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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICAL CONCEPTIONS AND CHARACTEROLOGICAL TRAITS OF PERSONALITY

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INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the Study

In the context of a global civilizational crisis and the growing threat of humanity losing its traditional spiritual and moral foundations, the scientific community has been increasingly drawn to the study of moral regulation of behavior. These processes become especially evident amid the intensification of sociocultural and political conflicts, rising anxiety and uncertainty, and the weakening of individuals' moral foundations—trends well-documented in recent studies (Nestic & Zhuravlev, 2018; Volovikova, 2018; Veselova, 2003; Kolhonen & Mironenko, 2023a; Kolhonen & Mironenko, 2024a). Against this backdrop, the exploration of the moral sphere of the individual acquires particular significance (Zhuravlev, Volovikova, & Galkina, 2014).

According to a scientometric analysis conducted by the Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, more than 2,000 scholarly works on the psychology of morality were published between 2002 and 2021 alone (Kostrygin & Zhuravlev, 2023, p. 98). Moreover, over the past decade, citation rates in this field have increased by 150% (ibid., p. 102), indicating a growing interest in the topic and an expansion of its methodological and practical importance.

One actively developing area within psychological science is ethical psychology—a field that investigates ethical conceptions as a form of internal regulation of behavior and as a reflection of an individual's moral stance (Popov, Golubeva et al., 2008). Central to this area are the categories of good and evil, which are closely tied to the search for ontological foundations of moral choice and personal life paths. A core conceptual element in this field is the ethical stance of the individual—an integrative characteristic reflecting one's attitude toward moral norms, as realized in behavior and in the interpretation of moral dilemmas (Dmitrieva, 2013; Kozlova, 2015; Kalinushkin, 2018).

M. N. Dmitrieva defines the ethical stance as "an integrative personality trait expressed through a conscious, stable, and active attitude toward moral norms and

values" (Dmitrieva, 2013, p. 41). In the international academic tradition, this concept corresponds to the terms ethical position or ethical stance. Today, this term is widely applied in research on moral attitudes in social and educational contexts.

Studies emphasize that the ethical stance is shaped through personal reflection, value-based socialization, and pedagogical influence. For example, in his work, Mazhar Nawaz highlights the role of moral exemplars in forming teachers' ethical orientation (Nawaz, 2024). The study by Octia, Fatimah, and Adinda explores the Value Clarification Technique as a method for developing an ethical stance in students (Octia, Fatimah, & Adinda, 2024). Other authors describe how institutional environments contribute to the development of stable moral orientations (Jommuang & Kaew-asa, 2024).

A classical example of conceptual distinctions between types of ethical stances is found in the work of C. Gilligan, who introduced the "ethic of care" and the "ethic of justice" as two different approaches to moral judgment shaped by gender and sociocultural factors (Gilligan, 1982), as well as in Alasdair MacIntyre's philosophical analysis (1981), which explores fundamental conflicts between moral positions in the modern world.

In line with these approaches, a key aspect of forming an ethical stance lies not only in behavioral orientation but also in the individual's interpretation of the content and relationship between the categories of good and evil. In this context, notions of good and evil may be understood as individually meaningful constructions formed within the framework of everyday knowledge.

The most appropriate framework for analyzing such knowledge is the theory of social representations, developed by S. Moscovici (1961) and later refined and expanded by both the author himself (Moscovici, 1986) and his followers. In particular, D. Jodelet (1986) interpreted social representations as forms of interpretative knowledge that reflect common sense and contribute to organizing social, material, and ideal reality (Jodelet, 1986; Rubira-García, Puebla-Martínez, & Gelado-Marcos, 2018).

Social representations are not merely part of the ethical stance—they form the foundation of the subject's "everyday knowledge," creating the interpretative framework within which good and evil acquire meaning and direction.

Thus, the conceptions of good and evil serve as the semantic core of the ethical stance, capturing the subject's everyday yet conceptually significant understanding of the ethical structure of the world. The conception of good and evil is the foundation of an individual's ethical stance.

In the present study, the ethical stance is understood as a stable and systemic construct that reflects the integrative attitude of an individual toward the categories of good and evil, in close unity with characterological traits. The ethical stance includes ethical conceptions but is not reducible to them. Characterological features of the subject are also integrated into its structure and are interconnected with ethical conceptions. These components do not exist in isolation; they are mutually conditioned and form an indivisible whole possessing qualities irreducible to the sum of its parts.

In the humanistic tradition established by A. Maslow and C. Rogers, ethical stances of personality may be viewed as related to personal maturity, self-actualization, and readiness for responsibility. As Rogers emphasized, "the most mature individual is the one who takes responsibility for their own values" (Rogers, 1961). These ideas found further development in Russian psychology in the concept of moral psychology, which was first articulated by B. S. Bratus: "moral psychology, apparently, is being postulated here for the first time" (Bratus, 1997, p. 3).

In the context of ongoing research in the field of moral psychology, a new direction has emerged—ethical psychology (Popov, Golubeva et al., 2008), whose subject matter encompasses the domain of ethical conceptions that function as expressions of personal moral relations and behavioral orientations. These include categories such as good, evil, freedom, responsibility, duty, justice, and conscience. The categories of good and evil occupy a central place in this relatively new and particularly important area of psychological science.

Although good and evil are formally within the domain of ethical psychology, their significance extends beyond this narrowly defined field, especially in regard to the dialectic or internal struggle between good and evil within the individual. This inner conflict significantly determines the individual's place within the ethical coordinates and moral orientations of society. I. S. Kon emphasized the importance of personality development—which he equated with the act of choosing oneself—and the formation of moral consciousness based on two polar models that concretely embody the notions of good and evil (Kon, 1984). B. S. Bratus stated this even more clearly: "Personality is the instrument for distinguishing between good and evil."

The direct relevance of the problem of "moral coordinates" to the subject matter of psychology is beyond doubt, which justifies the need for further development of the field of ethical psychology (Popov, Golubeva et al., 2008). B. S. Bratus substantiated the necessity of addressing the problem of personality as an interdisciplinary issue jointly by ethics and psychology as early as 1985: "If ethics begins to address its problems without reference to concrete psychological data, it risks viewing them outside the context of personality, or impersonally. Conversely, if psychological research into personality disregards ethical inquiry, it loses its humanistic worldview orientation, and even its ultimate human significance and purpose. After all, the psychology of personality does not exist for its own sake, but rather is justified by and intended to serve spiritual growth, human development, and the realization of ideals such as goodness, justice, and honesty—ideals that are the focus of philosophical and ethical thought" (Bratus, 1985, p. 8).

In our view, the growth of research in this area urgently demands its development as an interdisciplinary field at the intersection of ethics and psychology (Aprelian, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c; Prokofiev, 2021). We believe this will foster mutual enrichment of the two disciplines and provide the study of morality with the necessary impetus for development in the context of a modern, changing, and multicultural world.

Within the framework of ethical psychology, the study of individuals' ethical stances regarding the categories of good and evil acquires particular significance. It reflects a current trajectory of contemporary psychological science, which seeks to comprehend the moral nature of the human being in conditions of uncertainty and crisis. A thorough analysis of ethical stances requires consideration of the characterological features embedded in their structure, as a number of studies highlight their important role in shaping moral orientations, the stability of value-based attitudes, and the interpretation of ethical situations (Alfieri et al., 2022; Ashton & Lee, 2008).

This necessitates the identification and analysis of potential correlates between ethical conceptions (as the foundation of the ethical stance) and measurable personality traits (as structural components of the ethical stance), verified through valid psychodiagnostic methods. One of the most productive paradigms in this domain is the study of the dark and light triads—two methodological constructs encompassing six personality characteristics that are presumed to be related to ethical conceptions and included in the structure of an individual's ethical stance.

The concept of the dark triad, introduced by P. Paulhus and K. Williams (2002), comprises Machiavellianism, narcissism, and subclinical psychopathy, and is considered an indicator of personality dispositions associated with aggression, diminished empathy, and a tendency toward ethical relativism (Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Kaufman et al., 2019; Kositsyna, 2021). In contrast, the emerging concept of the light triad (Kaufman et al., 2019) describes a humanistic orientation of personality through such traits as faith in humanity, Kantianism, and humanism, and demonstrates stable correlations with prosocial behavior, empathy, and subjective well-being (Ilyichev & Zolotaryova, 2023).

Comparing individuals' ethical conceptions with their profiles on the dark and light triad scales may provide insights into how characterological traits relate to personal ethical stances concerning the categories of good and evil. This line of inquiry

is grounded in a humanistic approach, where personality traits and conscious moral choice are regarded as interrelated dimensions (Maslow, 2018; Rogers, 2017).

The relevance of the present study is determined by the importance of both examining individuals' ethical stances and exploring their relationship with characterological features.

Research objective:

to identify and describe the relationship between ethical beliefs and characterological traits of personality.

Object of the research – Moral self-awareness and regulation of behavior of the individual.

Subject of the research – the relationship between ethical beliefs and characterological traits of personality.

In accordance with the objective of the study, the following **tasks** were formulated:

1. To analyze the theoretical concepts and empirical studies of ethical beliefs of personality in the philosophical and psychological discourse and their role in the moral regulation of behavior. To formulate a theoretical model of the typology of ethical beliefs regarding good and evil.

2. To develop an empirical research program: to create and test an original questionnaire to identify beliefs about good and evil. To identify and analyze attitudes toward the categories of good and evil among respondents using selected research methods.

3. To conduct an empirical study of the relationship between ethical beliefs and characterological traits.

4. To identify groups of respondents with different ethical beliefs about good and evil and to carry out a comparative analysis of these groups. To describe and identify the characerological traits of each group of respondents.

5. To develop and describe a theoretical model of the ethical position of personality, including beliefs about good and evil, the relationship between good and evil, and characterological traits. To describe the identified types of ethical positions of personality.

Research hypotheses

<u>**Main hypotheses:**</u>

1. Ethical beliefs of personality about good and evil are related to characterological traits.

2. The ethical position of personality, as a holistic individual-typological construct, is based on the relationship between ethical beliefs about good and evil and characterological traits.

<u>Additional hypotheses:</u>

1. Individual-typological features of ethical beliefs about good and evil are related to character traits associated with the "dark" and "light" triads.

2. Individual-typological features of the ethical position are related to the level of self-actualization of personality.

3. Individual-typological features of the ethical position of personality are related to the level of behavioral flexibility.

Theoretical and methodological foundations of the study The theoretical basis of this study includes a number of concepts reflecting the development of ideas about the nature of ethical orientations of personality in moral and modern ethical psychology.

In Russian science, the humanistic line was continued by B. S. Bratus, who was the first to identify an independent field called moral psychology (Bratus, 1997). The development of this concept led to the formation of a new scientific field — ethical psychology, whose subject became ethical beliefs of personality (Popov, Golubeva et al., 2008). This field began to actively develop within the Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Herzen State Pedagogical University, and other research centers, relying on empirical data and new methodological approaches.

In the Russian scientific tradition, the problem of moral and ethical development of personality received multifaceted coverage. Conceptual foundations were laid by B. S. Bratus (1997), who first introduced the concept of "moral psychology." Subsequently, this line was developed within the scientific school of the Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, where ethical psychology was actively formed (Popov, Golubeva et al., 2008). Significant contributions to the development of this field were made by R. G. Apresyan, E. K. Veselova, M. I. Volovikova, A. L. Zhuravlev, L. M. Popov, and other researchers.

The problem statement of our study also relies on the humanistic paradigm, within which the moral orientation of personality is considered as part of the overall process of self-actualization, personal maturity, and conscious life stance. Key representatives of this direction are A. Maslow (Maslow, 2018), who identified moral values as the highest meta-motives of personality, and C. Rogers (Rogers, 2017), who emphasized that a mature personality takes responsibility for their values and decisions. The theoretical justification of the conceptual framework of the study is also based on developments in the psychology of moral development, represented in the works of L. Kohlberg, J. Piaget, A. Bandura, and A. Adler. According to Kohlberg's three-level model (Kohlberg, 1981), the moral orientation of personality develops from external compliance with norms to their internal integration and autonomous choice. Piaget (Piaget, 1932) describes the transition from heteronomous to autonomous morality, linking the development of moral consciousness with cognitive maturity. Bandura (Bandura, 1991), in his social cognitive theory, reveals the role of observation,

reinforcement, and moral disengagement in shaping moral behavior. Adler (Adler, 1933) emphasizes the connection of moral development with the sense of social responsibility and striving for community.

