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Preprint

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Suggested Citation: Melnichuk, A. S.; Selezneva, E. V. (2015) : Acme in Personal Values and Meanings (Age Aspect), SSRN, Rochester N.Y., <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2561154>

This Version is available at:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10419/122107>

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Acme in Personal Values and Meanings (Age Aspect)

Abstract

It is noted in the article that inclusion of the notion «acme» (designating summits in the development and most productive periods of human life) in the active vocabulary of many people actualizes revealing of the specificity of his personal meanings and place of acme in the system of values. The results of empirical study of everyday understanding of acme carried out with the use of the subjective scaling and semantic differential are given in it. Generals and particulars in the subjective interrelations of the notion «acme» with semantically near words in representatives of different age groups is shown. It is revealed that in respondents «adolescents» (aged 19 and younger) an acme image to a larger extent is associated with external achievements than with changes in the inner world, and in respondents «adults» (above 19 years of age) these components are presented in a more balanced manner.

The values nearest to the notion «acme» and determining the specificity of its interpretation in humans of different age are outlined. It is determined that the notion «acme» in both age groups is inferior by significance to the majority of personality values, and also interrelations between the personality significance of acme and the human value preferences are shown. On the basis of the factor analysis a latent structure of possible meanings of the acme phenomenon is presented. Some causes of the age differences in the images of acme, level of its significance and also preferences in the spheres of its achievement are discussed.

Key words: acme, values, personal meaning, semantic distance, age specificity.

In the contemporary world, man's striving for self-improvement and self-actualization in different spheres of life becomes more and more expressed. It is reflected in the increase in the number of psychological studies dedicated to the ideas of success, career, happiness etc. In virtue of the variety of possible benchmarks for implementation of the personality and professional potential, address to a more general category - «acme» becomes productive.

The word «acme» came from Ancient Greek into modern languages; and most commonly it means «tiptop», «summit», «peak». In this meaning it is quite widely used in the international terminological practice, for example, in psychoanalysis (for designation of the peak of satisfaction in coitus) and in medicine (for designation of the peak of disease development).

In addition, it should be noted that in the Russian language (along with the meaning mentioned above) there are other versions of the use of the word «acme». Its Russian history as such began in 1912, when it became the basis for a self-designation of the literature movement «Acmeism». In 1928 the term «acmeology» appeared. According to N.A.Rybnikov, it designaed a branch of the age psychology studying an adult human (and in this context supplementing pedagogy and gerontology).

However in the quality of an independent unit of the modern Russian language the noun «acme» has been used only for about 20 years. In the early 1990's N.V.Kuzmina, A.A.Bodalev and A.A.Derkach formulated provisions for justification of acmeology as a new integrative research area, which rests on the complex of philosophic and psychological ideas of the value of a man and his inner world, man's capacity for a creative work and self-improvement (Derkach, 2004). In the meantime the goals of acmeology were formulated – theoretical and applied provision of man's improvement and achievement of the peaks of his life by him (which received the name of «acme») (Derkach, Selezneva, 2007). At this particular time one started to emphasize one more meaning of the word «acme», going back to Ancient Greek, – «blossoming-tide» (since human achievements are not limited only by one summit, and potentially suppose the possibility of presence of several

«peaks» or reasonably long periods of a productive self-actualization. It is significant that in the context mentioned the term «acme» integrates not only various intentions of the development but also personality traits and principles of behavior required for it – «activity», «responsibility», «maturity», «strategy of life» etc.

At present the number of people involved in discussions of acmeological problems are notably increasing. On the one hand, not only psychologists but scientists of other branches of research are beginning to address the acme phenomenon. On the other hand, acmeology as an educational subject is taught in a number of Russian higher schools to future psychologists, pedagogues, doctors, managers, and formation and development of the acmeological competence becomes a component of many programs on the professional retraining and raising qualification of already working specialists.

One can state that today the term «acme» is used not only in specifically scientific publications but is a part of an active vocabulary of many people. It is indicated by the fact that at present the given word is practically always written in Russian letters, whereas 15-20 years ago the letters of the Latin or even Ancient Greek alphabet were used.

