

**ICHEU 2021****International Conference «Humanity in the Era of Uncertainty»****THE PHILOSOPHICAL ORIGINS OF RESILIENCE**

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**Abstract**

Resilience as a subject of scientific debate is of interest to a growing number of researchers. This is due to the high rate of change in the surrounding world, the virtual dimension of social reality, the introduction of new actors, forms and types of the Other (artificial intelligence, bots, robots) represent new challenges to human existence, and therefore the search for adequate responses to these challenges is becoming more relevant. Resilience is explored by contemporary psychology in the context of the age of uncertainty, liquid modernity and digital transformations of social being. The concept of "resilience" is in the focus of research attention. Research on resilience in modern psychology and pedagogy has shown the insufficiency of its historical explication. The aim of the author of the study is to discover the philosophical origins of the concept of resilience. Positions of the ancient Greek philosophers and the modern psychologist S. Maddy are compared, and they found the basement of the current ideas in the works of ancient authors. The derivation from philosophical interpretations formed in antiquity was established by Plato, Aristotle and Stoics. Here the main message is self-preservation of the individual capable of living a happy full life for its own sake, being ready for change, balancing between the acceptance of the inevitable and the responsibility for the choices made in life. There is a perspective to analyze the concept of "resilience" Middle Ages, Renaissance and other times.

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*Keywords:* Life, choice, responsibility, life style, involvement, challenge

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## 1. Introduction

Widely popular in today's mass consciousness, the phenomenon of "positive thinking" has acquired astonishing scale as digital tools of communication between people have developed. Various mentors and personal growth coaches are gaining millions of subscribers on social networks and hundreds of adepts at trainings and courses, with whom they share their "life hacks" for shaping thinking and lifestyle, teaching "the art of living" and enjoying life with a zeal that the ancient Greek sophists could not even dream of. In the epoch of "intimacy tyranny" (Sennet, 2002) a morass of "positive thinking" was established in public consciousness, endlessly calling to firmly bear any changes of life circumstances, remain self-faithful, get involved in any new projects and ideas, not being afraid of the future and enjoy existence. In our opinion, the cumulative naming of such orientations of consciousness and activity, among other possible connotations, can be defined as the initiation of resilience.

## 2. Problem Statement

Resilience as a subject of scientific debate is of interest to a growing number of researchers. This is due to the high rate of change in the surrounding world, the virtual dimension of social reality, the introduction of new actors, forms and types of the Other (artificial intelligence, bots, robots) represent new challenges to human existence, and therefore the search for adequate responses to these challenges is becoming more relevant. Resilience is explored by contemporary psychology in the context of the age of uncertainty, liquid modernity and digital transformations of social being. The foundation of this research in foreign psychology is laid by S. Maddy, while in Russian scientific discourse a significant contribution to the study of this phenomenon was made by D. Leontiev. Theoreticians and practitioners of pedagogy are involved in research from pragmatic positions, seeking to organize the educational process in such a way so as to increase resilience of the students. Methodological techniques and expertise are formed, allowing measuring and fixing it in different group and placing it among the corpus of indicators of pedagogical activity. Let us note that the instrumental nature of modern models of resilience determines the range of applicability to the current agenda, solving current practical tasks, but the concept itself is not at all a discovery of the 19th-20th centuries, and therefore a deeper study of both the concept and the phenomenon is possible. In the scientific discourse among Russian studies on this topic we found only two philosophical monographs by the same authors (Luchankin, 2016; Luchankin & Kadyrova, 2018) and one psychological (Leontiev, 2003). The problem is that the incompleteness of the research on resilience narrows the heuristic potential of this concept in the analysis of modernity.

## 3. Research Questions

However, the phenomenon of resilience has, firstly, a disputable potential of definition; secondly, a long history; thirdly, numerous philosophical connotations.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of the author of the study is to reveal a historical retrospective of the resilience concept content and to show its philosophical origins. The hypothesis is that the origins of the current interpretation of resilience are the ideas of ancient philosophical discourse. And if this is true, then the modern content of the concept of "resilience" acquires new connotations and extensions.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The research methodology includes historical reconstruction, comparative analysis and modeling.

#### **6. Findings**

Let us consider how resilience is understood by S. Maddy, Plato, Aristotle and the stoics.

##### **6.1. Maddy's concept of resilience**

A set of "key words" of Maddy's concept is ontological anxiety, ontological guilt, involvement, control (influence), challenge (risk taking), the existential core of personality (Maddy, 2005). He finds the basis for his ideas in S. Kierkegaard and P. Tillich's works, referring to the concepts of faith, courage, despair, courage, anxiety.