Equally important are certain ideas of Erich Fromm, who considered the phenomenon of evil as a result of deformation of love and suppression of the striving for freedom (Fromm, 1998), emphasizing the necessity of internal integration of personality for the formation of a mature moral orientation. In psychoanalytic and psychodynamic approaches, the categories of good and evil are not regarded as abstract philosophical entities but as internally experienced emotional and semantic poles formed in early experience. Such approaches allow moral distinctions to be understood as psychic structures emerging at the boundary between the Self and the Other. A significant influence on the understanding of the mechanism of ethical differentiation of good and evil was exerted by the ideas of E. Erikson, who described how primary mistrust can be metaphorically understood as the experience of evil (Erikson, 1950), as well as modern psychoanalytic interpretations pointing to the role of splitting mechanisms in the formation of early concepts of good and evil (Yeomans, Clarkin, Kernberg, 2018).

The empirical part of the study is based on correlating ethical beliefs about the categories of good and evil with characterological traits measured using psychodiagnostic methods. In particular, the concept of the dark triad (narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy), proposed by P. Paulhus and K. Williams (2002), and the concept of the light triad (faith in humanity, humanism, Kantianism), developed by S. Kaufman et al. (2019), are applied. These approaches make it possible to identify contrasts between the tendency toward manipulative strategies and ethical orientation based on trust, prosociality, and humanistic attitudes. An additional theoretical and methodological foundation of the study is the humanistic tradition in diagnostics, in particular the concept of self-actualization (according to E. Shostrom) and proactivity as a stable personality trait (Bateman, Crant, 1993), as well as the assessment of attitudes toward good and evil using a semantic differential and the original questionnaire.

Research Methods and Techniques:

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative analysis included statistical processing of survey data (factor, cluster, and correlation analysis, ANOVA), while qualitative analysis involved semantic analysis of individual perceptions of good and evil. The following instruments were used: the author's questionnaire "Attitudes Toward Good and Evil," semantic differential, Dark Triad (SD3) and Light Triad (LTS) scales, Self-Actualization Test (SAT), Proactive Personality Scale (PPS), and Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI).

Description of the Study Sample:

The study involved 170 respondents (72% female, 28% male) aged 22 to 35 (M = 27.3, SD = 3.5), all with higher education and permanent residence in St. Petersburg. Participants were selected randomly, and the survey was conducted online. Analysis of the sample revealed that 32% of respondents were psychologists, 44% represented the humanities, and the remaining 24% worked in technical fields. Regarding marital status: 60% were not in a relationship, 30% were in long-term relationships, and 10% were married. After dividing the sample into groups (clusters), statistical analysis showed no significant differences in gender, age, education, or professional orientation across groups (Table 1).

Scientific Novelty of the Study:

The scientific novelty of this research lies in the conceptualization of the psychological construct of an individual's ethical position as a systemic entity that includes ethical representations and characterological traits of personality. Based on this conceptualization, a theoretical model of typology of ethical positions was proposed, and an author's questionnaire was developed to identify an individual's ethical position.

A novel contribution is the identification of two empirically established types of ethical positions that differ in how they interpret the relationship between good and evil, as well as in the degree of acceptance of these categories. The study established a

connection between the type of ethical position and the characterological traits of personality, allowing these positions to be considered not only as cognitive judgments but also as phenomena linked to individual psychological characteristics.

Theoretical Significance of the Study:

The theoretical significance of this work lies in the development of scientific understanding of the internal structure of ethical positions of personality and the role of characterological traits within this structure. Based on the integration of humanistic, moral, and ethical psychology, the study refines the conceptual framework concerning the categories of good and evil in the context of personal functioning. The formulated propositions and obtained data contribute to a more precise theoretical description of the ethical position as a substantive component of personality structure, linked to ethical orientation.

Additionally, an important area of theoretical elaboration is the justification of the factor structure of ethical positions associated with the characterological traits of the Dark and Light Triads, which creates prerequisites for further modeling of ethical positions within an individual-psychological approach. The findings can be used to construct new conceptual models aimed at studying the sphere of moral regulation of behavior within ethical psychology.

Practical Significance of the Research Results:

The practical significance of the study is determined by the possibility of applying the results in applied psychology, in particular in counseling practice, psychological diagnostics, as well as in the field of ethical education and the formation of moral orientations among young people. The developed author's questionnaire makes it possible to identify an individual's attitudes toward good and evil, thereby serving as a useful tool in assessing the ethical position of a person in individual or group work.

Based on the identified factors, it is possible to create new diagnostic tools aimed at studying the structure of ethical representations, such as scales or indices (for

example, the Good and Evil Duality Index). The obtained data also open perspectives for the validation and adaptation of diagnostic models in various social and cultural contexts, including cross-cultural studies, educational, and awareness-raising practices.

Reliability and Validity of the Obtained Data

The reliability and validity of the results of this study are ensured both by the theoretical and methodological substantiation of the applied approach and by the diversity and rigor of the statistical data processing methods used.

The representativeness of the sample (N = 170) and its homogeneity across key demographic variables (gender, age, education) were confirmed by the following procedures: one-way analysis of variance (F (2,167) = 1.23, p = 0.29) and the Kruskal–Wallis test (H = 2.67, p = 0.12), which indicate the absence of systematic distortions and allow for a justified generalization of the results to a similar population of respondents.

The reliability and validity of the applied methods (SD3, LTS, SAT, etc.) were confirmed both in previous studies and within the framework of this analysis. The use of internal consistency coefficients, assessment of factor structure, and compliance of the scales with known criteria made it possible to verify the stability of the measurement tools. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using the Principal Axis Factoring method with Promax rotation, aimed at identifying the latent structures of representations of good and evil and their relationship with personality variables. Sample adequacy was confirmed by the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin index (KMO = 0.686) and a significant result of Bartlett's test of sphericity (χ^2 = 560.651, df = 66, p < 0.001), while the explained variance of the three-factor model was 51%, which meets scientific standards in the humanities. To identify stable groups of respondents, cluster analysis (Ward.D method) was applied, supplemented by AIC and BIC calculations to determine the optimal number of clusters. Differences between clusters were tested using MANOVA, ANOVA, and Post Hoc tests (Tukey HSD), ensuring multiple statistical verifications of differences between groups across all key variables.

The complexity of the analytical approach, which included a combination of factor, cluster, correlation, and variance analysis, provides grounds to assert the reliable degree of validity and empirical substantiation of the obtained results.

Approbation and Implementation of the Results

The main results of the study were discussed at the meetings of the Department of General Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, St. Petersburg State University. On the topic of the dissertation, 15 scientific works were published, including 7 articles in Russian peer-reviewed scientific journals, 4 of which are included in the Higher Attestation Commission (HAC) list, as well as abstracts and conference materials.

Articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals:

1. Kolkhonen A. Yu., Mironenko I. A. Representations of good and evil in individuals with high and low self-actualization // Vestnik SPbSU. Psychology. – 2025. – Vol. 15. Issue 1. – P. 134–147. (HAC)

2. Kolkhanen, A. Yu., & Mironenko, I. A. (2024). Toward a typology of personality in ethical psychology. Voprosy Psikhologii, 70(6), 40–51 (Scopus)

3. Kolkhonen, A. Yu., Andreev V. V. The relationship of athletic training with personality traits of the Dark Triad and the attitude toward overcoming // Psychology and Pedagogy of Sports Activity. – 2023. – No. 2(65). – P. 23–27. – EDN ONIIUF. (HAC)

4. Yumkina E. A., Kolkhonen A. Yu., Mironenko I. A. Representations of "good" and "evil" in psychology students in the "pre-COVID era" and in the present. Part 1: Semantic space analysis of categories // Social and Economic Psychology. – 2023. – Vol. 8. – No. 3(31). – P. 85–109. [DOI: 10.38098/jrspn.sep_2023_31_03] (HAC)

5. Yumkina E. A., Kolkhonen A. Yu., Mironenko I. A. Representations of "good" and "evil" in psychology students in the "pre-COVID era" and in the present.

Part 2: Content analysis of the definitions of good and evil // Social and Economic Psychology. – 2023. – Vol. 8. – No. 4(32). – P. 76–96. [DOI: 10.38098/jrspn.sep_2023_34_02] (HAC)

Articles in peer-reviewed non-periodical publications:

6. Kolkhonen A. Yu., Mironenko I. A. Good and evil in psychological discourse: toward problematization of conceptual content // Psychology of Personality: Methodology, Theory, Practice / Collection of scientific works. – Moscow: Institute of Psychology RAS, 2024. – P. 643–647.

7. Kolkhonen A. Yu., Mironenko I. A. The balance of Eros and Thanatos in the context of the modern trend of increasing nuclear war threats // Actual Problems of Contemporary Social Psychology and Its Branches: Collection of scientific works. – Moscow: Institute of Psychology RAS, 2023. – P. 867–871.

The results of the study were also presented in conference abstracts published in scientific conference proceedings:

8. Kolkhonen A. Yu., Kompaniets A. L. The idea of the dialectics of good and evil as a resource for coping with contemporary socio-political challenges // III International Conference on Counseling Psychology in Memory of F. E. Vasilyuk – Moscow: MSUPE, 2023. – P. 152–156. (ISBN 978-5-94057-522-3)

9. Kolkhonen A. Yu., Mironenko I. A. The dialectics of good and evil as a resource for life productivity today // XVIII All-Russian Parygin Scientific and Practical Conference with international participation – St. Petersburg: SPbGUP, 2023. – P. 87–89.

10. Kolkhonen A. Yu., Mironenko I. A. Indicators of Dark Triad traits and attitudes toward the concepts of good and evil in psychology students // Ananyev Readings – 2023. Human in the Modern World – Moscow: Soyuzkniga, 2023. – P. 414–416.

11. Kolkhonen A. Yu. The relationship of athletic training with Dark Triad traits and the attitude toward overcoming // International Scientific and Practical Conference of Young Scientists "Psychology of the Future" – St. Petersburg: SPb Scientific Research Institute of Culture, 2023. – P. 30–37.

12. Kolkhonen A. Yu. "Civilization tension" as a condition for the development of human and society – from the perspective of psychotherapy // XXVII International Conference of Young Scientists "Psychology of the XXI Century" – St. Petersburg: Skifiya-Print, 2023. – P. 268–269.

13. Kolkhonen A. Yu. Attitudes toward "Good" and "Evil" and features of personality self-actualization // XXVIII International Conference of Students and Graduate Students "Psychology of the XXI Century" – St. Petersburg: Skifiya-Print, 2024. – P. 57–58.

14. Kolkhonen A. Yu., Mironenko I. A. A factor model for describing personality in ethical psychology // Ananyev Readings – 2024. 80th Anniversary of St. Petersburg State University – Nizhny Novgorod: Soyuzkniga, 2024. – P. 176.

15. Kolkhonen A. Yu. The relationship of self-actualization with ethical representations of good and evil // "Psychology of the XXI Century," 2025. (abstracts accepted for publication)

Additionally, the research materials were presented and discussed in the framework of participation in scientific conferences, forums, and symposia of various levels:

Scientific conferences:

– International Conference on Counseling Psychology and Psychotherapy in memory of F. E. Vasilyuk (Moscow, 2022);

– XVIII All-Russian Parygin Scientific and Practical Conference with international participation (St. Petersburg, 2023);

– Contemporary Directions of Innovative Research of Young Scientists in Physical Culture and Sports (St. Petersburg, 2023);

– Conference "Psychology of the XXI Century: Science as Freedom and Creativity" (St. Petersburg, 2023);

– International Scientific Conference "Ananyev Readings — 2023. Human in the Modern World: Potentials and Prospects of Developmental Psychology" (St. Petersburg, 2023);

– Conference "Psychology of the XXI Century: Kaleidoscope of Discoveries" (St. Petersburg, 2024);

– International Scientific Conference "Ananyev Readings — 2024" (St. Petersburg, 2024);

– Conference "Psychology of the XXI Century: Human and the World" (St. Petersburg, 2025).

The presented materials were tested across various scientific platforms, which confirms the relevance of the topic, its compliance with modern scientific priorities, and the demand for the obtained results in the professional community, thus ensuring the reliability and validity of the provisions submitted for defense.

Structure and Scope of the Dissertation

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, findings, a list of references, and appendices. The main text of the dissertation is presented on 208 pages and contains 16 tables, 5 graphs, and 2 figures. The list of references includes 236 sources, of which 122 are in foreign languages.