One should take into consideration that in the context of the life journey of a specific man the word «acme» acquires a certain personal meaning and becomes an element of the individual image of the world. This subjective reality is capable of becoming an essential psychological determinant of the personality self-development and self-actualization processes. Consequently, revealing of the character of images of acme becomes important in practice and in theory.

Empirical study, within the frames of which we tried to reveal the specificity of the individual values of the notion «acme» and to determine the place of acme in the personality value- rational space, was dedicated to solution of this task. Fifty students learning under the programs of the first and second higher education (speciality «Psychology») took part in the inquiry. The respondents were allocated to two age groups:

- aged 19 and younger - 17 persons (hereinafter – «adolescents» group);

- above 19 years of age - 33 persons (hereinafter – «adults» group).

To receive a more complete information on the representation of acme at the commonplace sense level, we conducted inquiry in the very beginning of the training period (when the students had not yet been acquainted in detail with theoretical approaches to the acme phenomenon). Such situation necessitated to include a brief characteristic of the given event into the introduction to the questionnaire in a form of the following text:

«An Ancient Greek word «akme» means «the highest degree of something , blossom , blossoming tide». «To be in acme» is translated as «to be in a full blow, at the highest degree of development».

Broadly defined, acme is the entire step of man's adulthood, for which his physical and personality maturity is characteristic of. In a narrower sense, acme is a moment of the highest productivity of the activity and creative work. The term «acme» is also used for designation of the peak which an individual manages to reach at any age step – from his childhood to declining years.

Each of us has one's own image of acme, which develops on the basis of the life experience and may differ from definitions suggested by the science.

Please answer the questions in the questionnaire and reflect your perception of the acme phenomenon in it.

Such «foreword» made it possible to introduce a basic notion «acme» into the sense bearing sphere of the participants in the study, relying upon which they began afterwards to build their own system of images about this event.

In the first part of the study a subjective scaling method was used (author of the questionnaire - E.V.Selezneva). The respondents were asked to assess the degree of conformity of the notion «acme» and 37 words, in one way or other connected with it by implication. The words and expressions actively used irrespectively of the context and which describe acme as a result and as a process were included in the list. In doing so, we intentionally refused to use words apparently connected with the scientific terminology, even those used in everyday language («apogee», «optimum», «maximum», «progress», «efficiency», «culmination» etc.). Some words and

expressions having a negative tone and which are opposite to the acme essence were also included in the list. Correspondence of each word to the notion «acme» was evaluated by 7-score scale: from 1 (very low correspondence) to 7 (very high correspondence).

Presentation of the unique list of words ensured the comparability of individual and group estimates. At that, the possibility of entering and evaluating of any notions, which in respondent's opinion could be correlated with the notion «acme», was specifically stipulated in the instruction, however none of the participants in the study deemed it wise to do.

Analysis of the scaling data showed that there was a sufficiently apparent similarity in images about acme in the groups of «adolescents» and «adults» (Table 1).

Table 1

Estimates of correspondence of notions to the term «acme»

Ranking ¹	«Adolescents» group		«Adults» group	
	Notions	Mean score	Notions	Mean score
1	Tiptop	6,71	Summit	6,80
2	Summit	6,65	Peak	6,71
3	Peak	6,59	Tiptop	6,65
4	Perfection	6,47	Noon	6,53
5	Success	6,24	Perfection	6,51
6	Height	6,12	Success	6,44
7	Victory	6,12	Height	6,38
8	Blossoming tide	5,88	Harmony	6,06
9	Noon	5,76	Rise	5,91
10	Rise	5,71	Happiness	5,88

First of all, eight of ten words subjectively the nearest to «acme» coincide in both groups. Such notions of acme as «tiptop», «summit» and «peak» rank three first places in both groups. These words themselves are so near that to a certain extent they could be considered as identical ones (whereby it is not essential which specific

¹ Ranking 1 has a word most associated with the notion «acme».

ranking place they take in one or other group). They are united self-evidently by the meaning «the highest degree of achievement».