Involvement means that finding life purpose and relieving anxiety about the future is possible if and only if one is actively involved in, pays attention to and participates in everything that happens in the world. Those who consider control (or influence) to be the main state they are looking for assume that they can influence the happening in their struggle. The state of control over what is happening is their way of finding the purpose of their own existence, and probably the more events are under their influence, the more meaningful their existence is perceived to be. The third component - challenge, risk-taking - implies an attitude towards reality where the greatest satisfaction from life is achieved by the individual while acquiring wisdom from his or her own experience. Maddy (2005) emphasizes, "These three B's - involvement, influence and challenge are interrelated and mutually complete, together forming resilience as a disposition that helps to reduce and more easily tolerate the ontological anxiety associated with future choices" (p. 89). Under ontological anxiety, the feeling one has when making a decision about the future due to the novelty and unpredictability of changing circumstances is understood (Maddy, 2005). The test instruments created by S. Maddy and interpreted by D. Leontiev share involvement, influence, and challenge and suggest that if certain values for each of them are achieved, it is highly probable that an individual can live a meaningful rich life.

##### **6.2. Etymology of resilience and Plato's point**

Let us consider the vocabulary content of the concept "resilience". We suggest unsinkability, vitality, firmness, stamina as synonyms, that is, we are talking about property of an object, allowing it to preserve itself in various circumstances. Let us note that this notion is applied not only to a man, but also, for example, to mythological constructions, cities, civilizations, dialects, plants or animals, is distinguished as

a property of a system to self-preserve, to remain alive, that is, to act. Such a "word map" allows us to make sure of the considerable volume of the concept itself and the vast scope of its possible uses.

The understanding of resilience is first formulated in excerpts in the legacy of the Seven Sages, in particular, the following words are attributed to Pittacus: "9. [What] is fearful to know [?] is the future, [what] is safe [?] is the past...13. Cherish piety, parenting, self-control, reasonableness, truthfulness, faithfulness..." (The Fragments of the Early Greek Philosophers, 1989). These statements obviously contain elements of a set necessary for defining resilience in S. Muddy's concept - an emotionally coloured attitude toward the past and the future and guidelines for personal behaviour. The latter are also presented in numerous variations by other members of the "Magnificent Seven": Solon: "10. If you learn to obey, you learn to rule"; Chilon: "12. If you have a cool temper, show calmness"; Bias: "17. You will gain... courage by daring", etc. (The Fragments of the Early Greek Philosophers, 1989).

We can talk about a systematic version of the understanding of resilience basing on the analysis of Plato's texts. We neither will find the very notion of "resilience" in its pure form in the dialogues, nor will find it among Plato's eidos. Resilience is intended to be an operator, i.e. a constructor that ensures the reproducibility of reference points of the Good, Beauty, Truth, etc., in being. The individual's striving for sublime ideals requires a trait that will make it possible, despite inevitable blunders, failures, and the initially obvious inaccessibility of the sublime's fullness in being, to strive for it. Thus it turns out that resilience appears in two hypostases - as an individual's ability to preserve the aspiration for the ideal in being and as a property of ideals to be reproducible in the reality of being.

What sources does resilience as a property of the individual come from? The unity of fatalism and heroism in the culture of antiquity is a proven trait. Death was a recurring subject in the Socratic Conversations. Socrates told Alcibiades, Meno, Gorgias and many others of death as an inevitable point of reference for the analysis of the current state of being, the evaluation of his own performance, the state system, the description of virtues and ways of acquiring them. Death simultaneously unites and divides people, being an inevitable fate for everyone; it performs the function of universalization, though everyone forms his individual attitude to it. Through persuasion and reasoning Socrates tried to convince his companions, the readers of Plato many centuries later, that death is such a challenge, the response to which must be formed in each of his actions, choices made, decisions made. We refuse "the most shameful ignorance," based on the belief that no one knows "whether it is the greatest of blessings for a man, and all are afraid of it, as if they knew for certain that it is the greatest of evils" (Plato, 1999, p. 37). Socrates gives us an amazing example of courageous acceptance of risk, a challenge, responds to the fear of death, multiple times crossing the border of social condemnation and eventually going beyond it. The risk of the unknown, the challenge of the inevitable future - death - are the maximum possible and therefore that yields the richest possible inner experience and resilience growing with it. In the name of what does Socrates do this? Why does he ask to pay back his debt to Asclepius, remembering practically on his deathbed some cock? This is the only way to establish the lofty ideals in the reality of human existence without devaluing practical life itself.

The problematic nature of interpreting the Good and the Beauty, Goodness and Truth that make up Plato's triad has been maintained for centuries. Let us consider the position of A.F. Losev, "... Plato's terms, as a rule, have many meanings, and even the famous term "idea" has several different meanings" (Losev,

1999, p. 13). As for the Plato's eidos destiny, A.F. Losev notes, "The eternal and unchanging world of ideas, being embodied in the liquid and dull Earth reality, had to ... to make human life the same eternal and unchangeable" (Losev, 1999, p. 15). Consequently, constructive-logical methods allow one not only to assume stability of these ideas themselves, but also to allow their certain resilience in real existence. The Twelve Theses on Ancient Culture reads, "When Plato states that his ideas exist in the celestial world, this means that he cannot imagine his idea excluded from a thing, let it be an etheric thing, and yet it is something that is perceived either by the sensual or the mental eye" (Losev, 2003, p. 5).