Main Scientific Results

1.   In the course of the study, the conceptual framework was refined, including the author's interpretation of key categories: ethical representations of good and evil, and the ethical position of personality (the entire theoretical analysis was carried out personally by the author of the dissertation).

2.   The main types of ethical representations of the relationship between good and evil in philosophical, religious, and psychological theories were identified and systematized; it was shown that despite the diversity of contexts, the interrelations of these categories in psychological discourse are reduced to a limited number of stable types, which remain relevant and serve as a theoretical basis for analyzing these ethical representations using empirical methods (see works (Kolkhanen, Mironenko, 2024a).

3.   The relationship between ethical representations of good and evil and the characterological traits of personality was revealed (see works (Kolkhanen, Mironenko, 2025; Kolkhanen, Andreev, 2023)).

4.   Based on the generalization of the obtained empirical data, a typology of ethical positions of personality was proposed, including the features of the semantic core of ethical representations, the individual's attitudes toward good/evil, and characterological traits (see works (Kolkhanen, Mironenko, 2024a).

Provisions to Be Defended

1.   In psychological discourse, two types of ethical representations of the relationship between good and evil can be distinguished. In the first type, evil is interpreted as the absence of good, arising as a result of its deficiency. The second type considers good and evil as autonomous forces engaged in complex dialectical interaction.

2.   There is a relationship between ethical representations and the characterological traits of personality. In particular:

2.1. Connections were established between the features of ethical representations of good and evil and the traits of the Dark and Light Triads;

2.2. A relationship was established between the type of ethical position and the level of self-actualization;

2.3. A relationship was established between the type of ethical position and behavioral flexibility.

3. A conceptual theoretical model of the ethical position of personality is proposed, in which ethical representations of good and evil and the characterological traits of the subject are mutually conditioned and integrated into a unified whole.

CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICAL CONCEPTIONS AND CHARACTEROLOGICAL TRAITS OF PERSONALITY

The first chapter of this dissertation addresses the analysis and theoretical elaboration of concepts that are directly or indirectly related to the topic of ethical conceptions of personality and characterological traits, which, as will be demonstrated further, may be theoretically interconnected and even mutually determined.

The theoretical analysis begins with defining and clarifying the concept of an individual's ethical conception. An integrative analytical trajectory will be developed— starting from philosophical issues in defining the notions of good and evil, progressing through religious interpretations, and then moving toward their psychological and psychotherapeutic interpretations, and ultimately toward the internally driven, characterological structures that may be associated with ethical conceptions.

To approach an understanding of the forms that ethical conceptions of the individual may take, it is necessary to consider the philosophical foundations of these categories. The diversity of interpretations of good and evil in philosophy requires not so much a detailed description of each as the identification of universal types or vectors that determine how good and evil interact. These types provide a basis for understanding individual forms of ethical conceptions. It is important to emphasize that the objective of this study is not to establish a universal definition of good and evil, but rather to analyze how individuals perceive, interpret, and relate these categories to one another.

In other words, the focus lies in how individuals represent in their consciousness the interrelation between good and evil, while recognizing that the concepts of "good" and "evil" refer only to forms—potentially infinite in number (e.g., white–black, light– dark, etc.)—whose content is filled in uniquely by each individual. Nevertheless, as this

study aims to demonstrate, the ways these forms interact are governed by a limited number of stable systemic types.

To this end, we will turn to religious traditions in which ideas about the relationship between good and evil are expressed through stable normative system types. We will briefly describe the distinction between monotheistic and dualistic systems, as they establish fundamentally different axiological frameworks for the formation of ethical conceptions.

Next, within the context of psychological and psychotherapeutic approaches, we will examine how various schools and theoretical perspectives conceptualize ethical representations by incorporating them into their respective normative systems. Particular attention will be paid to those cases in which the notions of "good" and "evil" are not named directly (as previously noted, they are only variable forms), but instead manifest through other constructs or models.

Following this, we will turn to the analysis of characterological traits of personality, including such contemporary constructs as the dark and light triads. The chapter will conclude with the identification of stable types of ethical conceptions and a consideration of potential interrelations between ethical conceptions and characterological traits, as well as the formulation of prerequisites for the empirical investigation of this relationship.

1.1 The problem of ethical representations in philosophy

The problem of good and evil is one of the oldest topics in philosophy, permeating the history of human thought from early mythological representations to postmodern theories. It touches not only upon moral choice, but also upon more fundamental questions: how the world is structured, what the essence of the human being is, and whether a clear distinction between good and evil is possible. In this regard, the philosophical foundations of good and evil provide the framework for subsequent psychological interpretation, including in the context of individual ethical

stances. Below, we briefly outline several concepts and ideas proposed by various philosophers who have, in one way or another, addressed the theme of good and evil in human nature.

Ancient philosophy laid the groundwork for two opposing intuitions. The first is the view of good as a teleological aim: in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle asserts that all beings strive toward the good, and therefore, good is that which nature naturally seeks (Aristotle, 2021). The second is the understanding of evil as a consequence of ignorance: Socrates, Plato, and the Stoics believed that no one does evil knowingly, and that evil is the result of not knowing the good. This idea would be repeatedly revisited in the centuries to follow, especially within the Christian tradition.

Medieval philosophy introduced a transcendent dimension. For Augustine, evil is not a substance, but *privatio boni*—the absence of good. This metaphysical model removes responsibility from God for the presence of evil in the world, but it generates the paradox of free will: if evil is merely an absence, how can one account for real suffering, crime, and destruction? Thomas Aquinas clarifies that evil is a partial and necessary element of the overall order, without which there would be no testing, nor virtue (Aquinas, 2020).

With the onset of the modern era, philosophy adopted new emphases: rationality, the autonomy of the subject, and, at the same time, a crisis of metaphysical foundations. In *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Immanuel Kant speaks of radical evil as an innate human tendency to substitute the moral law with the maxim of egoism. However, he emphasizes that the human being is capable of overcoming this evil through the exercise of reason and moral duty (Kant, 2018). Here, evil takes on the status not of an ontological entity, but of an anthropological condition embedded in the structure of the subject—an idea that would become a critical starting point for subsequent philosophical and psychological thought.

With the development of the dialectical tradition, particularly in the philosophy of Hegel, the problem of good and evil ceases to be static. Good and evil become moments

in the self-development of Spirit. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit,* Hegel asserts that through negation, through conflict and rupture, Spirit advances to a higher stage of self-awareness. In this view, evil is not an error but a necessity: only through the dissolution of the whole can something new emerge (Hegel, 2020). This idea would later be taken up by existential philosophy, where evil is seen as a condition of existence, of experiencing ultimate situations and exercising freedom.

Friedrich Nietzsche radically reinterprets the moral dichotomy. He views traditional morality of good and evil as an expression of *ressentiment*—a form of weakness disguised as virtue. In *Beyond Good and Evil,* he contrasts master morality with slave morality, demonstrating that good and evil are not eternal essences but evaluations dependent on the will to power and historical circumstances. He writes: "In all European countries, and also in America, there is now something that abuses... a certain type of narrow, limited minds on a leash, who almost want the exact opposite of what we intend and feel instinctively... What they seek to attain at all costs is the common herd happiness of green pastures, along with security, safety, comfort, and ease of life for all... They even consider suffering something that must be eliminated. But we, who hold opposing views and have given careful and honest consideration to the matter—where and how the plant 'man' has most powerfully grown upwards—believe that this always occurred under the opposite conditions: that man's danger had to grow to monstrous proportions first. His ingenuity and dissimulation (his 'mind') had to develop under prolonged oppression and constraint to a point of subtlety and fearlessness, his will to live had to be raised to an unconditional will to power. We believe that harshness, violence, slavery, danger in the street and in the soul, secrecy, stoicism, the cunning of the seducer, and all forms of devilry—everything evil, terrible, tyrannical, predatory, and serpentine in man—contributed as much to the elevation of the human type as did its opposites" (Nietzsche, 2017, pp. 320–321).

The philosophical interpretation of the nature of evil as a necessary component of personal development—and, more broadly, of the growth of peoples and civilizations—is especially vivid in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, who radically rethinks the

traditional opposition between good and evil. In his works, evil is not presented as an external destructive principle but as a condition of growth, a form of tension necessary for the realization of human creative and spiritual potential. In one of his aphorisms, he writes:

"Take a close look at the best people, whose lives seem most fruitful and reflective; take note of the best nations and ask yourself: can a tree that is meant to grow proudly upward avoid storms and bad weather? Are not external adversities and all kinds of obstacles—such as hatred, jealousy, willfulness, distrust, cruelty, greed—precisely the favorable conditions without which no growth, no development is possible?" (Nietzsche, 2017, p. 53).

This idea illustrates a key principle in Nietzsche's philosophy: that suffering is not only inevitable but valuable, since it is precisely through suffering that individuality is formed. In another passage, he clarifies that the rejection of pain necessarily entails the suppression of the capacity for pleasure:

"If you want to minimize people's sensitivity to pain, you will also have to eliminate and suppress their capacity for enjoyment" (Nietzsche, 2017, p. 46).

This antinomy of suffering and pleasure—tightly interwoven—defines the paradoxical structure of human existence, where the attempt to eliminate evil may result in the atrophy of the capacity for good as an intense experience of meaning and wholeness. In such formulations, evil is not denied but recognized as an essential companion to existence—one that provokes development, resistance, and ultimately, moral and spiritual maturity.

It is interesting to compare this position with the earlier Renaissance reflections of Michel de Montaigne, who lived three centuries before Nietzsche (1533–1592), during the humanist era of the Renaissance. In his *Essays*, one can find a remarkably subtle and psychologically rich understanding of the dual nature of the human being. Like Nietzsche, Montaigne rejects moralistic condemnation of the "lower" aspects of the soul, affirming them as part of the subject's wholeness: "Among the functions of the

human soul, there are base ones; whoever does not see this side of it cannot claim to know it fully" (Montaigne, 2017, p. 271). This humanistic intent to embrace human nature in its fullness continues in his reflections on pain and suffering.

Similar to Nietzsche, Montaigne observes that a reduced sensitivity to pain is accompanied by a diminished capacity for joy: "If someone tells me that the advantage of a dulled and lowered sensitivity to pain and suffering is offset by the disadvantage of a less acute and less vivid perception of joy and pleasure, I would agree entirely; unfortunately, we are made in such a way that we are more concerned with avoiding suffering..." (Montaigne, 2017, p. 435). However, unlike Nietzsche's philosophy of overcoming, in which suffering serves as a catalyst for the will to power and creativity, Montaigne offers a more balanced position of acceptance: "Indeed, in eliminating the sensation of pain, one also eliminates the sensations of pleasure, and in the end, man ceases to be human. Such insensitivity is achieved at a great cost—at the price of a hardened soul and a numb body" (Montaigne, 2017, p. 436). Here, evil is understood not as a challenge to be transcended but as an inescapable element of human experience, to be lived with, not resisted in extremes. He summarizes: "I believe that to neglect all natural pleasures is just as wrong as to indulge in them too passionately... One should neither pursue them nor flee from them, but rather accept them" (Montaigne, 2017, p. 1016).

If for Nietzsche evil is to be welcomed and even consciously provoked, for Montaigne it is simply an element of existence: if it is present, that is well; if it is absent, that is also well. Yet Montaigne's second "well" derives from the will of God—reflecting the historical epoch in which he lived, in contrast to Nietzsche, who proclaimed the death of God. This attitude toward evil, understood here as temptation and passions, is well articulated by Montaigne in the following passage: "I think there is no doubt that it is better, by divine grace from above, to suppress temptations in the bud and thus prepare oneself for virtue by rooting out the very seeds of vice, than to give in to the first signs of bad passions and only later forcibly suppress their growth and struggle to overcome them; but I also believe that following this second path is better

than merely having a naturally mild and easy character that instinctively shuns vice and dissipation. For people of this third kind—innocent but not virtuous—do no evil, but they are also incapable of doing good" (Montaigne, 2017, p. 374).

Thus, while Montaigne acknowledges that innate virtue is an unquestionable good, he emphasizes that the inner struggle with the "germination of evil passions" is more valuable than the mere absence of such passions. This insight precisely articulates the subtle distinction between "rejecting evil" and "accepting evil": the latter requires activity, effort, and inner work, while the former may be no more than a passive status quo, which often conceals moral indifference.