We take into account that the definition of acme given in the introduction to the questionnaire and proceeding own speculations of the respondents to a certain degree could influence on such trends of the estimates. In this context other (close by ranking and an absolute value) sense bearing interpretations of acme are highly interesting.

As seen from the Table, meanings «perfection», «success» and «height» (4-6-th ranking places in the group «adolescents» and 5-7-th – in the group «adults») also form a unique sense bearing group. It can be interpreted in the following way: in respondents' consciousness the notion «perfection» is a determinant of «success» and allows one to reach the «height».

It should be noted that in both groups among the first ten most expressed meanings of acme only two notions («noon» and «rise») have a processual character. One can suppose that a resultative side of acme, and not movement to this result is more significant for the participants in the study.

We can see sense bearing nonconcurrences in the meanings of acme only in respect of two words. In the group «adolescents» the notions «victory» and «blossoming tide» appeared to be the nearest to «acme» while in the group «adults» these were «harmony» and «happiness». Thus, in the group «adolescents» the understanding of acme as the highest degree of achievement is connected with the necessity of overcoming the obstacles, fight while the notion «blossoming tide», is likely to be associated with the own age of the participants in the study (reflecting their hopes for a quick success or confidence in it). Thereupon one can make a conclusion that in the group «adolescents» an acme image in the first turn is associated with the external achievements and does not affect the personality inner world.

In the group «adults» «acme» is subjectively interconnected not only with fixation of some high achievements and movement to them but also with awareness of the possibility of increasing the degree of one's own internal integrity and with

sensation of fullness of the existence, gladness and satisfaction with life. Thus, understanding of acme is more complicated in this group and includes not only images of success (directed exceptionally «outwards»), but also images of self-actualization (combining directedness both to human «outwards» and «inwards»).

The age specificity of the acme meaning is clearly demonstrated by the correlation analysis. According to the data obtained, an acme image with age becomes more clearly associated with ideas about endeavour ($r=0,414$, $p=0,003$), harmony ($r=0,337$, $p=0,016$), triumph ($r=0,333$, $p=0,021$) and blossom ($r=0,274$, $p=0,052^1$). At the same time, a negative dependence between the age and ideas of acme as of the limit ($r=-0,525$, $p=0,0001$) and decay ($r=-0,375$, $p=0,009$) was revealed.

Comparison of the average estimates of the interrelation of the notion «acme» with its possible meanings showed significant differences in images of acme in different age groups. At that, the results obtained are practically identical to the correlation analysis data (Table 2).

Table 2

Differences in the subjective estimates of compliance of the notions to the term «acme»

Notions	Mean score of the notion interrelation with the term «acme»		p by Mann-Whitney test
	«adolescents»	«adults»	
Limit	5,35	3,09	0,001
Endeavour	3,65	5,19	0,001
Harmony	4,82	6,06	0,003
Blossom	5,76	6,53	0,028
Triumph	4,24	5,19	0,042

In our opinion, the differences and interrelations revealed are indicative of the fact that the following is reflected for adults in the acme image:

- need in an ongoing self-development and self-actualization;

¹ Despite the fact that value p in this case is somewhat higher than $0,05$, we found it possible to take into account the given result as an indicator of a certain trend.

- necessity to take prompt decisions and capability to overcome the arising difficulties;
- need in harmonization of one's life activity, external and internal world;
- subjective feeling of gladness of self-actualization;
- sensation of the absence of boundaries in the self-development process;
- awareness of the fact that only when self-improving himself permanently a man can prevent weakening of his capacities.

Revealing of a latent structure of meanings of the notion «acme» in respondents became an important aspect of the first part of the study. Factor analysis of the responses of all respondents made it possible to single out 12 factors, together reflecting 83% of the dispersion revealed.

In *the first factor* (10,4%) there were included such meanings as «harmony» (factor loading 0,837), «happiness» (0,776), «welfare» (0,685), «endeavour» (0,577) and «triumph» (0,558). One can speak about the fact that this factor describes acme through courage in striving to achievement of the internal integrity and emotional signs pointing to the fact that the efforts were not in vein.

