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КОНЦЕПТУАЛИЗАЦИЯ БАЛАНСА ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ В АСТРОЛОГИЧЕСКОМ ДИСКУРСЕ

Научная статья

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Аннотация

Исследование посвящено концептуализации баланса идентичности в астрологическом дискурсе. Баланс рассматривается как конечная цель поиска и обретения индивидом идентичности и состоит в таком взаимодействии личностной и социальной идентем (*термин наш*), при котором человек принимается другими как полноценный член общества/группы, сохраняя при этом свою уникальность и неповторимость. В качестве экспериментального материала нами были проанализированы отрезки аутентичных текстов обыденной астрологии, посвященные описанию представителей различных знаков зодиака в роли родителей. В результате исследования было выявлено, что баланс идентичности, концептуализированный средствами астрологического дискурса, дает индивиду чувство принадлежности к сообществу и психологического комфорта от выполнения социальной роли родителя, не вынуждая при этом его/ее менять свои (даже отрицательные) черты характера и свойства поведения.

Ключевые слова: идентичность, идентификация, идентема, самоидентичность, социальная идентичность, баланс идентичности.

IDENTITY BALANCE CONCEPTUALIZATION IN ASTROLOGICAL DISCOURSE

Research article

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Abstract

The research deals with the issue of identity balance conceptualization in astrological discourse. Identity balance is regarded as a final purpose of seeking and gaining identity. It means that personal and social identemas (*our term*) interrelate in a way when an individual is accepted by others as a full-fledged member of society/social group without losing his/her uniqueness and authenticity. Speech samples taken from authentic "low" everyday astrological texts devoted to the description of different zodiac signs representatives as parents have served as experimental material for our article. As the result of the undertaken research we have been able to reveal that identity balance conceptualized by means of astrological discourse gives an individual the feeling of belonging and psychological comfort from a social role as a parent without forcing him/her to change his/her (even negative ones) traits of character and behavior features.

Keywords: identity, identification, identema, self-identity, social identity, identity balance.

Introduction

Nowadays the word "identity" is so widely used that it might seem to be more an item of fashion than a complex phenomenon embracing all spheres of a person's life. For example, the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) contains 54504 speech samples with the word "identity". There are plenty of modifiers (mostly nouns and adjectives) coming together with "identity" as a key word, such as gender, national, cultural, ethnic, social, personal, online, digital, corporate, sexual, political, collective, professional, religious, local, human, group, individual, racial, to name just the most frequent ones.

No wonder, it is quite difficult to find some tiny islands of "untouched space" [10, P.265] in this huge ocean of definitions, concepts and ideas. The question to be answered here is, in our opinion, the purpose of identity.

Identity and Identification. Some researchers believe that identity need is culturally pre-determined and conditioned. Growing up in a certain society, an individual experiences a natural desire to follow its principles, rules and values and to be accepted as its full-fledged member and representative. As identity associated with a particular cultural background, some scholars suggest that the terms "identity" and "cultural identity" should be regarded as similar ones. We would like to point out, however that this synonymy is often context-oriented. Identity can build on and develop partially or totally in contrast with social rules and values. For instance, a person may choose to accept the culture of another ethnos, rather than of his or her biological one. In the English language such identities are often conceptualized by means of ethnic nicknames, which reflect social disapproval of these individuals: white chocolate (a white person trying to behave like a black one); Vanilla Gorilla (a black person who wants to adapt white culture); Bruised Banana (an Asian behaving like a black person); Rice Cracker (white people admiring Japanese culture).