As we will later see, this idea underpins an entire direction that emerges vividly in the twentieth century within humanistic psychology and psychotherapy—particularly in the works of Erich Fromm, who in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* analyzes many of the same passions. It is also noteworthy that nearly four centuries after the publication of *Essays*, a similar idea was expressed by the Russian philosopher Merab Konstantinovich Mamardashvili in his lecture series *Topology of the Psychological Path*. Mamardashvili draws attention precisely to this distinction between moral engagement and ethical neutrality when he states: "I told you that the fundamental psychological type of person to whom the world can reveal itself (not everyone can have the world revealed to them, even if they desire it) and for whom their own psychology unfolds along certain magnetic lines, is the engaged person. We have the engaged person, and by that very fact, we have dismissed the other type of person… Who, in Dante, is unworthy even of Hell? 'The ignoble dead.' The stirred-up dust. These are people who neither sinned nor did good. And good can only be done at one's own risk, at one's own expense. One must take risks, not merely participate in something collective. These are the indifferent ones, who are neither here nor there. And their fate is truly dreadful—they run naked, bitten by flies and wasps: 'Blood, mingled with tears, streamed down their faces, and loathsome swarms of worms licked it at their feet.' One of the most terrifying images. In Hell, at least, there is a specific punishment. But here, there is none, and as Dante writes: 'This

is the miserable fate of those souls who lived without disgrace and without praise… And death itself cannot reach them, and this life is so intolerable that anything else would be easier for them. Their memory on earth is erased.' We will never even know of them. 'Justice and mercy alike disdain them. They are not worth speaking of: look— and pass on.'"

A close analysis of the philosophical positions of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, Nietzsche, Montaigne, and Mamardashvili—formulated across different historical epochs—already allows us to outline a number of shared foundations on the basis of which recurring types of ethical conceptions may be identified. Nevertheless, we will deliberately postpone a more detailed discussion of these structures to a later stage, where a systematization of types of ethical conceptions will be proposed. For now, within the present section, we will focus on analyzing several additional philosophical approaches to the role of evil in the ethical context.

In contrast to the humanistic line of accepting evil through personal effort and internal integration, we find the political-philosophical stance of Niccolò Machiavelli, which articulates a different perspective. In *The Prince*, he writes: "A man who wishes to act entirely in accordance with virtue is soon destroyed among so many who are not virtuous. Therefore, a ruler who wishes to maintain his position must learn how not to be good and how to use this knowledge as necessary" (Machiavelli, 2014, p. 57). This aphorism clearly expresses the conviction that moral purity is impossible in an environment permeated by destructive impulses. Unlike Montaigne, Machiavelli does not seek psychological integration of good and evil, but instead proposes strategic ambivalence: the necessity of mastering evil as a tool for survival. His idea is closer to the realist tradition, in which morality is not denied but subordinated to a higher priority—the preservation of the subject's integrity (or power), even at the cost of ethical compromise. Against Montaigne's ideal of inner harmony, Machiavellian ethics reveals the limits of humanistic tolerance, reminding us that reality demands not so much elevated agreement as the ability to engage in the inevitable play of contradictions. In this sense, despite their different emphases, both positions highlight

the inherent duality of human existence and the need to acknowledge it as the foundation for a mature approach to good and evil.

Thus, the historical shift between Montaigne's 16th-century philosophy and Nietzsche's 19th-century thought is expressed in the differing degrees of radicalism: from moderate humanism of acceptance to a provocative will to transcendence. Nonetheless, both thinkers converge on the idea that evil is not only an ontological reality but also an existential challenge that shapes the moral and emotional fabric of human subjectivity. These ideas are essential to understanding how conceptions of good and evil have evolved in the history of philosophy—from metaphysical essences to psychologically complex and internally contradictory phenomena.

In the 20th century, the theme of evil took on a tragic dimension, becoming central to the moral collapse of modern European civilization. The Holocaust, Hiroshima, the Gulag, and unprecedented forms of depersonalized violence called into question the familiar metaphysical and ethical foundations of good and evil. Whereas in earlier philosophical systems evil was interpreted through categories such as guilt, vice, tragedy, or the Fall, after the events of the 20th century it began to be perceived as something banal and embedded in the anonymous mechanisms of social order. Hannah Arendt, analyzing the trial of Adolf Eichmann, formulated the concept of the *banality of evil*, by which she meant the loss of the subject's capacity for moral judgment: evil is committed not by monsters, but by "ordinary" individuals who have lost the ability to reflect and engage in inner dialogue (Arendt, 1963).

One of the most radical continuations of this line of thought is found in Jean Baudrillard's *The Transparency of Evil* (Baudrillard, 2021), where he argues that modernity has destroyed the very possibility of the dialectic between good and evil, replacing it with simulacra that have lost substantive coherence. In the postmodern world, according to Baudrillard, evil does not disappear but transforms into something else—a "cursed side" of things, a structure that defies evaluation or redemption. His critique of morality, rooted in the deconstruction of binary oppositions, leads to a state in which "good" and "evil" become autonomous, hypertrophied, and incapable of

engaging in dialogue. "Good, deprived of a dialectical relationship with evil, becomes obsessive and dangerous: any structure that expels its negative side condemns itself to catastrophe" (Baudrillard, 2021, p. 157).

One of Baudrillard's central metaphors is the idea of the *cursed side of things*—an irreducible, rejected aspect that returns in the form of crisis, catastrophe, or disintegration. He writes: "Every distinction between good and evil becomes meaningful only at the very edge of our rational model… beyond which lies the indivisibility of good and evil… this, in essence, is the theorem of the cursed side of things" (Baudrillard, 2021, p. 157). This is not merely a philosophical image—it is a statement about the impossibility of preserving moral integrity in conditions where systems (ethical, political, biological) strive for absolute positivity, excluding conflict, and thereby generate their own demise. He emphasizes: "There is one terrifying consequence of continuous positive production… when elevated to the level of hyperbole, it gives rise to catastrophe…" (ibid., p. 157).

Much like a biological body deprived of an immune response, a society that has entirely expelled evil as a category becomes vulnerable to metastases that arise precisely due to the system's sterility. The analogy drawn here concerns the role of the immune system, which exists only by virtue of the presence of foreign bodies within the organism. It is, in a sense, trained by destroying them, and it is effective precisely because it is active. In this context, evil is understood as a foreign body, but it is precisely this foreign element that stimulates immunity—that is, our ethical conception—to function. Without evil, the internal coordinate system would resemble a sterile environment—so clean that there would be no need for immunity. This is dangerous for the human being precisely because the human is an open system and, by nature, is meant to interact.

Baudrillard formulates this with unsettling clarity: "Everything that expels the cursed side of its essence signs its own death sentence" (ibid., p. 158). In this context, evil does not merely exist—it is necessary as a condition of balance, as an antagonistic element without which neither the individual nor culture can remain viable.

The principle of evil, according to Baudrillard, is radically autonomous and cannot be reduced to moral condemnation. "The principle of Evil is devoid of morality; it is the principle of disequilibrium and mental disturbance, the principle of complexity and strangeness, the principle of seduction…" (ibid., p. 158). It is set in contrast to good, which is conceived as an artificial construct striving for order and harmony at any cost—and thus ultimately doomed to collapse. "The illusion that Good can be separated from Evil… is simply absurd" (ibid., p. 163), Baudrillard asserts, dismantling the final remnants of the rationalist hope for a morally ordered world.

Perhaps Baudrillard's most somber and simultaneously precise thesis is this: "Evil… lies in the denial of this dialectic, in the radical disconnection of Good and Evil… Evil thereby becomes the dominant force" (ibid., p. 205). This conclusion is not only deeply pessimistic but also raises an important question regarding the possibility of ethical existence under conditions of moral relativism. It demands from psychological science—including ethical psychology—a new perspective on the phenomena of moral judgment and ethical choice. If contemporary culture, as some authors suggest, erases the distinction between good and evil or replaces them with "simulacra," then the task of psychology is not so much to restore former moral codes, but to reconstruct the subject's capacity for inner dialectics—the capacity to sustain contradiction without reducing it to binary evaluations.

Contemporary philosophy and post-structuralism reinforce the relativization of the concept of evil. In a pluralistic world where universal values are in doubt, evil appears as an irreducible dimension of human freedom. Jean-Luc Nancy, Slavoj Žižek, Giorgio Agamben, and others have raised the question not so much of the essence of evil as of the possibility of ethics *after* evil—after catastrophe (Nancy, 1991; Nancy, 2024; Žižek, 1999; Žižek, 2003; Agamben, 2020; Agamben, 2022). In these frameworks, evil is not subject to ultimate elimination—it is a constant companion of human existence.

In this context, it becomes especially important to distinguish between dualistic and dialectical understandings of good and evil. Dualism presupposes a strict

separation: good excludes evil. Dialectics, by contrast, sees evil as necessary for the comprehension of good—as intrinsically tied to processes of development, self-awareness, and transformation. These philosophical foundations are directly relevant to the psychological analysis of ethical stances, since individuals' value orientations often inherit one of these paradigms. As demonstrated in the empirical chapters, differences among respondent clusters are revealed, in particular, in whether individuals are inclined toward rigid separation of good and evil or toward their mutual integration.

Contemporary moral philosophy, as represented by authors such as Charles Taylor (Taylor, 1989), Alasdair MacIntyre (MacIntyre, 1981), and Jonathan Haidt (Haidt, 2012), seeks to return good and evil to the context of "moral sources" and cultural narratives. Taylor emphasizes the importance of moral horizons within which individuals interpret their behavior and their belonging to a community (Laitinen, 2014). MacIntyre argues that without a shared tradition connecting us to the past, morality loses its strength and becomes fragmented—a point illustrated in his analysis of emotivism and his critical retrospective of the post-Enlightenment era (Mutlu, 2016). Haidt, in turn, highlights the role of intuition, collective moral sentiments, and culturally embedded "moral foundations," stressing that rationality often serves to justify preexisting emotional responses (Haidt, 2001).

Additionally, the contemporary discussion includes T. M. Scanlon, who advances a contractualist approach grounded in mutual recognition among rational agents (Scanlon, 2008), and G. E. M. Anscombe, who, in her now-classic essay *Modern Moral Philosophy*, argues that modern moral terminology—rooted in concepts such as "ought" and "duty"—has lost its meaning outside a religious or metaphysical framework, and therefore requires not only philosophical but also psychological reconsideration (Anscombe, 2020).

Despite the diversity of perspectives, only a small fraction of which has been addressed in this section, philosophical thought from antiquity to the present day reveals a conceptual trajectory in the understanding of the ethical. From Aristotle's teleological view of the good, according to which all beings naturally strive toward the good as their

inherent end, to Socrates' and Plato's notion of evil as the result of ignorance, to Thomas Scanlon's contemporary contractualism, which defines morality as a system of obligations among rational agents based on principles that no one could reasonably reject—all of these conceptions may be interpreted as models of ethical conceptions of the individual.

Philosophy, therefore, enables the identification of recurring implicit schemas and models through which individuals conceptualize the categories of good and evil. These structures—despite differences in terminology and emphasis—can be regarded as various forms of ethical conceptions: that is, as stable modes of experiencing, interpreting, and relating to ethically significant phenomena. In this sense, philosophical theories serve as a valuable preliminary resource for the subsequent analysis of religious and psychological frameworks.

Philosophical analysis, in most cases, only briefly touches upon religious narratives and mythological systems. Therefore, in the next section of this work, we will briefly but purposefully turn to the religious perspective, examining how the Christian tradition constructs the categories of good and evil through the lenses of sin, redemption, and the sacred—before proceeding to the analysis of contemporary psychological approaches.

1.2 Ethical representations of good and evil in world religions

Moving to the religious perspective, it is important to emphasize that the analysis of the categories of good and evil requires turning to religious traditions rooted both in Western European culture and in the Eastern Christian context. At the same time, it is useful to consider how these categories are interpreted in other religious and philosophical systems as well. For example: From the perspective of the Vedas, the soul is inherently contradictory. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, this quality of the soul is called *achintya* ("inconceivable"). Confucian thinkers regarded the true essence of the human being as *ren* (humaneness), the genuinely human principle of goodness. Self-perfection was understood as self-cultivation, the development of the "humane" principle (the

bearer of high moral and psychological qualities) and the suppression of the "wild," "evil" aspect within oneself. In Slavic mythology, Belobog and Chernobog appear as archetypes of creative and destructive forces: the former symbolizes order, light, and creation, while the latter embodies darkness, chaos, and evil (Shnirelman, 1999).