The second factor (also explaining 10,4% of dispersion) turned out to be directly opposed by the contents. Meanings entering into its composition such as «misfortune» (0,924), «fall» (0,789), «decay» (0,741) and «collapse» (0,711) describe a situation in which a man realizes that he has not succeeded in attaining the target goal, feels that his life plans have failed and he suffers blow of hopes, which are semantically reflected in the notion «tiptop», which is in the opposite pole of the factor (-0,546).

The third factor (10,0%) was comprised of the meanings «greatness» (0,837), «pride» (0,817), «victory» (0,683), «reward» (0,650), «luck» (0,583). To a certain extent it is close by the meaning to the first factor because it also characterizes emotional consequences of the acme achievement. However, in our opinion, there is rather an important distinction. An internal sensation, not depending on the social environment, which occurs at the achievement of acme, is reflected in the first

factor. In the third factor a positive emotional state is associated, first of all, with the external features of acme, as success:

- attained despite the obstacles;
- having as consequence a certain requital for the efforts made;
- allowing a man to feel clearly his superiority.

The fourth factor (8,6%) describes sufficiently important psychological mechanism of the acme achievement. Notions «lucid moment» (0,904), «aha reaction» (0,874) and «success» (0,536) entering into its composition fix the relation of the acme state with the lucidity of consciousness, soul steadiness, availability of life wisdom and developed intuition.

The fifth factor (6,9%) includes polar meanings: «punishment» (0,913), «defeat» (0,792) and «noon» (-0,559). Here the movement to acme is described through possible mistakes, failures, losses associated with them, search for a guilty one and a merited (and very often undeserved) punishment. However a successful development, possibility of a maximum self-opening in the creative work is opposed to this version.

The sixth factor (6,5%) consisted of the meanings «summit» (0,824), «noon» (0,584) and «movement» (0,565). They imaginatively fix one of the mechanisms of acme achievement – combination of a permanent change and self-development allowing one to realize any of the highest goals.

The seventh factor is close by meaning (5,9%). It also includes the term «tiptop» (-0,313), but here it opposes to the terms «aspiration» (0,900), «blossoming tide» (0,577) and «rise» (0,503). In our opinion, in this case acme is described through contraposition to stagnation (even though in the highest point) and permanent self-change and self-transformation.

The eighth factor (5,8%) includes terms «rise» (0,706) and «height» (0,693) as images of acme, and «gulf» (-0,651) as image of the state opposite to acme – catabole (Bransky, Pozharsky, 2002).

In *the ninth factor* (5,3%) the meanings «withering» (0,872) and «nothingness» (0,560) are opposed to the term «blossoming tide» (-0,389), which

describes two versions of the development: one – leading to loss of energy and deprivation of the personality identity, the second – permitting to disclose one's own possibilities to the maximum and realize one's potential.

Two next factors characterize close versions of the acme understanding. *The tenth factor* (4,8%) describes acme through the term «zenith» (0,858), i.e. as a culmination moment of life. *The eleventh factor* (4,5%) includes the term «perfection» (0,946), describing acme as the highest degree of development of all human essential qualities.

The twelfth factor (3,9%) includes two poles. At one of them the terms «limit» (0,646) and «success» (0,616) are located, and at the opposite one - the meaning «submission» (-0,370). Such combination can reflect several versions of the acme perception:

- as success attaining of which supposes living «at the limiting regime» (or even going out of the limiting line);
- as the highest degree of success, which could be exceeded no longer.

However in both cases the way to acme in principle excludes passivity and submissive acceptance of the reality.

Thus, the factor analysis showed that the system of individual meanings forms a highly complicated structure reflecting the mansidedness of the acme phenomenon itself.

The second part of our study supposed determination of the character of interrelation of the notion «acme» with a number of values. The importance of such comparison is connected with the fact that the values act as «conscious and recognized by a man purports of his life» (Bratus, 1981). The 12-scale semantic differential was chosen as an instrument for the solution of this task. Apart from the category «acme» the following notions were assessed with its help: «self-actualization», «ego», «success», «career», «creative work», «health», «power», «work», «ideally-me», «material welfare», «self-improvement», «freedom», «stability (confidence in tomorrow) ».