A number of researchers prefer the term "identification" to "identity" considering the latter to be too static to reveal the dynamic nature of an individual's self-orientation in the social context. This, too, appears to be a moot question [1], [8]. According to the definitions given in the most reliable English language dictionaries (Oxford Dictionary, Collins Dictionary, Cambridge Advanced Dictionary, Webster Dictionary of Contemporary American English, American Heritage Dictionary, Merriam Dictionary, etc.) identity is closest to the concepts of individuality and personality, meaning that it (identity) describes present moment traits and features as well as those, which have been present for a period of time. Identification, on the other hand, is associated with process (action, act, recognition, etc.) by means of which the existing traits and features are

determined, analyzed, compared, i.e. identified. Identifying someone we try to determine his or her identity in accordance with available (often limited) information. For example, one may conclude that a person is stubborn because his or her star sign is Taurus. In reality, it can turn out to be true, partially true or completely false.

Identity cannot be regarded as a state, at least, as a permanent state. This issue is highlighted by the scholars of different fields (linguistics, psychology, sociology, etc.). A. V. Brushlinsky states that identity is a process, “influencing other processes”, and the state of identity is dynamic and changeable [6, P. 18]. According to Hall, identity is a constant process, is always in a state of being constructed [7]. Elias states that identity is to be associated with process as long as “a clear definition of process and, especially, a clear definition of development, is elaborated” [3, P. 96].

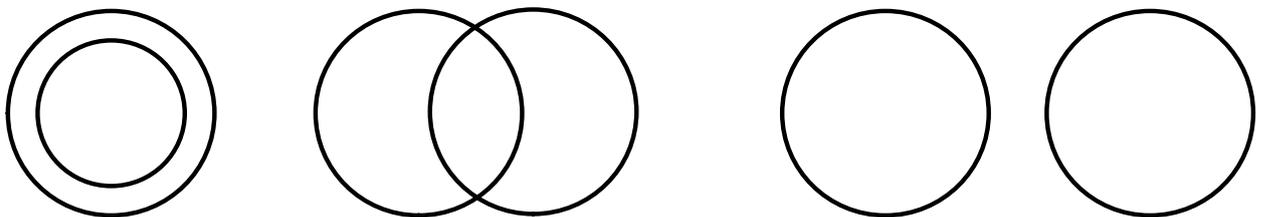
If we try to describe identity by means of one of the English tenses, Present Perfect Progressive seems to be the best option. It comprises both state (some result is achieved) and process (the action is going on) as well as duration (the process started in the past and continues in present). As any other process or action (we move in order to reach some destination, we listen in order to hear, we look in order to see, we learn in order to know, etc.), identity has to have a reason or a purpose.

Identity levels (identemas). Here we come to the issue of identity levels, traditionally defined as self-identity (individual identity) and social identity. These levels are closely interconnected and are difficult to separate. Identity construction includes at least two participants: an individual and other people, either as a group or as a society as a whole. On the one hand, it is next to impossible to determine oneself totally on one’s own. A person needs a direction, an orientation model, which would guide him or her on the way of identification with some social pattern. On the other hand, the word “individual” means “being different from any other”, which implies that there is no identity in the framework of sameness. Thus, identity presumes remaining unique and authentic in the process and in the result of identifying oneself with others.

In this way, self-identity and social identity are mutually complementary and interdependent components (*identemas — our term*), whose interrelation is proportioned differently in the case of each particular person. We believe that the term “level” is not quite appropriate here as it implies some difference in positions, one being higher than the other, while in case of identity both personal and social components are equally important.

Some identity definitions are focused on the self-identema: the way one sees oneself as an individual with a certain set of behavior characteristics, beliefs, convictions, opinions and relationships [4, P. 16]; self-conception, a perception of oneself [9, P. 265]; means of self-presentation and marking [2, P. 42]. For other authors, social identema is a priority: a self-perception, influenced and determined by the family upbringing, gender and ethnic background, socialization processes and the way a person is seen by others [11, P. 79].

We suggest presenting identity in the form of two circles, one of which being a personal, and the other a social identema. Their relation can have three configurations with two extreme and one middle position.



The first extreme position (conventional pattern) demonstrates a complete agreement between personal desires, opinions, views and beliefs and social expectations, meaning that personal and social identemas coincide and an individual is ready to follow socially pre-set rules, principles and standards without ever questioning them. Conventional pattern implies that a person loses his or her uniqueness and authenticity (an individual equals a society).

