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## Imperatives of Spirituality: Essence and Key Meanings

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### *Maneviyatın Gereklilikleri: Öz ve Anabtar Anlamlar*

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**Abstract:** In today's dynamic, globalized world, when not only social, economic and cultural standards are being transformed, but also a person himself, his moral and spiritual imperatives, interest in questions about the meaning and purpose of his life, his world outlook and prospects for further existence. In this context, humanity is insistently seeking ways to preserve personality, which would be based on the new spiritual foundations of development, on those existential that would become one of the core factors of his value-meaning sphere of being. The purpose of this study is to reveal the essential characteristics of spirituality, its imperative principles, and those axiological landmarks, due to which a person's understanding of his place in the world changes. Moreover, the imperatives of spirituality are closely related to morality as an attribute of humanity, indicating the realization of the essence of a person in historical and practical terms. In contemporary society, they are represented by personal meanings that are associated with both deep archetypes and the value priorities of a person.

**Keywords:** Spirituality, imperatives, morality, existential experience, essence.

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## Introduction

Today humanity is experiencing a break in systemic and global shifts, sociocultural transformations and civilizational changes, directly related to the underlying foundations of human existence. These changes are exacerbated by the global crisis, in which specific features are purely anthropological. Its origins are connected to the deformation of human spirituality as the determining value-meaning form of being.

The breaking of the old, classical, traditional scientific worldview is connected to the need of developing new worldviews, which should become a basis for the scientific approach in solving numerous problems of survival of human civilization. There is a practical need for the formation and approval of a rethought system of spiritual values and moral standards. Therefore, the problem of the study of the imperatives of spirituality, to avoid the devaluation of human values and traditions, becomes more urgent than ever.

In modern philosophical and religious studies literature, despite the variety of approaches to the study of spirituality, there is no single and complete picture of the spiritual concept. Although some aspects of this problem are present in many works. The problem of spirituality is being developed and gets appropriate explication in the context of revealing such semantic nuances: the categories of “consciousness” (V. Zinchenko, A. Ivanova, I. Kon, A. Leontyev); Faith-Hope-Love as a value-meaning perspective of human existence (R. Granovska, N. Odohivska, V. Shinkaruk); humanity (V. Andrushchenko, V. Kremin, S. Krymsky, V. Fedotova); religiosity and religious studies aspects (T. Gavrilyuk, A. Kolodny, I. Petrova, D. Predko, L. Filipovich).

A brief overview allows us to conclude that at the moment, the researchers have achieved certain results in the study of the phenomenon of spirituality. However, there is no single holistic concept of spirituality and, as a result, many important issues of the problem of spirituality remain outside the scope of researchers' interests. Therefore, the article aims to clarify the significant imperatives of spirituality, its main essential and meaning dimensions.



## The Main Paradigms of the Concept of "Spirituality"

The term "imperative" comes from the Latin word "imperativus" and usually is defined as crucial, insistence, command and order. Especially often this concept is used by philosophers. In particular, Immanuel Kant in his work *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* has defined an imperative as a general moral prescription, a moral and ethical maxim, in fact, a law, immanently inherent in every person. He noted: "Act only according to that maxim whereby which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (Kant, 2002, p. 25).

The word "spiritual" in many scientific sources and everyday life is more often used as a phenomenon that refers to the person's inner world. On the everyday level, the appeals to the concept of "soul" are more common (for example, the soul hurts, suffers, worries, loves, etc.). In the etymological dictionaries (Baldyrev, Kolomiets & Kritenko, 1985) it is indicated that the term "spiritual" comes from the word "spirit" in the meaning of "breath". The most detailed study of the meaning of the word "spirit" in its biblical interpretation was carried out by Benedict Spinoza in *Treatise on Theology and Politics*. The author shows how different the semantic meanings of the concept of "spirit" are: breath, consciousness, courage, strength, power, ability, the intention of heart, the mind itself (soul), mind, world regions (Spinoza, 2007, p. 13) Such a wide interpretation of the phenomenon of "spirit" focuses not only on the "inner", closed "in itself" world of a person but also ongoing beyond it. Therefore, the phenomenon of "spirit", on one hand, is used in the meaning of a person's soul as his internal essence, the source of "breathing" from which it comes, and on the other, indicates its functional manifestations.