The analysis of the subject of resilience in Plato's philosophical heritage brings to the fore a component of risk, acceptance of challenge, readiness to acquire and comprehend profound individual experience, despite any possible tragic consequences. Life itself, and hence its resilience, is valuable with regard to the possibility of affirming the sublime in the real being of the individual.

### **6.3. Resilience as viewed by Aristotle**

The Aristotelian approach to resilience is more rational and can be characterized as active. According to Luchankin and Kadyrova, (2018) "Aristotle's entelechy (realization, energy) can be interpreted as synonymous to the resilience of empirically loaded consciousness". The evidence of this approach are the words of Aristotle himself, for whom entelechy is a movement which contains a goal in itself, like thinking, life, contemplation, happiness, joy; by contrast, a movement whose goal is to achieve something other than itself, like walking, building, healing, teaching, etc., is not entelechy (Aristotle, 2008). Entelechy characterizes only a living, organic body, each element of which is correlated with a certain task and is meant to fulfil a certain function, and the goal is to be the whole in itself. And since we are talking about a living organism, possessing a soul capable of reasoning and characterized by the pursuit of happiness, we are talking, therefore, about human life, in which, according to Aristotle, the main thing is activity. The resilience of man to changes, caused by either accidental failures or great numerous misfortunes, even if over a long and full term, will allow him to become happy, having achieved the great and beautiful (Aristotle, 2002).

In this perspective, resilience is revealed through a component of involvement, activity, conscious activity, and it is important to clarify that Aristotle does not underestimate the importance of speculative reason. Contemplation, speculative reason in ancient culture is not at all synonymous with passivity, inactivity, idleness, but acts as the most important universal practice that requires an active social position, a reflective type of thinking and creative moral values from the individual.

### **6.4. Stoicism position**

Stoicism is another philosophical school of antiquity that paid particular attention to resilience. According to Diogenes Laërtius, Zeno, the ancestor of the Stoics, claimed that "the ultimate goal is defined as a life consistent with nature, a life in which we abstain from everything that is forbidden by the general law, and this law is faithful mind, all-pervading and identical with Zeus, the guide and master of all things. This is virtue - a smoothly running life of a happy man, in which everything is carried out in accordance with the God of each person and serves the will of the universal master" (Zeno, 2003). Seneca develops this attitude and gives the following instruction:

...A (happy) life is possible, if, first, a man constantly possesses a sound mind. Then, if his spirit is courageous and vigorous, noble, hardy and prepared for any circumstances; if he, without falling into anxious anxiety, takes care of satisfying physical needs; if he is generally interested in material aspects of life, without being seduced by any of them; finally, if he is able to use the gifts of fortune, without becoming their slave... The result of such a state of mind is constant tranquillity and freedom. (Seneca, 2003, p. 45)

Epictetus warns of the "disease of desire" which afflicts "any man who worries about the future or torments himself with various worries and fears about things that do not depend on him" (Epictetus, 2003). Marcus Aurelius reminds us, "No one can lose either the past or the future. After all, who could take from me what I do not possess? (Marcus Aurelius, 2003). With regard to possible events that can make up a person's misfortune, he gives the following instruction: "Not the event is a misfortune, but the ability to endure it with dignity is happiness" (Marcus Aurelius, 2003). To conclude this brief excursus into the philosophical Stoics' concepts, let us note Seneca's opinion: "The state of the human race stands because there is something unconquerable, someone against whom fortune is powerless", this is how he concludes his dialogue "On the Firmness of the Wise" (Seneca, 2001). The resilience to affect (insult as an excuse for affect) is multiplied by the resilience to the fatal shocks, to the inevitable games of unforgiving fortune - and here you are, the model of resilience according to Seneca is ready.

If we combine these positions in a common perspective, we can argue that the Stoics direct us to constantly control our actions, pay attention to the scale of influence we can have on everything that happens in the world, and engage in a struggle against any manifestations of practical life that attack our state of tranquillity and our being free.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, the hypothesis of the study is confirmed; ancient philosophy contains a kind of precursor of those operational tools, the components of the resilience model put forward by S. Muddy. The philosophical heritage of Aristotle draws us to engagement, Plato's philosophy teaches us to accept risk and respond to the challenge of death through the mouth and fate of Socrates, and Stoicism persuades us to control the preservation of tranquillity and freedom. And a further historical reconstruction of resilience interpretation in medieval and New European philosophy offers prospects for new research.

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