To analyze the scaling results we used two indicators:

- a semantic distance between «acme» and the rest notions (which makes it possible to reveal the values closest to the acme phenomenon at the innermost, weakly apprehended level);
- a semantic distance between the notion «ego» and the rest notions (which allows one to determine the place of acme in the hierarchy of the personality values).

The data on the semantic distance between the notion «acme» and values from the list given above confirmed the availability of the age specificity in apprehension of acme.

Thus, in the group «adolescents» the values «health» (5,27), «self-improvement» (6,36) and «welfare» (6,46) turned out to be the nearest to «acme». One can say that acme is apprehended by the youth, first of all, as a physical perfection (maybe as that ensuring all the rest achievements). From the resultative point of view, ensuring of a worthy material level becomes a feature of acme, while a key instrument for its achievement proves to be a permanent conscious development of high-demand personality qualities, capacities and skills.

In the group «adults» a semantic distance between «acme» and the notions «ideally-me» (4,28), «freedom» (5,13) and «stability (confidence in tomorrow)» (5,35) proved to be the shortest. Thus, for adults acme is matched, in the first turn, with the approaching to their personality ideal. This ideal self-image acts as a semantic benchmark in the self-development possessing a motivating force and regulating human activity in the process of self-improvement and self-actualization.

Subjective nearness of acme with an existential value of freedom can be interpreted in two ways. On the one part, absence of external restraints is perceived as an essential condition for the achievement of acme. On the other hand, both increase in the personality internal freedom and expansion of the field of its external independence can be an important indicator of human advancement to acme and its significant result.

Relation between acme and stability as «confidence in tomorrow» also has two sides. Firstly, the life stability is apprehended as consequence of the achievement of

acme. In this case the professional level achieved or personality maturity allow a man to perceive himself sufficiently protected of unpredictable environmental changes (which also gives a high degree of freedom). Secondly, achievement of acme requires both sufficiently stable life conditions and man's conviction in his capacity to an efficient self-organization in the conditions of uncertainty (which makes it possible to create conditions for a successful development).

Let us not that the significant age differences exist just in relation to the three values considered above (Table 3).

Table 3

Differences in distance between acme and other values

Values	Semantic distance between the value and the notion «acme»		p by Mann-Whitney test
	«adolescents»	«adults»	
Ideally-me	8,02	4,28	0,004
Freedom	7,48	5,13	0,047
Stability	7,68	5,35	0,022

It was also revealed that respondent's age is:

- directly related with a semantic distance between the notions «acme» and «work» ($r=0,289$; $p=0,049$);
- inversely related with a semantic distance between the notions «acme» and «ideally-me» ($r=-0,365$; $p=0,011$).

The described differences in the value «tone» of the acme phenomenon to a large extent result from the specificity of the juvenile age. At this stage a man is striving largely to self-assertion, and not to self-actualization, and specifically a professional activity is more frequently considered as the most apparent sphere for realization of such intention. While growing-up, other trends manifest themselves increasingly, particularly:

- possibilities of achieving acme in a specific professional environment are assessed more realistically;

- acme phenomenon begins to be apprehended as multidimensional one (not limited only by the sphere of work);
- not externally recognized achievements, but internal (frequently existential) criteria increasingly become the basis for the assessment of the advancement to acme.

For a deeper understanding of possible meanings of acme a factor analysis of the semantic distances between the given notion and personality values was carried out.

Data factorization by all respondents made it possible to single out 4 significant factors, in the aggregate explaining 71,9% of dispersion.

In the first factor (28,5%) the value «career» (factor loading 0,923), which «attracts» to itself values «power» (0,805), «work» (0,793), «success» (0,627), «welfare» (0,617), «ego» (0,546) and «self-actualization» (0,511) is a system-forming one. Proceeding from such composition, the given factor reflects perception of acme as achievements in the professional sphere. At that, the criteria of approaching to the summit turn out to be utilitarian (a high position in the organizational hierarchy and relevant material and high-status bonuses). At the same time the value of self-actualization which was included in the given factor (although with the lowest load) «restrains» the utilitarian acme from transforming into a pseudo-acme.