The main paradigms, determining the semantic field and fundamental features of the concept of spirituality, are conditioned by the socio-cultural development of civilization. The origins of the concept of spirituality go back to ancient systems of philosophy - Neoplatonism and Stoicism. It was Neoplatonism that first raised the question of the correlation and opposition between the sensory cosmos and being, comprehended by the mind, where the World Soul (Psyche) was recognized as an indirect connection. This sphere of true being is always opened for an individual soul, it only needs to find a way to return to itself, to know its



true nature. This is possible in the process of emanation - the transition from higher, perfect ontological degrees of the universe to lower ones, and the return from lower to higher, overcoming the isolation of the individual soul from the transcendental source, which is comprehended by the mind. A certain proto-modification of the concept of spirituality can be considered a state of "autarky" in the ethics of Stoicism, as a state that does not depend on external circumstances. Here person acts freely according to the imperatives of *Nous*, according to ethical principles of his or her attitude to the world.

Christianity inherits the semantic constants of the concepts of "spirit" and "spirituality", which have developed in Neoplatonism and Stoicism, and finds new nuances in them. Personifying the Spirit, interpreting it as the personification of the absolute - "Holy Spirit", the Christian culture unfolds within the trinity of the Divine nature - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

An invariant semantic field of concepts of Spirit and Spirituality was formed and the origins of the metaphysical and methodological foundations of the interpretation of the phenomenon of spirituality are found within the Christian paradigm. They determine the specificity of the modern discourse of spirituality and its semantic constructs. The essence of this paradigm is the obligatory metaphysical recognition of the objective Spirit as a transcendental reality, comprehended by the mind (Catholic tradition), opened through *Sofia* (Eastern Christianity), or through the exchange of energies (*Hesychasm*). Such an understanding of spirituality as a process of union with the Absolute, identification with the Absolute within the framework of religious practice and religious discourse is still dominant in Christian philosophy.

In contemporary philosophical discourse, the meaning of the phenomenon of "spirituality" changes. The well-known Ukrainian philosopher Sergei Krymskii discusses the problem of spirituality, giving it the status of a principle, due to which personality's self-construction and constitution of his or her core values, moral attitudes and priorities occur. "Spirituality is the ability to translate the Universum of external being to the inner universe of a personality on an ethical basis, the ability to create that inner world, due to which a person's self-identity and its freedom



from cruel dependence on constantly changing situations are realized. Spirituality, in the end, leads to a kind of meaning cosmology, that combines the image of the world according to the moral law of the personality" (Krymskii, 1992, p. 23). Therefore, spirituality is the factor due to which one goes beyond "Self", opens up scope for empathy and dialogue with the "Other". Through such dialogue it becomes possible to realize internal spontaneous impulses to put oneself in the "Other's" place and follow the moral categorical imperative, listening to the voice of conscience.

However, spirituality is not only a component of the personality, rooted in deeper layers of his or her "Self-concept," but also it is a paradoxical possibility and the ability for a "view from the outside". In this context, spirituality is directly related to morality. Moreover, moral consciousness presupposes the reflection of objective reality through the prism of higher spiritual values. Therefore, morality is the core, through which spirituality is revealed. In this sense, spirituality is a certain algorithm that has its roots in the deep layers of the collective unconscious. It is a potential due to which the "growth" of the "human" in human takes place. Consequently, morality is a mechanism for the actualization of spirituality. Thus, spirituality is the acquisition of the highest meanings and values, those moral attitudes that bring constructive and transformative principles into all spheres of reality.

The problem of spirituality is closely related to the level of development of a soulful life, a certain culture of feelings, which reflects the psychological structure of personality, its perception of self, others and the world as a whole. We completely agree with Valentina Fedotova, who raises the question of the relationship between spirituality absence and soullessness. "We are used to criticizing the absence of spirituality, however, are we aware to a large extent that the basis for its growth is soullessness, not developed social sensuality, elementalism of feelings, their reduction to unclean life attractions, as well as (on the other extreme) their abandonment, asceticism?" (Fedotova, 1988, p.51). Thus, soullessness is a prerequisite for a lack of spirituality. The underdevelopment of soul and feeling experiences often causes underdevelopment in the sphere of value orientations. *Spirituality* is a personal quality, by its nature tran-



scendental, and in essence - existential, able to create its integral inner world, where a person constantly experiences dissatisfaction with today's himself or herself and strives for self-improvement. Therefore, if spirituality does not raise organically from the soulful foundation, it can be excessively rational and transform into fanaticism. Hence, the soulful world is the vital principle of human existence, connecting physical and spiritual.