The second extreme position (parallel planes) illustrates a total divergence of personal and social identemas, meaning that an individual is in constant conflict with social standards, values and principles. This makes him or her an outcast and can end up with an identity crisis.

The middle position (crossing planes) represents identity balance and means that there is a common area connecting individual and personal identemas. As a result of identity balance a person manages to preserve his or her uniqueness while being accepted as a full-fledged society member. The above-mentioned common area is dynamic and can alter due to the developments and changes taking place in both society and an individual’s life. It can also differ depending on the identity type: gender, ethnic, political, confessional, etc.

We regard identity balance as a purpose of seeking identity as it fulfills the needs of being authentic (different from the others) and simultaneously being accepted by other people. When the identity lacks either personal (the first extreme position) or social (the second extreme position) identemas, he or she cannot be satisfied with his or her place in the world as well as be in harmony with oneself.

Identity Balance Conceptualization. In this research we would like to point out and analyze some ways of identity balance linguistic conceptualization on the example of astrological discourse. The samples to be analyzed are taken from the texts of “low” (routine) astrology, which is conveyed by means of horoscopes and deals with everyday order of life, schemes and axioms to be followed to interpret our individual, group and social experience in contrast to the “high” (classic) astrology, which is regarded as form of great intellectual life and thought of as a search tool of soul immortality whose aim is used to fulfill a human need for spiritual and moral links with the Cosmos.

Our choice to analyze astrological rather than any other type (gender, ethnic, professional, etc) identity is based on the observation that balance (harmony) seems to be its cornerstone. Each zodiac sign by means of which people are conceptualized possesses both positive and negative traits, has lucky and unlucky days (weeks, months, years), successful and unsuccessful periods of life, etc. Everything is good as long as a balance between contrasting features is kept.

In the process of working with the experimental material consisting of 24 samples devoted to the description of zodiac representatives as parents (both mothers and fathers) we are able to determine a number of techniques applied to conceptualize identity balance in astrological discourse.

To begin with, the description always starts by highlighting positive traits and characteristics, which are conveyed through the words of praise and admiration.

1. The rock solid foundation of love and support from the Taurus mother is outstanding.
2. Gemini mother is the sort of mom who is absolutely filled with life.
3. Cancer mother truly embraces the phrase “a labor of love”.
4. Libra father loves to shower his children with a luxurious and glamorous life.
5. Faithful, responsible, hard-working and protective describes the Taurus father.
6. The Aries man is a fun-loving and caring father figure.

Adjectives of highly positive semantics (outstanding – sample 1, faithful, responsible, hard-working, protective – sample 5, fun-loving, caring – sample 6), often proceeded by intensifiers (absolutely – sample 2, truly – sample 3) as well as metaphors (the rock solid foundation of love and support – sample 1, a labor of love – sample 3, to shower his children with a luxurious and glamorous life to shower his children with a luxurious and glamorous life — sample 4) captures the reader’s attention and makes him or her feel good about his or her role as a parent, even though in real life it may not be the case. Moreover, positive traits of zodiac signs superimposed on a person’s identity prevent people from feeling either superior or inferior to other zodiac representatives (each sign makes a good parent in his or her own unique way).

To make astrological descriptions more personal (after all, there are thousands of Scorpios, Virgos, Cancers, etc. in the world), pronouns “you” and “your” are often employed. This gives a reader the feeling that an astrologist speaks to him or her personally.