The various religious and philosophical systems that have developed over millennia in different regions of the world possess extensive corpora of texts and teachings in which the categories of good and evil are thoroughly examined. Although a comprehensive review of all traditions is impossible within a single study, it seems sufficient to highlight several key examples that reflect the complexity and multidimensionality of these concepts.

This multidimensionality of the understanding of good and evil also finds expression in modern humanistic interpretations. In particular, the Israeli historian Yuval Noah Harari—one of the most influential intellectuals of the 21st century—in his work *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* does not address the metaphysics of the categories of good and evil themselves, but rather how humanity perceives these notions within various worldview systems.

Harari identifies two fundamentally different perspectives on the "struggle between good and evil" (Harari, 2016). Dualism, according to his analysis, represents the world as an arena of confrontation between good and evil—two independent principles, each possessing its own power and autonomy. Such a view, in the author's words, "provides a simple and convincing answer" to the problem of evil: suffering and misfortune occur not because God permits evil, but because there exists an evil force in the world that does not submit to God. Dualism thereby resolves the logical contradiction faced by monotheists: if God is omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent, how can He allow evil?

Monotheistic traditions—primarily Christianity, Islam, and Judaism—are compelled to turn to complex concepts such as free will, which explains the existence of moral choice but introduces new philosophical difficulties. If God knows from the

beginning that a person will use free will for evil, why does He create them and condemn them to eternal suffering? Despite the asserted doctrinal unity and omnipotence of God, a significant number of believing Christians, Muslims, and Jews in practice acknowledge the existence of a powerful evil force capable of acting independently of the Creator's will. Thus, in Christianity, the devil or Satan is depicted as a figure endowed with freedom, opposing God and fighting for human souls. This idea, in fact, enters into logical contradiction with the foundations of strict monotheism, presupposing, in essence, a dual-centered ontology in which God is not the sole source of influence.

Harari concludes that humans are capable of reconciling the irreconcilable—coexisting with internally contradictory concepts without noticing their logical inconsistency (Harari, 2016). These tensions in the religious worldview are especially evident within the Christian tradition, where the question of the origin and essence of evil receives particular dogmatic and moral elaboration. Here, the understanding of evil is closely tied to the notion of sin—a central category of Christian anthropology and morality.

The Christian tradition regards sin primarily as a violation of divine will and law. In Christian ethics, sin is defined as the conscious disobedience of God's commandments—a kind of "rebellion" of human nature against the Creator (Orthodox Encyclopedia, 2006; Catechism, 2018). Theological study of sin (*hamartiology*) emphasizes that sin is not only an individual act but also a state of the soul conditioned by original sin, inherited from Adam, through which the human being is in a constant inclination toward evil (Veltistov, 2013).

The doctrine of original sin dates back to the works of Augustine of Hippo (4th–5th centuries), who defined it as an inherited state of "sinful contamination" and the corruption of human nature (Moiseeva, 2015). According to Catholic teaching, original sin led to the loss of the state of "original righteousness"—and although through Baptism a person is freed from guilt, the inclination toward evil remains (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2003).

Thomas Aquinas, in the *Summa Theologica*, specified that sin is a turning away from God toward created objects as a result of disordered passion and self-love. He distinguished between mortal and venial sins: mortal sin destroyed the spiritual life in a person, whereas venial sins weakened it, much like an illness (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2020; Catechism, 2018). Within the religious tradition, especially in Christianity, evil is thus interpreted primarily as the consequence of sin—a free but erroneous choice that distances the person from God.

However, despite the integrity of this dogmatic system, many questions remain open: from the ontological nature of evil to the motivation of morally "evil" behavior. Increasingly, answers are sought not only within theology but also within the humanities, above all psychology. Already in the 20th century, many psychologists and philosophers, including Erich Fromm, critically reexamined religious and metaphysical explanations of evil, aiming to reveal it as an inner structure of personality, a socially conditioned and psychologically motivated phenomenon. Thus, Aquinas's view of sin as a "turning away from God" was reinterpreted by Fromm, who suggested considering evil not as a mystical or metaphysical essence but as the result of alienation, destructive drives, and the loss of connection with one's authentic vitality (Fromm, 1941).

The next step of our analysis is to examine psychological approaches to the typologization of ethical representations. Our interest lies in how different frameworks—from cognitive-developmental to cultural-normative—describe the types of ethical representations of personality, and whether on this basis it is possible to identify stable forms or types of ethical representations.

1.3 Ethical Typology of Personality and Moral Regulation of Behavior: From Classical Approaches to the Russian Psychological Tradition

The preceding analysis of the philosophical and religious foundations of the categories of good and evil has shown that the relationship between good and evil is conceptualized through a limited number of stable models. The next step is to review psychological approaches to the typologization of an individual's ethical consciousness.

In other words, how science distinguishes between types of moral thinking and moral consciousness through which the personality interprets the world. This section presents an overview of theories of moral development and ethical typologies of personality, including Lawrence Kohlberg's classical theories, their critical analysis and alternative approaches (including those of contemporary Russian and international scholars), as well as specific studies on the problem of typologizing ethical consciousness. On the basis of this analysis, a division of ethical representations into two main types will be substantiated.

One of the first psychological attempts to typologize moral consciousness was Jean Piaget's theory, which described two qualitatively different types of moral reasoning in children. Piaget found that children's moral judgments undergo a transition from heteronomous morality (Piaget, 1932; Meifang, 2025). In other words, Piaget proposed distinguishing between two basic forms of moral consciousness: an early heteronomous type—in which good and evil are perceived as externally imposed absolute commands (for example, the will of parents or God's law)—and a later autonomous type, in which children (around 9–10 years and older) begin to evaluate intentions and consequences themselves, recognizing the relativity of rules and the importance of internal principles of justice (Piaget, 1932; Katashev & Linkov, 2016).

This basic dichotomy (external, heteronomous morality vs. internal, autonomous morality) became the foundation for subsequent typologies. In philosophical ethics, it corresponds to the division between heteronomous and autonomous ethical conceptions: the former derive the moral law from an external source (e.g., God), while the latter regard the human being as the author of moral norms (Kretchmar, 2024). Heteronomous ethics thus includes, in particular, religious systems in which God embodies the Good and imposes commandments upon the human being, whereas autonomous (secular) ethics is grounded in the independent rational choice of moral principles (Kretchmar, 2024).

The most influential psychological theory that continued Piaget's line was developed by Lawrence Kohlberg. Kohlberg proposed a cognitive-developmental model

of stages of moral development, which in fact functions as a typology of moral reasoning by levels of maturity. According to Kohlberg, a person's ability to reason (including about good and evil) passes through six sequential stages grouped into three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. It is important to emphasize that Kohlberg conceptualized typologies of moral reasoning specifically in terms of developmental stages, rather than fixed personality categories. Nevertheless, his levels can also be interpreted as relatively stable types of ethical consciousness. For example, a person of the conventional type thinks in terms of group norms and authority, whereas a person of the post-conventional type reasons in terms of personal principles and ideals of conscience.

Moreover, Kohlberg suggested the possibility of a stage that transcends the post-conventional level. In his later works, he admitted the hypothetical Stage 7—"transcendental ethics" or "morality of cosmic orientation"—which links moral reasoning to a religious-philosophical worldview (Conn, 1981). This step reflected Kohlberg's attempt to move beyond secular conventionality and acknowledge yet another type of moral consciousness—one based on spiritual values and existential orientations.

Kohlberg considered his stage typology to be universal across cultures, but these claims provoked significant debate. In addition to gender-based critique (Gilligan, 1982; Snarey, 1985), Kohlberg's theory faced other challenges. One major concern was the gap between moral judgment and moral action. Kohlberg described how people think about good and evil, but did not guarantee that higher-level reasoning would translate into behavior (Rest et al., 2020). He assumed that at higher stages, behavior would align more closely with principles (due to internal moral standards), and some empirical evidence supported this—for instance, students with post-conventional reasoning were more likely to participate in value-driven protests. Yet overall, actual behavior often diverged from declared moral beliefs (Rest et al., 2020).

This prompted alternative approaches that accounted for situational and personality factors. As early as the 1920s, the studies of Hartshorne and May showed

that children's honesty was inconsistent and more dependent on the situation than on stable moral dispositions (Hartshorne & May, 1928).

Continuing along this line, the American psychologist Donelson Forsyth proposed an approach to the typology of moral consciousness through the lens of individual moral philosophy, rather than solely stages of development. Forsyth (1980) identified two basic dimensions of personal ethical orientation: (1) idealism—the degree of adherence to the principle of avoiding harm to others, and (2) relativism—the degree of rejection of universal moral rules. The combination of these axes yielded four types of personal ethical ideologies (Forsyth, 1980). This taxonomy of ethical ideologies has become popular in applied research (e.g., in business ethics, cross-cultural value comparisons, etc.). Notably, this model has recently been developed within Russian scholarship as well: the Ethical Position Questionnaire (EPQ) was adapted into Russian, which made it possible to study the distribution of these four types in Russian samples (Fedorov & Badiev, 2018). However, we did not employ Forsyth's EPQ in our study, since his model is limited to the dichotomy of "idealism–relativism" and does not capture the key aspects at the center of our research—namely, individual ethical representations of the relationship between good and evil and their correlation with characterological traits of personality.

Another significant turn in moral psychology is associated with the inclusion of emotional-intuitive and cultural factors. As modern scholars note, Piaget and Kohlberg conceptualized moral development in an overly "rationalistic" manner, focusing on the logic of judgments about justice. Jonathan Haidt and colleagues proposed the Moral Foundations Theory as a meta-typology of key value dimensions. Initially, five universal "foundations" of morality were identified: (1) care/harm, (2) fairness/reciprocity, (3) loyalty/in-group, (4) authority/respect, and (5) sanctity/purity (Haidt & Graham, 2007; Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009).

In contrast, anthropologists and cultural psychologists have demonstrated that values of good and evil are diverse and culturally embedded. Thus, Jensen, based on

field studies, concluded that different cultures construct morality around three "ethics": the ethic of autonomy (focused on individual rights and justice), the ethic of community (emphasizing duties to family and group, respect for hierarchy), and the ethic of divinity (Jensen, 2011). These findings enrich the typology of ethical consciousness: beyond individual developmental stages, there exist culturally normative types of morality. Representatives of different cultures thus demonstrate distinct moral mentalities.

Social-cognitive approaches are also noteworthy. For example, domain theory (Killen & Smetana, 2006; Smetana, 2006) proposes that people distinguish between the moral and the conventional domains: some situations are evaluated in terms of justice and harm (universal moral principles), while others are seen as conventions or matters of personal choice. Here, too, one can observe distinctive types: individuals vary in how broadly they extend moral criteria (Turiel, 1983).

In Russian psychological and philosophical scholarship, the problem of ethical typology of personality has also been explored. Already during the Soviet period, an attempt was made to specifically analyze which types of moral consciousness can be distinguished. In F. I. Dumitraş's dissertation *The Problem of Ethical Typology of Personality* (Dumitraş, 1981), the task was set to theoretically justify the principles of classifying types of moral personality. Its emergence indicated the pressing need to systematize knowledge about different moral orientations of personality in the context of Marxist-Leninist ethics and the general personality theory of the time.

This line of research continued into the post-Soviet period. In the 1990s, S. P. Paramonova undertook a sociological study of types of moral consciousness. She proposed and empirically tested specific typologies. In particular, Paramonova distinguished several stable socio-ethical types of personality differing in value orientation and style of moral behavior, and worked on validating these types within empirical samples (Paramonova, 1999).

In contemporary Russian psychology, the components and structures of moral (ethical) consciousness are also studied. A criterion of the formation of ethical thinking

may be considered the ability to resolve moral contradictions (Levichev, 2010). As the field of moral psychology expanded, the need arose to conceptualize a broader category—not only moral attitudes but also the very ethical coordinates within which personality exists and develops.

The transition toward a more holistic understanding of these coordinates was associated with the introduction of the concept of moral psychology, proposed by B. S. Bratus in 1997, who noted: "moral psychology, apparently, is postulated here for the first time" (Bratus, 1997, p. 3). Within the framework of actively developing research in moral psychology, a new field emerged—ethical psychology (Popov, Golubeva et al., 2008), whose subject is the sphere of ethical representations that perform the functions of moral relations of personality and behavioral guidelines, including categories such as good, evil, freedom, responsibility, duty, justice, and conscience. The central place in this relatively new and extremely important area of psychological science is occupied by the categories of good and evil.