### **Meanings of Spirituality in the Context of Existential Experience**

According to Ralph W. Hood Jr., Peter C. Hill, and Bernard Spilka (Hood, Hill & Spilka, 2009, p.11), spirituality is a multidimensional concept that includes personal and subjective dimensions and does not require an institutional structure. Moreover, a spiritual person is deeply concerned with value obligations.

For us, the most complete understanding of *spirituality* is the one, which includes, firstly, the interiorization and exteriorization of moral values and spiritual elements of culture; secondly, the moral layer directly related to soulfulness, due to which the semantic center of the personality is set. In such a context the person's spiritual essence is revealed, the freedom of his or her own choice, self-actualization, and his or her unique path are realized. Orientation is present not in the external requirements "you must", but in the internal personal decision. In general, the main elements in the structural hierarchy of spirituality are the moral and ethical beginnings. They act as indicators determining the fullness of social and individual being since morality is one of the main mechanisms not only for regulating relations but also for the "spiritualization" of a person, on which depends its existential experience. "In other words, I want to say that essential, constitutive acts of consciousness and our spirituality always occur on the background of what might be called the experience of consciousness. Not consciousness about something, but the experience of consciousness itself as a special kind of being, ontologically rooted, in which there are some evidence, some non-verbal or terminologically indivisible state of "I think, therefore I exist", which is on the verge of ultimate individuation, when nothing is permissible even before I can see and experience this, and lasts our (yours, mine) undoubted for us a vital



presence in the world” (Mamardashvili, 1992, p.91). However, it should be noted that this boundary of individuation simultaneously includes the ultimate universalization, which indicates both the uniqueness and universality of spirituality as the basis of existential experience.

Experiences as "living through" are manifested as an existential-spiritual act that is potentially contained in a person's mentality. However, this action arises only as a result of a value-based understanding of particular phenomena, activating the transcendental capabilities of a person, its deepest ground of the soul. Therefore, deciding to “be himself or herself”, a person joins the process of searching for true self-identity, the functionality of which determines the manifestation of the ability to transcend. At the same time, the peculiarity of transcendence is immanence: by breaking through the limits of "Self", the personality goes deeper into himself. Russian and Ukrainian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev emphasized: “Man is transcending himself, going beyond his boundaries, striving for mystery and infinity. But the experience of transcendental and transcending is an inner, spiritual experience, and in this meaning, it can be called immanent. The immanent here is not staying within one's limits, but going beyond these limits. The transcendent comes to a man, not from the outside, but the inside, the depths. God is deeper within me than myself. This has already been said by Augustine of Hippo. I have to transcend to myself. Depth can be closed in a person, and this depth requires a breakthrough, transcending” (Berdyaev, 1993, p. 278). Thus, the act of transcending implies going beyond the limits of one's Self, overcoming the ontological state of given, existing conditionality - this is a breakthrough to the essential boundaries of the Other, to new meanings and value-purpose attitudes of being.

The irresistible attraction to transcending is an essential feature of the spiritual being of a person. On one hand, the transcendent attracts the personality by the possibility of going beyond the limits of being, and on other hand, it encourages the formation of new meanings that were not previously present in the culture. Therefore, the spiritual development of the personality is determined by symbolical and semantic constructions, that do not follow from the reality of being. They serve as the impetus, due to which the personality goes beyond the limits of what is



given and is directed to the future, towards the "possible self". However, spiritual work is not only the orientation of "Self" deep into oneself, but also outside — preparation for the accomplishment of the Act, manifestation of oneself in professional activity (Pourmola, Bagheri, & Alinezhad, 2019), which result in person's individuality, soleness, and uniqueness. In this way, spirituality can enhance virtuosity and quality of life, inspiring a sense of purpose and meaning.