7. *You* not only take care of the child, but will give equal importance to the requirements of the family (Virgo mother)
8. *Your* child knows what *you* want him to do and is not afraid of *you* (Scorpio mother)
9. *Your* main objective is to prepare *your* child to succeed in life (Capricorn mother)
10. *Your* child-like spirit helps *you* to get along with your child. *You* will encourage and help *your* child in studies (Sagittarius father)
11. *You* will be highly devoted to *your* offspring and will try to make the environment highly comfortable (Pisces father)
12. *You* will find the company of a child enjoyable and like to spend *your* quality time with *your* offspring (Aquarius father)

When it comes to negative traits, the language becomes much more vague and obscure to avoid direct criticism or to mitigate it to a maximum extent. For example, when describing negative consequences for children resulting from parents’ attitude and upbringing, the modal verb “may” is frequently used rather than the finite verb alone.

13. This *may* lead to her children growing up to be testing her authority all the time (Gemini mother).
14. Her child *may* grow up to be that spoiled princess down the block demanding gifts left and right (Cancer mother).
15. Your child *may* not like your efforts to overtake him always (Leo mother).

The modal verb “may” used in samples 13-15 implies that the negative consequences described in them are not 100% to occur. They are just one of many other possibilities taking place in our lives. In this way, a criticism of parents’ inappropriate behavior sounds significantly milder.

In some cases negative features are excused, justified or compensated by positive ones. Let us consider the examples.

16. There are times when the bluntness and brutal honesty of the Aries mom becomes a bit overbearing for her children, but they do respect and appreciate feedback. After all, greatest lesson comes from making mistakes.
17. Sometimes it may seem she is not appreciative of what her children have accomplished, but that is simply not true. The Taurus mother thinks nothing but the best of her kids but has difficulty putting it into words.

18. While she (Gemini mother) loves her children dearly, she cannot stand having to take care of them for hours on end.

In sample 16 the negative traits (bluntness and brutal honesty) are compensated by the positive outcomes (they do respect and appreciate feedback; greatest lesson comes from making mistakes). The adversative conjunction “but” is used to focus a reader’s attention on the positive part of the sentence, and the negative meanings of the noun “bluntness” and the phrase “brutal honesty” are lessened considerably.

Sample 17 implies that it is other people’s fault that they fail to see the Taurus mom’s true feelings towards her children (she has difficulty putting it into words)

In sample 18 the lack of patience on the mother’s side is justified by her natural feeling of exhaustion (cannot stand having to take care of them for hours on end). It is pointed out that this fact does not make her a bad parent (she loves her children dearly).

One more issue worth mentioning here is the way advice or recommendations are given in order to cope with difficulties any parent is likely to face.

19. A babysitter or caretaker will be most definitely hired to fill in for when she (Gemini mother) is not in the mood to handle those mundane tasks.
20. The Cancer dad personality will require some help from his partner to guide him towards maintaining his friendships a little bit better.
21. She (Cancer mother) may need some guidance from the women in her life to set things straight and be less protective.
22. The Gemini father characteristics he needs his partner to be the disciplinarian in the family to avoid being the “bad guy”.

Samples 19-22 illustrate that an astrological individual is not required to get rid of his or her traits even if they prevent him or her from fulfilling socially imposed duties – parenthood (inability to keep to daily routines – sample 19, isolation from the outside world – sample 20, overprotectiveness – sample 21, lack of authority and censorship – sample 22). Other people’s

involvement (partners – samples 20, 22, friends and acquaintances – sample 21 or even strangers – sample 19) rather than on forcing an individual to change something in his or her personality is considered a way out in these circumstances.

In this way, parent identity presented astrologically seems to achieve the balance of social (parenthood standards: love, care, responsibility, protectiveness, security, respect, etc.) and personal (unique traits and characteristics of a particular zodiac sign) identities.

Conclusions

Summing up our research we would like to highlight the following issues.

Identity is regarded as a process or action, which continues throughout a person's life. Its state is always dynamic.

Like any other process, identity has a purpose, which we believe to be a balance of personal and social identities. Identity balance means that an individual is accepted by others as a full-fledged society member while preserving his or her unique and authentic personality.

Identity balance can be conceptualized by means of astrological discourse, which gives people a feeling of belonging and psychological comfort of self-knowledge and uniqueness without rejecting social standards and principles.

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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