Over thousands of years of human history, libraries have been written on the essence of good and evil. The problem of good and evil, of the criteria of virtue and vice, traditionally holds the foremost place among the core problems of the philosophical discipline of ethics. The approach to its resolution determines how questions of the meaning of life and human purpose, free will, moral obligation, and its reconciliation with the natural desire for happiness are posed. The question of personality typology, as raised in ethical psychology (Popov, Golubeva et al., 2008), also presupposes seeking solutions in light of this problem.

Research by Russian psychologists and philosophers devoted to the moral regulation of behavior covers a wide range of topics: from the analysis of representations of the moral ideal and conscience in the Russian mentality to the study of spiritual abilities, the moral self-determination of youth, and economic behavior. These studies demonstrate that the formation of personal morality is associated with conscience, the moral ideal, spiritual self-knowledge, and socio-economic factors

(Zhuravlev & Kupreichenko, 2003; Volovikova, 2005; Gostev & Borisova, 2012; Kupreichenko & Vorobyeva, 2013; Kupreichenko, 2014).

This line is complemented by works devoted to the moral determination of economic self-identity, spiritual abilities, subjective experience and spiritual personality, as well as interdisciplinary studies of consciousness and evil, which emphasize the necessity of synthesizing ethics and psychology for understanding the dialectic of good and evil and the development of the human moral-spiritual sphere (Zhuravlev, 2019; Volovikova & Mustafina, 2016; Ozhiganova, 2016; Arutyunova & Alexandrov, 2019; Ozhiganova, 2020).

Special attention to these issues has also been evident in international academic discourse. Mijuskovic's (2023) monograph on theories of consciousness and the problem of evil immediately entered the sphere of academic debate, as confirmed by Michael D. Bobo's review published in 2024 in *Philosophy in Review* (Bobo, 2024).

The categories of good and evil are the subject of ethical psychology and at the same time, by their significance, extend beyond this narrowly understood field, especially in the part that concerns the dialectic or struggle of good and evil within the human being as a moment largely determining the place of personality within the space of ethical coordinates and moral orientations of society. I. S. Kon emphasized the significance of personality formation, which he equated with choosing oneself, and the development of moral consciousness, grounded in the presence of two polar standards embodying in concrete form the notions of good and evil (Kon, 1984). B. S. Bratus was even more explicit: "Personality is an instrument for distinguishing between good and evil."

The direct inclusion of the problem of "moral coordinates" in the subject field of psychology leaves no doubt, which determines the relevance of developing the domain of ethical psychology (Popov, Golubeva et al., 2008). The need to develop the broader problem of personality jointly between ethics and psychology was substantiated by B. S. Bratus in his 1985 monograph: "If, without drawing on the data of specific

psychology, ethics begins to consider its problems detached from personality, or impersonally, then without taking into account ethical elaborations, specific psychological research on personality loses its humanistic worldview orientation, and moreover its ultimate universal human meaning and purpose, for the psychology of personality exists not for its own sake, but in its purpose and justification is called to serve human spiritual growth and development, the realization in the human being of ideals of goodness, justice, honesty, that is, those very ideals whose elaboration and comprehension are the focus of effort by philosophers of ethics" (Bratus, 1985, p. 8). The growth of research within this discipline, in our view, urgently requires its development as an interdisciplinary field at the intersection of ethics and psychology (Apresyan, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c; Prokofiev, 2021), which, in our opinion, will promote the mutual enrichment of the two disciplines and give the study of moral problems in today's changing and multicultural world the necessary impulse for development (Kolhonen, Mironenko, 2025a; Kolhonen, Mironenko, 2025b).

In ethics and theology, there is the following dual interpretation of the relationship between the categories of good and evil:

a) good and evil are considered autonomous forces engaged in an eternal struggle for the right to rule the world. Such a system of views in theology is called dualism. Thus, in Christianity, evil is fundamentally historical. It arose not by the will of God and has a beginning. It will be defeated by the will of God and will have an end. The Christian dogma states that the end of times is coming, evil will be overcome, and the general resurrection of the dead will be accompanied by the Last Judgment; b) according to the dogmas of some other religions, evil is not seen as a relatively independent historical force but rather as the absence of good, a negative characteristic of existence in our world. Judaism views evil in this way. The same perspective is characteristic of many Christian scholastic thinkers. In Judaism, the meaning of history is not in the end of times but in the transformation of the "material world" according to divine laws, for the completion of which the Jews await the Messiah.

They proceed from different metaphysical and axiological premises but invariably return to the same key question: how are good and evil related—as two independent forces or as interconnected elements of a single process of personality development?

It is precisely this opposition that becomes the basis for the typology we propose. As we have shown above, regardless of the specific images with which the notions of good and evil are filled (whether light and darkness, purity and impurity, freedom and subjugation), the personality in its ethical representation tends to interpret their interaction in one of two forms:

1. The first type of representation, in which good and evil are seen as antagonistic forces, where the growth of one leads to the diminution of the other. This is a zero-sum conception: more good—less evil, and vice versa.

2. The dialectical type of representation, according to which good and evil cannot exist without one another; they are two sides of a single process, and their interaction is not mutual annihilation but a tense co-existence capable of generating development and inner work.

Consequently, our typology is based not on substantive (emotionally or culturally colored) representations of good and evil, and not on their form or content, but on the structural ways of correlating them in the ordinary representations of personality. In this sense, it continues and generalizes those lines of analysis presented in sections 1.1 and 1.2. We believe that the proposed division into types constitutes a universal matrix through which both philosophical and religious as well as individual-psychological forms of ethical representation can be interpreted.

In the next section we will turn to the analysis of psychological concepts such as existential, humanistic, and Jungian psychology, in order to identify how these two types of ethical representations are manifested or implicitly represented within them.

1.4 The Jungian Perspective on Good and Evil

Carl Gustav Jung, one of the founders of analytical psychology, developed the idea of the internal conflict between good and evil as an archetypal and energetically charged structure permeating the human psyche (Jung, 1967; Jung, 1972; Jung, 2023). In his conception, opposites are not defects or anomalies but the basic conditions of personality's existence. In this context, the phenomenon of the Shadow acquires particular significance—the sum of repressed, rejected, and unaccepted aspects of the Self that nevertheless continue to influence behavior and shape the structure of the unconscious (Bolea, 2016; Casement, 2003; Bolea, 2020). Thus, already in the fundamental premises of analytical psychology lies the idea of the irreducibility of the conflict between good and evil as the driving force of psychic development.

Jung emphasized that the conflict between good and evil, between the conscious and the unconscious, does not represent an anomaly but the condition of psychic movement. He wrote: "The conflict between two dimensions of consciousness represents simply the expression of the polar structure of our psyche, which, like any other energy system, depends on the tension between opposites" (Jung, 2019, p. 324). This energetic model of consciousness, according to Jung, is close to the physical understanding of movement—energy is born of tension and polarity, not of harmony. This idea develops further in his reflections on the nature of psychic energy.

In another passage, Jung specifies: "My idea of psychic energy is also based on the conception of a contradictory picture of the world, in which energy must arise from the interaction of opposites, similar to the energy of a physical phenomenon, which presupposes the existence of opposites such as hot–cold, high–low, etc." (Jung, 2019, p. 65). Thus, psychic development is, on the one hand, a movement toward the resolution of conflict, but on the other hand, and at a deeper level—which appears to be uniquely human—it is the capacity to sustain tension that allows consciousness to evolve. Importantly, Jung does not limit himself to the structural description of conflict but

stresses its affective nature. He insisted that emotional involvement in conflict is the key to the transition from the unconscious to the conscious (Jung, 1970; Hopwood, 2015).

He calls emotional response to conflict the decisive condition of development, which, like fire, simultaneously destroys and illuminates: "To fan the flames of conflict is a Luciferian virtue in the truest sense of the word. Conflict engenders fire, the fire of affects and emotions, and, like any other fire, it has two aspects: it burns and at the same time it gives light... For emotions are the chief source of consciousness. There is no change from darkness to light or from inertia to movement without emotion" (Jung, 2019, p. 119). This statement reflects a philosophy of development not through the elimination of evil, but through its awareness and transformation.

At the same time, Jung does not deny the risks: "Experiences of this kind are not without danger, for they are, among other things, the matrix of psychoses" (Jung, 2019, p. 421). Confrontation with the Shadow, contact with evil within oneself, requires maturity; otherwise, it may not lead to growth but instead to the disintegration of personality. Therefore, the path of individuation, according to Jung, presupposes not the expansion of light but inner work on the integration of darkness. Already at the very beginning of his work Jung warned against a naïve morality that seeks to absolutize the good, forgetting that everything elevated is born of contrast: "Our horror of Freud's insights arises solely from our barbarous or childish naïveté, which still does not know that the upper always implies the lower and that 'les extrêmes se touchent' is the absolute truth. It would be wrong, however, to assume that what is bright ceases to exist once it is explained by the shadow side... Without light there is no shadow, without good there is no evil, and vice versa" (Jung, 2019, p. 21). Jung concludes this thought with a metaphor of the soul's mobility: "Without this iridescent mobility of the soul, man would perish, surrendering to his greatest passion—laziness" (Jung, 2019, p. 35).

This formulation strongly resonates with the image offered by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in the prologue to the tragedy Faust. There God, addressing Mephistopheles, says: "Of all the spirits of denial, you cause me least fatigue, rogue and

jester... Out of sloth man lapses into slumber. Go, stir his stagnation, vex him, trouble him, and irritate him with your restlessness" (Goethe, 2017, p. 23).

Thus, Jung's idea of laziness as the true vice acquires additional cultural depth in dialogue with the poetic tradition. Goethe, like Jung, regarded movement, struggle, and inner conflict as indispensable components of both the spiritual path and ethical formation (Bishop, 1999; Jung, 2020). The conflict with the Shadow in Jung is analogous to the disturbing presence of Mephistopheles in Goethe—it is not evil as an absolute, but an opposing force pushing the human being toward growth, consciousness, and activity (Luschei, 2009; Ungar Sargon, 2025). For both thinkers, evil is a driving force (Bishop, 2011). Life as dynamics, consciousness as the play of light and shadow, development as the dialectic of opposites—such is the essence of the Jungian conception of the conflict between good and evil (Smythe, 2013; Watson, 2023).

These reflections find resonance not only in Jungian psychotherapy but also, as we have previously seen, in the philosophical tradition, and as we will later show, in a number of humanistic approaches, for example, in the works of Erich Fromm. To this line we shall return in the following section.

Already in the prologue to Faust, Goethe, through the words of God, assigns Mephistopheles the role of a force that personifies evil; however, this evil sets man in motion, stirring him to activity and overcoming. This irresolvable inner tension, this "fever" of opposition, becomes, in essence, an instrument of formation (Goethe, 1808). And in the finale of the tragedy Faust declares: "Only he who has experienced the struggle for life has earned life and freedom." Here lies a powerful dialectical thesis: it is precisely evil, obstacle, and suffering that turn out to be the matter through which, in the process of overcoming, a person becomes himself. Thus, we have before us one of the clearest examples of the dialectical type of ethical representations of the relationship between good and evil—representations in which evil is not denied but included in the structure of development as a challenge necessary for the formation of personality and its inner work. This model is extremely valuable for ethical psychology, as it allows not only to diagnose the moral crises of personality but also to accompany it on the path of

integration, using evil itself as a source of virtue. Within psychotherapy, such a position can serve as support and guidance, granting "evil" (a form filled with specific content) the status of a resource and a "gift," thereby enabling its use, opening space for inner work and conscious becoming instead of self-denigration, which is offered by reductionist moral schemes.