The most vividly "the code of spirituality" is revealed in boundary situations, where a person breaks through beyond his or her own "Self" and opens up a completely different dimension of being. Boundary experiences, identified as mystical, transcendental, are accompanied by a state of delight, bliss, a feeling of completeness, happiness. By the way, precisely such states are often associated with the creative processes of personality or with a change in his or her spirituality.

Spirituality has a beneficial effect on a person: he or she becomes serene and is not afraid of making mistakes. People, who are more religious and spiritually open, seeking connections, are more able to endure pain and overcome life's hardships (Lysne & Wachholtz, 2011). Therefore, religious spirituality is distinguished by its life-meaning orientation, mitigating social and psycho-spiritual crises, thereby reducing anxiety and depression. In this context, spirituality acts as a psychotherapeutic factor, softens a person's existential tension, gives him or her hope, and fills his or her life with meaning. At the same time, the meaning of spirituality is more existential than given by higher powers or social norms. Therefore, spirituality is the subject's ability to act freely in relation to his own life strategy and social stereotypes of behavior.

Thus, spirituality is forming constantly. It is renewed by human efforts, again and again shining with new shades in the wake of these efforts. In general, nothing human can exist in itself but can renew constantly. The imperatives of spirituality cannot be established and then neglected and hope that they have gone into oblivion. In fact, their action is based on the thousand-year history of mankind. They grew up in the moments of historical upheavals, of the rise of human thought and heroic acts, that "painted" the fabric of human existence as an integral element of their existence, the fight for freedom, democratic values and





priorities of all purely human. Spirituality is a concept that forms the horizons of the future, which is not perceived but is being constructed. Spiritual experience carries irrational experience, the unavoidable factuality of preserving the world and humanity as a whole. It is an experience that the world is an inexhaustible source of meaning, despite all the hardships. Actually, spiritual action becomes that boundary where spiritual and practical values meet, complement and enrich each other.

### Conclusion

Spirituality is a phenomenon, due to which not only certain imperatives are found by a person, but also the indicators of the existence of a certain hierarchy of values and meanings are verified. This is an integrative quality, dealing with the sphere of life-meaning values, which determine the content, quality and orientation of human life. The attribute characteristics of spirituality are soulfulness and morality, due to which a person self-identifies. Soulfulness is an emotional and personal living through values, experiencing them within an individual being. Morality is a rational comprehension and implementation of these values, a conscious affirmation of basic meanings and values in human activities. However, soulfulness and morality are just meaning and materials for constructing the “architectural ensemble” of human life, the contours of which are in the realm of transcendental, where perspective possibilities of a person’s spiritual development are constructed. Thus, spirituality, firstly, presents person’s life-meaning orientations; secondly, sets his or her communicative horizon; thirdly, it forms a life strategy, entering into the life principles of the personality, providing them with a certain comprehension; fourthly, it is revealed to person as a trans-subjective reality; fifthly, performs a psychotherapeutic function, that leads to the stabilization of mental processes.

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**Öz:** Günümüzün dinamik, küreselleşmiş dünyasında, sadece sosyal, ekonomik ve kültürel standartların değil, aynı zamanda bir kişinin kendisi, ahlaki ve manevi zorunlulukları, hayatının anlamı ve amacı, dünya görüşü ve beklentileri ile ilgili sorulara ilgi duyduğu daha fazla varoluş. Bu bağlamda, insanlık ısrarla, gelişimin yeni manevi temellerine dayanan kişiliği, değer-anlam varoluş alanının temel faktörlerinden biri haline gelecek olan varoluşsalları korumanın yollarını aramaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, bir insanın dünyadaki yerini anlamasının değişmesi nedeniyle maneviyatın temel özelliklerini, zorunlu ilkelerini ve bu aksiyolojik dönüm noktalarını ortaya koymaktır. Dahası, maneviyatın gereklilikleri, insanlığın bir niteliği olarak ahlakla yakından ilişkilidir ve bir kişinin özünün tarihsel ve pratik terimlerle gerçekleştiğini gösterir. Çağdaş toplumda, bir kişinin hem derin arketipleri hem de değer öncelikleri ile ilişkili kişisel anlamlarla temsil edilirler.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ruhsallık, buyruklar, ahlaklılık, varoluşsal deneyim, öz.