In the second factor (19,9%) the value «freedom» (0,818), which is associated with the values «self-improvement» (0,725), «creative work» (0,678) and «self-actualization» (0,661) is the central one. Such composition of the factor characterizes a subjective understanding of the way to acme as a process having an existential character in its essence, both by intention and by the result (self-actualization and achievement of freedom through self-improvement and creative work).

The third factor (14,5%) includes the values «stability (confidence in tomorrow)» (0,769) and «ideally-me» (0,722). It allows one to single out the following meaning of acme – as a peculiar benchmark of human development, approaching to which allows one to ensure a stable position in the social medium. At

last, *the fourth factor* (9%) includes the only value «health» (0,870), characterizing a vital aspect of acme.

Analysis of the semantic distances between the notions evaluated and the notion «ego» gave the following results.

In the group «adolescents» the values «self-actualization» (distance in 4,2 scores) and «power» (4,9 scores) are the nearest to «ego» (and , consequently, the most significant ones). However the notion «acme» ranks 11-th of 12 possible positions (8,4 scores). In the group «adults» the first three places by the semantic nearness to «ego» are held by values «self-actualization» (4,4 scores) and «success» (5,1 scores), while «acme» ranks only 9-th of 12 possible positions (6,5 scores).

In our opinion, such situation is stipulated by the fact that the participants in the study:

- have not yet learnt to the full extent to apprehend and feel one or other manifestations of acme in their life;
- for the present have no experience of acmeologically oriented self-development.

Therefore, the respondents do not apprehend the notion «acme» as that subjectively close to them, and do not consider it as a significant part of their individual world image.

Apart from these common causes one can put forward suppositions about determinants of the situation revealed in respect to the age groups. In the group «adolescents» the notion «acme» is practically at the same semantic distance from the notion «ego» as the notions «ideally-me» (8,3 scores) and «health» (8,8 scores). We think that such results can reflect the understanding of acme as an event, which refers to a sufficiently distant future (just as achievement of the personality ideal), and in the meantime it is in the zone of the subjective non-actuality (like the task of preservation of health for people of a young age). A low position of «acme» in the value hierarchy of adult respondents can, from our point of view, reflect the influence of the current professional situation. It stipulates apprehension of the life

goals and achievements in more specific categories (improvement and realization of one's potential, career advancement, ensuring of financial welfare etc.).

However, it is highly interesting to pay attention to the following result of the statistical analysis. In the group «adolescents» the semantic distances «ego» - «acme» and «ego» - «ideally- me» have the highest standard deviations of the mean values among all the distances calculated. Such dispersed opinions of young respondents are indicative of the fact that understanding of acme and their ideal have for many of them rather brightly expressed personal meaning.

Scientifically and economically it is highly important to reveal the character of interrelation between the degree of the subjective nearness of acme (semantic distance «ego» - «acme») and degree of the subjective significance of the rest values (distance «ego» - specific values).

According to data of the correlation analysis it was revealed in the group «adolescents» that the growth of significance of the notion «acme» is accompanied by increase in the importance of the values «self-improvement» ($r=0,674$, $p=0,003$), «work» ($r=0,528$, $p=0,029$), «health» ($r=0,503$, $p=0,040$). Thereupon one can suppose that acme in the consciousness of young respondents has several semantic verges:

- professional activity as space of acme achievement;
- self-improvement as a way of acme achievement,
- health as a resource for acme achievement.

The result in the group «adults» appeared to be largely similar. Development of the subjective significance of acme here is also connected with the increase in the significance of the values «health» ($r=0,438$, $p=0,014$) and «self-improvement» ($r=0,395$, $p=0,028$). Besides, a direct relationship of the positiveness of ratio to the notion «acme» and significance of the values «ideally-me» ($r=0,645$, $p=0,001$), «freedom» ($r=0,428$, $p=0,016$) was revealed.

