and intimacy, then communication becomes formal. A decrease in intimacy and the prevalence of formal communication is very likely to lead to a feeling of loneliness. But a reasonable balance between intimate and formal characters in communication is necessary, because a bias in the other direction can become a self-destructive factor. According to these researchers, loneliness is a normal, natural experience in the conditions of global “atomization” of a society, and both intraindividual factors and environmental factors can lead to it. And these researchers consider the need for deep, intimate relationships to be basic.

The humanistic approach.

A very original approach to the study of loneliness belongs to Maslow [4], who studied self-actualizing personalities and, quite justifiably, concluded that the need for loneliness is vital for them. But it can also be said that frustration or the deprivation of any psychological needs, leads to a state of loneliness, such as a lack of communication or the lack of the possibility of self-actualization.

Loneliness, in Maslow's view, is becoming positive. You can recall a lot of statements by famous people about the healing power of loneliness, about its positive, beneficial effect on a person, on his self-improvement.

So, N. Berdyaev argued that "through loneliness a person is born". A. Schopenhauer also spoke about this: "Do you want to create and create, more often remain alone", "Alone, everyone sees in himself what he really is" [10] and K. Jung: "Loneliness for me is a cure giving meaning to my life" [3].

The list of statements by famous people about the beneficial effects of loneliness on creativity and personal development could be continued indefinitely.

It should be noted that only a mature personality with a high level of reflection, a stable perception of one's "I" and capable of deep personal transformation can be in a state of positive loneliness. If the process of self-actualization has begun, then it can go on throughout the entire human life. And that means that people will always feel the need for loneliness.

Existential approach.

The existential approach coincides with the humanistic one. Loneliness is an absolutely natural and necessary phenomenon inherent in the human psyche. According to the existential approach, loneliness is the basis for personal growth.

I. Yalom [10] considered isolation as one of the four realities of our existence. And he emphasized that this is not isolation from people with a feeling of loneliness and not internal isolation from any part of their own personality. "Individuals are often isolated from others or from parts of themselves, but at the heart of these disconnections lies an even deeper isolation associated with existence itself - isolation that persists in the most satisfactory communication with other individuals, with excellent self-knowledge and integration. Existential isolation is connected with the gap between themselves and others, through which there are no bridges. It also denotes an even more fundamental isolation - separation between the individual and the world ... Existential isolation is a valley of loneliness, to which there are many paths. A confrontation with death and freedom will inevitably lead the individual to this valley" [10]. Yalom believed that the growth process is closely related to separation. Growth refers to autonomy, independence, self-control and the process of individuation. There are two ways to protect oneself from the horror of "ultimate isolation" - a partial acceptance of this given and attitude. Relationships cannot destroy isolation, but they help to share their loneliness with others, and then love compensates for the pain of isolation. Most often, existential loneliness

is felt during critical, stressful situations, during severe crisis periods, when a person faces a cruel problem of choice or in the face of the need to come to terms with the inevitable. V. Frankl believed that the loss of certain values and the meaning of life also leads a person to a feeling of loneliness.

Like Maslow, representatives of the existential branch of psychology, they believe that true loneliness can be a creative force. They urge people to overcome their fear of loneliness and learn to use it positively. And if an immature or neurotic personality seeks to avoid loneliness, then a genuine authentic person accepts his loneliness as a true human existence, as a gift, as an opportunity for becoming and self-realization.

The humanistic psychoanalysis of E. Fromm.

The selection of E. Fromm as a separate chapter was not accidental, but conscious. It is difficult to correlate his work with any one approach. He is considered one of the founder tendency of neo-Freudian, and his work can be attributed not only to the psychoanalytic school, but also to social psychology. In any case, he would be cramped within the framework of one paradigm. Fromm wrote that man is social in nature. And his very nature “cannot agree with isolation and loneliness. The need for communication, affection, self-affirmation, love is the exact opposite of loneliness. The feeling of loneliness fragments the personality, which leads to aggression, violence, anarchy” [9].

Fromm considered the reason for loneliness to be “the cultivation of unreasonable needs” [9]. He wrote about the alienation of man in the sphere of production, where he turns into a small screw of a huge mechanism, on whose will and desire nothing depends, and man himself becomes a commodity, and in the sphere of consumption, where the main function of man, his main, sense-forming line of behavior, becomes absorption of more and more pleasures and impressions. And all this leads a person to an ever greater alienation from himself, to the loss of his “I”. And in order to muffle the inevitable at the same time bouts of melancholy and loneliness, a person drowns out these “unpleasant” and “uncomfortable” sensations with the next dose of new impressions in the form of idle pastime and various entertainments. And such a “consumption of entertainment” becomes a cult. Man does not live in order to develop and improve, but in order to consume.

To overcome the fear of loneliness, according to Fromm, a person has two ways: “negative freedom” - authoritarianism, destructiveness, and automating conformism. The latter is the road of least resistance, when the boundaries between the “I” and others are blurred, and a person turns into a faceless car. All these paths are fatal to the individual. But there is another way out a harmonious path of development. The road is not down, but up. This is “positive freedom”, which is realized through “spontaneous activity”. And its components are Love and Labor. But Love is not a fanatical dissolution in the personality of the Other and not a money-grubbing, selfish claim to the object of love as a thing, but love, as an equal union of the two, preserving their own personality, where there is a

place for acceptance and sacrifice. And labor should be creative, connecting a person with the world and helping to realize his personal potential. And a person faces a choice to overcome loneliness by fleeing freedom, or through the implementation of spontaneous activity. True Love and creative work are the highest manifestations of freedom.

This study suggests that the phenomenon of loneliness should not be considered as an externally observable phenomenon, but as an internal mental state of a person. The true causes of loneliness are not external factors, such as, for example, loss of loved ones, social lack of inclusion of an individual, which, in fact, are the starting hook that triggers the mechanism of the loneliness process. The true causes are intrapersonal psychological predispositions of a person. The same event can cause different reactions. In some, it will trigger the launch of mechanisms of social isolation, in others it will only strengthen the constructs of social interaction. It should be noted that the practical value of this study is in that specific benefit that it can give to specific people. Needless to participate in the study, the search for answers to the questions asked, and even minimal feedback from the author of the study, help to strengthen the reflexive processes, encourage to set important existential questions about the meaning of life and their place in it. These thoughts will help reduce the degree of anxiety before being alone and, dispelling phantom fears, will allow you to see its positive value.

CONCLUSION

Each of the hereinabove approaches to the study of loneliness is distinguished by a deep understanding of the issue and a demand for theoretical analysis. Many representations and conclusions were made on the basis of clinical observations and empirical studies. The phenomenon of loneliness is complex and ambiguous in terms of scientific definition and individual understanding of it by researchers. Therefore, consideration of its individual aspects, for example, external and internal causes, the role of the situational factor in the individual context of experience, dependence on social transformations in society and others, is a necessary and methodologically justified stage of the study. Any of the approaches considered focuses on any features of the psychic phenomenon of loneliness, thereby building a unique perspective of its holistic perception. Together, all these approaches provide important tools for theoretical knowledge, each of which can be used in its own context. The presence of several approaches to the study of loneliness proves the presence in this concept of real scientific content, which, on the one hand, can be rationalized, on the other hand, requires further theoretical and experimental research.

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