Another prominent representative of Jungian psychology is James Hollis. In his book Why Good People Do Bad Things: Understanding Our Darker Selves, he turns to the cultural paradox of the twentieth century: "How could it happen that the culture which gave the world Goethe and Beethoven produced such swine as Goebbels and Himmler? How could the elevated culture that gave birth to Faust become the stage of such a decline into the dark degradation of the human spirit?" (Hollis, 2017, pp. 171–172). Hollis raises the question of the tragic rupture between the individual and the cultural Shadow—an archetypal principle that cannot be eliminated without the loss of genuine subjectivity. His analysis points to the illusory nature of progressivist expectations: science, art, and moral systems in themselves do not make a person ethically mature. "Our venerable institutions do not protect us from ourselves and from thousands of small bargains with our values. What a disappointment to learn that our great religions do not save us from ourselves! Our achievements in science, art, and the humanities do not make us special. Our 'progress' will not come to our rescue. As George Steiner reminds us, in the laboratory of modernism we failed the experiment: 'We know that some of those who invented Auschwitz and ran it were once taught to read Shakespeare and Goethe, and they continued to read them afterward'" (Hollis, 2017, p. 201).

The key metaphor for Hollis—Faust as bearer of both light and Shadow (as also for Jung)—enables a deeper comprehension of the inner tension of moral subjectivity: "And yet Faust is not devoid of nobility in his aspirations. He wishes to know everything, he is enchanted by the temptations of witches and the seductions of power. He is also the best among us, our hero complex. He is with those who contemplate the riddles of quantum physics, the human genome, the subatomic universe, striving to

expand the creative horizons of art and to finally overcome poverty. But, without realizing it, in destroying a harmful insect, he pollutes the environment; in opening the age of jet aviation, he spreads AIDS to all regions of the world; in splitting the atom, he brings the nuclear nightmare to the blind people of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Chernobyl and disperses strontium through the air across all borders, forever settling in the bone marrow. Where there is light, there is always Shadow. Faust is the best, the most representative of our Selves. He is heroic, unconscious, well-intentioned, and dangerous. He is the embodiment of light, aspiration, success, heroic defiance of limitation, and at the same time the source of so much of our suffering. Like his brother Hamlet, indecisive and torn by inner doubts, Faust, though himself free of doubt and full of desire, proves to be the forerunner of the world we now inhabit, with all its blessings and its corruptions. Never in its history has humanity had so many possibilities, and never has it known so much neurotic misery. Never before has there been so much light—and never before such Shadow" (Hollis, 2017, p. 203). This image illustrates the inseparability of opposites: evil does not disappear with the achievement of light but grows in its shadow. Or, as Hollis himself puts it: "The brighter the light, the longer the Shadow" (Hollis, 2017, p. 176).

A related thought is developed by Clarissa Estes in her work Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype. She argues that true value arises not despite destruction but through it. Confrontation with death, suffering, and darkness is the source of awakening: "Poets understand: without death there would be nothing to value. Without death, there would be no lessons, no darkness in which diamonds shine" (Estes, 2020, p. 121). This statement captures the deep structure of Jungian thought: darkness is necessary not for suppression but for comprehension. The denial of evil does not lead to its disappearance but to its repression and deformation. Only the one who can endure the Shadow is worthy of the light—and vice versa.

This idea is developed further in analytical works that emphasize: the movement toward wholeness is impossible without the recognition of destruction as a necessary stage of becoming (Estes, 1995; Popławska, 2018; Mirskaya & Pigulevskiy, 2021). In

studies of bodily-existential symbolism, water, darkness, and pain appear not as obstacles but as mediators of deep awakening and moral transformation (Farr, 2024; Deatherage, 2022). The Jungian paradigm affirms: the deeper a person strives for light—meaning, goodness, creativity—the more he must be prepared to meet the Shadow—fear, destruction, the unconscious. Only in this tense dialectic is it possible to achieve a mature dialectical ethical position, as we shall call it later. Hollis explicitly states: "The brighter the light, the longer the Shadow" (Hollis, 2017, p. 176), linking the idea of spiritual ascent with the inevitable acknowledgment of deep inner conflict.

A similar approach to the Shadow was developed by Jungian analyst Edward Edinger, who emphasized that the opposites of good and evil are a necessary condition of psychic life (Edinger, 1985). The ego must experience itself as "more good than bad," otherwise it cannot survive; from this arises the Shadow (Edinger, 1992; Edinger, 1994). Similar emphases can be found in Marie-Louise von Franz, who studied the nature of evil in fairy tales. She stressed that the creative impulse comes from unconscious layers; the Shadow contains both beneficial and destructive qualities (Von Franz, 1995). She warned of "archetypal evil," when a person is carried away by one-sidedness, and pointed to the existence of a "secret inner norm"—each person can withstand a certain amount of Shadow, and seeing too much or too little is equally dangerous (Von Franz, 1995). Contemporary popularizers, summarizing her book Shadow and Evil in Fairy Tales, note that the Shadow has both personal and collective dimensions; civilizations, like individuals, have their Shadows, which, if unrecognized, are projected onto "outsiders" (Sladojević Matić, 2020; Kechan & Ismail, 2022). Evil is considered a natural force; at a primitive level, it is not an ethical issue but a destructive phenomenon, like an avalanche, which must either be overcome or avoided.

This idea of the collective Shadow acquires particular urgency in the works of American post-Jungian James Hillman. In A Terrible Love of War, he shows that war is not merely a social or political phenomenon, but an archetypal force inscribed in the structure of the human soul. It is inseparable from the idea of the duel between good and evil: it requires an enemy who must be dehumanized, and thereby intensifies the

projection of the Shadow rooted in the unconscious (Hillman, 2004). Instead of eradicating evil outwardly, Hillman proposes a dialectical reversal—recognizing that it is precisely the repressed, unacknowledged evil within that becomes the driving force of destruction. As Bryen stresses, Hillman believed that "war is governed by collective power," and therefore "the true enemy lies within ourselves" (Bryen, 2016). Wylie adds that, in Hillman's view, "faith is a short fuse that ignites the archetypal energy of war," and only the recognition of one's Shadow can stop projection and destruction (Wylie, 2020). A similar position is taken by S. Svehla, who argues that the culture of war is based on the refusal to integrate internal conflicts, and therefore requires the image of an "enemy" as a reflection of its own repressed darkness (Svehla, 2022). In other words, a culture that does not enter into dialogue with evil is doomed to its unconscious repetition.

This same thought, but in the context of individual and group psychotherapy, is developed by Jungian psychotherapist Edward Tick in Warrior's Return: Restoring the Soul After War (Tick, 2014; Tick, 2024). Unlike approaches that seek to "heal" trauma, Tick emphasizes the depth of the existential shift that occurs in a person under the impact of war: "We do not acknowledge that the transformation of character caused by the cruel trauma of wartime is all-encompassing, profound, and cannot simply be undone… The warrior, however, is already a different and unique identity" (Tick, 2024, p. 29). Through numerous testimonies of veterans, he shows that the path to healing is possible only through an honest and courageous encounter with the demonic (Nicolae, 2016) within oneself: "I dismissed several psychotherapists because I knew they could not handle the desires that burned within me, my beast, my berserker, my demon in my Shadow, which is a part of me" (ibid., p. 36). This realization is not only personal but archetypically universal. Veteran Greg Walker, who served in the Special Forces, declares: "The path of the warrior ends when he becomes a healer"; Tick places these words alongside the teachings of Buddha and Plato: "Buddha instructs: 'The holy man turns the curses of fate into blessings.' Plato teaches: 'Not even the god of war compares to Love'" (ibid., p. 402). These words form a powerful symbolic formula: the

movement from evil to good, from destruction to healing, is possible only on the condition of deeply experiencing and integrating the Shadow.

Kalsched, further developing the Jungian approach, shows that the inner "protector" arising in response to trauma does not always remain a benevolent figure. On the contrary, the inner world itself can become the source of terror when defense mechanisms lose their flexibility and turn into rigid archetypal structures. He notes: "The inner world, meant to be a sanctuary, becomes a prison" (Kalsched, 2015, p. 15). Particular attention is given to the so-called "daimonic figure"—an archetypal image in which protection and persecution merge: "The epithet 'demonic' appears in describing the malevolent, persecutory aspect of the regressed part of the ego. For us it is clear that the metaphor of the 'daimonic' most aptly conveys the idea of the archetypal doubleness of second-line defenses" (Kalsched, 2015, p. 15).

"The function of this figure, apparently, is the division of the inner world. Jung in this case used the word 'dissociation,' and our daimon acts as a personification of dissociative defenses of the psyche in cases where early psychic trauma has made integration of the psyche impossible" (Kalsched, 2015, p. 31). Evil is not so much external as internally systemic: it is generated by the very attempt to protect oneself from pain, but at the cost of losing genuine subjectivity. Kalsched emphasizes that in therapy with a traumatized patient it is important neither to destroy the defense nor to identify with it. "Often in this process we must overcome our own demonic impulses… while at the same time preserving the ability to maintain rapport with the pain, the traumatized psyche, and the true needs of the patient. It is necessary to find a balance between confrontation and compassion in order to bring the patient's traumatized ego out of its refuge and help it to regain trust in the world. The search for this 'middle way' represents a very serious problem, and if it is found, then enormous possibilities open up in psychotherapeutic work with patients who have suffered psychic trauma" (Kalsched, 2015, pp. 86–87).

This search for the "middle way"—between destructive confrontation and dangerous empathic fusion—can be considered an existential analogue of the ethical balance between good and evil, between protection and growth.

Thus, the Jungian paradigm asserts: the deeper a person strives for light—meaning, goodness, creativity—the more he must be prepared to encounter the Shadow—fear, destruction, the unconscious. Only by sustaining the tense dialectic of opposites (Kolhonen & Kompaniets, 2022) and assuming responsibility for dark impulses can a mature ethical position emerge. Only the recognition of one's own Shadow makes it possible to be freed from projections, to avoid repeating the horrors of the past, and to create a culture that accepts the multiplicity of good and evil.

1.5. The existential-humanistic perspective on the nature of evil and suffering

This section should begin with the words of Abraham Maslow, who wrote: "For many years I have been trying to solve this psychological puzzle. Why are people cruel and why are they kind? In the behavior of most, evil can be found. My next task I see as the study of evil, its understanding" (Maslow, 2018, p. 371). In his later work he wrote explicitly: "I believe that before we can create a world of goodness, we must solve one more task—to develop a humanistic and transpersonal psychology of evil, written on the basis of compassion and love for human nature, rather than disgust for it or a sense of hopelessness" (Maslow, 2022, p. 9). A few pages later he continues: "This is the first attempt to bring together the psychology of growth and development with psychopathology and psychoanalytic dynamics, the dynamic approach with the holistic one, becoming with being, good with evil, positive with negative" (Maslow, 2022, p. 14). Such an integrative approach, characteristic of humanistic psychology, reflects a striving to move away from the logic of separation and opposition. In this sense, the language of humanistic psychology becomes a conduit for its core value—the acceptance of the diversity of human experience, of everything human within a person. Thus, in one of his works he describes this as follows: "A healthy person is not only expressive... He must be able to forget about control, inhibition, and defense when he

considers it appropriate. But equally, he must be able to control himself, postpone gratification, be polite, not inflict pain, hold his tongue, and regulate his impulses. He must be able to be Apollonian and Dionysian, a Stoic or an Epicurean, to behave expressively or resort to coping behavior, to control himself and to act spontaneously, to be open and secretive, to enjoy and to abstain, to think of the future and of the present. Healthy or self-actualizing people are very versatile; they have lost far fewer abilities than the average person. They have at their disposal a wider arsenal of reactions and actions, encompassing everything a human being is capable of; thus, they possess all human possibilities" (Maslow, 2018, p. 141). In the writings of the humanists—and especially in Maslow—the conjunction "and" acquires semantic weight: it expresses not simply grammatical linkage, but the acceptance of the wholeness of human nature, the union of contradictory aspects of personality, the synthesis of "higher" and "lower," of "good" and "dark."

Contemporary researchers continue Maslow's line, emphasizing that mental health is not reducible to the elimination of the "negative." As V. Kaftanski and J. Hanson note, dominant concepts of well-being often ignore suffering, although it is precisely negative experiences and the capacity to ascribe meaning to them that make life authentic and profound (Kaftanski & Hanson, 2022; Kaftanski & Hanson, 2023). In contemporary humanistic and existential psychology, it is increasingly acknowledged that suffering and negative emotions are an inevitable part of life, which must be accepted and transformed, while positive experiences should not displace but complement this experience (Dindo, Van Liew, & Arch, 2017; Rajkumar, 2021; Israelashvili, 2021; Carreno et al., 2021). Within the "second wave" of positive psychology, emphasis is placed on the benefits of mindful acceptance of one's feelings and thoughts, the critique of "toxic positivity," and the value of self-transcendence for transforming suffering into a source of growth and wisdom (Ford et al., 2017; Cherry, 2024; Wong et al., 2023; Wong et al., 2021). Just as we previously noted that good and evil can take the form of categories filled with varying content, here we may also assume that suffering expresses the pole of evil. Yet this idea is not new; Abraham

Maslow explicitly wrote: "If suffering and sadness are sometimes necessary for personality development, then we must learn not to fight against them…" (Maslow, 2002). The refusal to experience the negative, the attempt to construct only a bright, harmonious identity, according to Maslow, leads not to maturity but to indulgence, to the loss of inner autonomy. In this sense, mental health is defined not by the absence of evil or suffering, but by the ability to endure them, to process them, to transform them into experience.