On the basis of these data one can fix a sufficiently important age difference. In the group «adults» a subjective nearness of the acme value leads to increase in the significance of an ideal self-image. This image increasingly begins to act as an internal benchmark when constructing a trajectory of movement to acme and a

criterion of success of this process (along with the strengthening of orientation to the personality independence).

A factor analysis of the semantic distance between the notion «ego» and other categories made it possible to determine the place of the acme phenomenon in the value-semantic space of the personality.

In the course of analysis by all respondents there were singled out 4 factors, which in the aggregate reflect 64% of the dispersion revealed. The notion «acme» entered into the composition of *the third by significance factor* (18,8% of dispersion). At that, it acts in the role of a system-forming component (factor loading 0,754) along with the value «ideally-me» (0,737). Also values «creative work» (0,626), «self-improvement» (0,605) and «health» (0,554) entered into the composition of the factor. The given factor characterizes, first of all, a processual side of the acme phenomenon, its understanding as man's movement to his ideal at the cost of internal creative efforts and permanent personality advancement. In addition, the presence of the value «work» (0,403) in the given factor (though, with a small load) reflects one of the possible vectors of realization of the acme-oriented personality activity.

The resultative aspect of the way to acme, in some specified meaning, is reflected in *the first factor* (20,5%). The values «welfare» (0,795), «stability» (0,715) and «freedom» (0,705) are present in it in the quality of leading components, and in the quality of enough significant ones – the values «self-actualization» (0,567), «health» (0,541) and «self-improvement» (0,482). Thus, in its composition the own acmeological, utilitarian and vital values are rather harmonically combined, a simultaneous realization of which can be a target benchmark on the way to acme.

The second allocated factor (14,6%) included the values «career» (0,862), «power» (0,744) and «work» (0,613), and the fourth factor (10,1%) – the values «success» (0,881), «work» (0,363) and «stability» (0,316). Both the notion «acme», and the values essentially connected with it – self-improvement, self-actualization, creative work are absent in the composition of the given factors. At the same time, the notion «work» (which is present in two factors, directly or indirectly connected with the acme phenomenon) is part of them.

In our opinion, such situation reflects two possible understanding of the interrelation of acme and a professional sphere. In the first case (it is represented to a large extent by the first and third factors) a professional activity is considered:

- as one of the top-priority spheres for the personality self-improvement and achievement of acme;
- as the sphere where achievement of acme appears to be one of the subjectively significant consequences of carrying out of activities (along with no less significant utilitarian or high-status results).

In the second case a man subjectively divides the achievement of acme and the activities carried out (at that, self-development, self-actualization, manifestation of creativity are perceived as those existing outside the frames of profession). Consequently, the activities fulfilled semantically appear to be oriented exceptionally to the achievement of goals, not having an acmeological character (for example, ensuring of stability) or close to pseudo-acme (for example, striving to the career advancement and welfare irrespective to a real level of one's competence and aspirations to improve it).

The research carried out is one of the first steps in studying of the value-semantic patterns of representation of the acme phenomenon on the level of everyday consciousness and do not pretend to a comprehensive coverage of the given topic. At the same time, in our opinion, quite interesting data were received in the course of the study:

- on the generals and particulars in the individual meanings of acme in representatives of the different age groups;
- on the specificity of representation of the resultative and processual aspects of the acme phenomenon, as well as internal and external criteria of its achievement;
- on the character of interrelation of acme and other personality values and place of acme in their hierarchy.

The study results give grounds to speak about the fact that with age a human value-semantic sphere acquires an acmeological trend. Inclusion of the value of acme

into the structure of the value-semantic space activates the processes of self-development and self-actualization, imparting them goal and ensuring the criterial basis.

Employment of data and conclusions of the study when working out programs of the personality and professional development allows one to increase their ecological compatibility.

Further study of the problem addressed in the article could be carried out by different directions. Carrying out of study similar to ours on greater number of respondents in the groups, which makes it possible to assess the steadiness of the interrelations and differences revealed could be among them. Also revealing of the specificity of images of acme in gender and professional groups of different age could also be highly promising.

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