Artistic and philosophical thought has likewise repeatedly pointed to the danger of repressing evil. In Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* there is a cult scene in which the main character, the Savage, demands the right to be unhappy. Here is an excerpt:

"'That's just it,' said the Savage gruffly. 'You've eliminated everything unpleasant instead of learning to put up with it…'

'We prefer to do things comfortably,' said the Controller.

'But I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin.'

'In fact,' said Mustapha Mond, 'you're claiming the right to be unhappy.'

'All right then,' said the Savage defiantly, 'I'm claiming the right to be unhappy.'

'Not to mention the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to have too little to eat; the right to be lousy; the right to live in constant apprehension of what may happen tomorrow; the right to catch typhoid; the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind.'

There was a long silence.
'I claim them all,' said the Savage at last" (Huxley, 2016, p. 326).

His polemic with a technocratic world that eliminates all suffering for the sake of comfort returns us to the deep existential choice: the loss of evil as a category is the loss of the possibility of being human. This thought, expressed by Huxley, anticipated what

Jean Baudrillard would later formulate, as well as what we have described above. The Controller eliminates suffering—he makes the system sterile; the Savage, however, demands another life—one in which there is misfortune, but also Shakespeare.

Existential psychoanalysis, as represented by Irvin Yalom, in turn draws attention to the fact that the search for meaning cannot be separated from moral choice. As a therapist, Yalom emphasizes: "If you want to find Good, carefully study Evil" (Yalom, 2017, p. 30). The conflict between good and evil here appears not as an accidental pathology but as a structure of inner growth, requiring the acceptance of responsibility for one's contradictory impulses. Existential-humanistic psychotherapists stress that personal growth is impossible without the recognition and integration of one's "dark side"—potentially evil, destructive impulses that are part of human nature (May, 1982; Diamond, 1996; Hoffman et al., 2011; Filatova & Kostromina, 2024). Acceptance of one's capacity for evil and a responsible attitude toward one's contradictory urges are considered essential conditions for achieving inner wholeness and wisdom; conversely, ignoring the "dark principle" generates moral superficiality, which only increases the risk of the "banality of evil" (Fromm, 2016; Frankl, 1969; Schneider, 2013). Rollo May, citing Heraclitus, writes: "Heraclitus spoke of how people 'do not understand how what is at variance with itself agrees with itself: there is a harmony in the bending back, as in the bow and the lyre'" (May, 2017, p. 84). This statement acquires particular significance if we regard personality as a system that includes not only moral activity but also the potential for destruction, aggression, suffering, and resistance. The human "self" is constituted not by homogeneity but by the tense correlation of creative and destructive impulses, and it is precisely within this tension that its capacity for choice, responsibility, and becoming is revealed. May also noted: "Good people, as we have already pointed out, are capable of doing evil, which allows them to keep balance with their virtues... Good and evil should be understood as man's sensitivity to the consequences of his actions and thoughts, both in relation to himself and to the society in which he lives. Saints are righteous people thanks to their incredibly developed sensitivity to good and bad... The more sensitive a person is to good deeds, the more

capable he is of great evil... The higher we are able to rise, the lower we can fall" (May, 2017, p. 149). It is precisely in the acknowledgment of one's own Shadow, in an open dialogue with the unconscious, that the path to a more mature Self is discovered.

Continuing this line of reasoning, Rollo May writes: "Every constructive act is preceded by an act of destruction" (May, 2017, p. 92). This assertion, in turn, resonates with the Heraclitean paradox, according to which harmony arises in the struggle of opposites. Within the human being, good and evil not only coexist—they form a dynamic system of tension that is the source of psychic energy and meaning.

Erich Fromm emphasized that "the passions which move man are not instincts in the narrow sense of the word but those vital forces which transform him from a small creature into a hero striving for wholeness" (Fromm, 2016, p. 31). Fromm presents man as a being in which the conflict of constructive and destructive principles is not pathology but the structural foundation of development. His conception stands in opposition both to reductionist psychoanalysis, which reduces behavior to childhood traumas, and to naïve humanism, which excludes the reality of inner struggle. Fromm stresses that human passions cannot be reduced to instincts, because they transcend the biological and represent the energetic core of personality, shaping its wholeness and existential orientation. He writes: "It is precisely these passions, not determined by instincts, that stir man, ignite him, make his life full... Human passions transform man from a small, insignificant creature into a hero, into a being that, despite all obstacles, seeks to give meaning to his own life. He wants to be the creator of himself, to turn his deficient existence into one that is full, meaningful, and purposeful, allowing him to achieve to the maximum the wholeness of his personality. Human passions are by no means psychological complexes that can be explained by referring to events and impressions of early childhood. They can only be understood by breaking through the narrow limits of reductionist psychology and studying them in living reality, that is, by analyzing man's attempt to give meaning to his life; to experience the sharpest, most powerful shocks of existence, which can take place only under given conditions" (Fromm, 2016, p. 31). Passion—both as potential and as threat—sets the conditions of

inner tension in which moral subjectivity is born. Evil cannot be removed from this structure, for it is the reverse side of the striving for good: the same energy directed in different ways.

Fromm directly challenges anthropological pessimism, according to which man is "evil by nature." He stresses that evil cannot be recognized as man's original essence, any more than good can: "In short, the statement that 'man is evil by nature' is not a whit more true than the statement that 'man is good by nature.' But the first is much easier to say; and if someone wishes to prove the 'evil beginning of man,' he will always find grateful and approving listeners, for he provides each of them with an alibi—forgiveness of sins—and risks nothing" (Fromm, 2016, p. 567). Here Fromm shows that belief in "innate corruption" serves more as a social mechanism of self-justification than as a scientific assertion. It removes from the individual the responsibility for his own moral choice. On the contrary, genuine becoming requires the recognition of both sides of nature—light and dark—without excuses and moralistic absolutizations. The same motif is heard in Fromm's later works, where he connects the search for truth with the destruction of illusions, which also carries its own inner drama. He writes: "The search for the true essence is at the same time the renunciation of illusions. Buddha, Moses, the Greek philosophers, modern science, the philosophers of the Enlightenment, great artists, physicists, biologists, chemists, Marx and Freud—all of them were united by a passionate desire to break through the 'maya'—the deceptive veil of feelings and 'common sense'—and to attain the perception of the true essence of the human and the natural, the spiritual and the material. They had different fields of activity, their methods also differed, but their motives and goals were undoubtedly the same. All that humankind has achieved spiritually and materially it owes to the destroyers of illusions, the seekers of genuine reality" (Fromm, 2017, p. 197).

The inner struggle between illusion and authenticity, between fear and the comprehension of evil, is an inevitable process of individual growth. The striving for good itself presupposes passing through the zone of shadow meanings; otherwise, it remains superficial.

In the context of social and psychological resilience, Fromm emphasizes that maturity does not mean safety, but rather the ability to endure its absence. He states: "Just as a sensitive, deeply feeling person cannot avoid a sense of sadness, he cannot avoid a sense of insecurity. The task that a person can and must set for his psyche is not to feel safe, but to be able to endure the absence of safety without panic and excessive fear" (Fromm, 2016a, p. 216). Finally, moving from the level of the individual to that of culture as a whole (Fromm, 2016b), he underscores the impossibility of spiritual health without the integration of different levels—psychic, social, and symbolic: "Socioeconomic, spiritual, and psychological explanations view the same phenomenon from different perspectives, and the task of theoretical analysis is to understand how these different aspects are interrelated and how they interact... The spiritual health of society can be achieved only through simultaneous changes in industrial and political organization, in spiritual and philosophical orientation, in character structure, and in cultural activity. If we concentrate our efforts on any one sphere and ignore or exclude the others, this threatens to have destructive consequences for change as a whole" (Fromm, 2016a, pp. 296–297).

The understanding of evil within the humanistic and existential paradigm requires going beyond dichotomies. Here evil is not so much eradicated as it is interpreted as part of personal and cultural dynamics. Moral choice, inner struggle, the acceptance of suffering, and openness to its meaning become not deviations from the norm but driving forces of the formation of a mature and responsible personality. This approach implies not an escape from the inner Shadow but a striving for its integration as a source of freedom, wholeness, and authenticity.

1.6. The dialectic of the destructive and the creative in psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis does not operate with the categories of "good" and "evil" in the usual moral-philosophical or religious sense. Instead, it describes the inner dynamics of the individual through the tension between opposing affective poles—love and aggression, the striving for closeness and the fear of engulfment, impulses of

destruction and creation. Within the framework of the present study, we consider these psychodynamic antagonisms as potential substantive expressions of the forms that, in the ethical domain, are denoted as "good" and "evil." Such a comparison makes it possible to interpret classical psychoanalytic concepts in terms of ethical representations. Psychoanalytic concepts empirically and clinically support this philosophical thesis. Thus, E. Berne emphasizes: "The striving for creation and for destruction, the culmination of which is sexual intercourse and killing, is the very raw material with which man and civilization must work… Human psychic development depends on his ability to direct these inner forces toward the most productive goals" (Berne, 2015, p. 72). Here the key point is not the elimination of evil, but its reworking and integration into the ethical field of consciousness. The energy of destruction can be transformed into the power of creation, but only on the condition that this destructive component is recognized as an integral part of personality. This integration requires not so much adherence to external moral norms as the capacity for inner observation, reflection, and acceptance of one's Shadow. In this context, the ideas of the contemporary psychoanalytic school, including the work of Yeomans and McWilliams, acquire particular significance.

The study of ethical positions of personality in the context of good and evil requires close analysis of those clinical forms of psychic organization in which the opposites of moral, emotional, and identity contents appear in their most exposed, conflictual, and paradoxical form. Of special importance in this context is the phenomenon of borderline personality structure—a psychodynamic organization situated between neurotic and psychotic levels of functioning, characterized by unstable identity, intense emotional reactivity, and the splitting of affective and cognitive representations.

In her work, Nancy McWilliams notes that "they were too sane to be psychotic and too psychotic to be sane" (McWilliams, 2015, p. 86). This formulation paradoxically reveals the very essence of borderline existence: it is a state of constant inner fracture, in which the personality is simultaneously held within the bounds of

reality and rapidly loses its stable coordinates. Borderline organization of functioning, in McWilliams's view, represents a "stable instability" (ibid., p. 87), located on the boundary between neurotic control and psychotic breakdown, which makes it a unique zone of observation for the dialectic of inner contradictions—including between good and evil as fundamental coordinates of moral experience.

The psychodynamic model describes the borderline personality as trapped in a dyadic conflict—between the striving for complete connectedness and the fear of loss of identity, and at the same time between the pull toward isolation and the panic fear of abandonment (ibid., p. 88). This dilemma becomes the source of constant inner tension, in which "closeness" is experienced as a threat of engulfment, while "distance" is experienced as annihilating loneliness. Thus, we are dealing with a psychic configuration in which destructive and constructive, attachment and aggression, good and evil are not integrated, but exist in the form of sharply opposing poles, resistant to synthesis.

McWilliams emphasizes that "borderline psychology is not a single entity… it is determined by multiple factors" (ibid., p. 89), and its diagnostic verification is possible, in particular, through Kernberg's Structural Interview (Kernberg, 1984) and later modifications (Stern et al., 2004), which allow the identification of fundamental mechanisms of personality organization (ibid., p. 90).

The central one of these mechanisms is the inability to integrate opposing affective states. Borderline patients are prone to rapid and uncontrolled affective escalation, where instead of "shame, envy, sadness, or other more subtle emotions," rage emerges (ibid., p. 103). Their emotional reactions are initially colored in extreme tones—anger or idealization, contempt or admiration, good or evil. The limited access to the observing ego makes it impossible for such patients to consciously regulate their reactions. "The patient has no access to the observing ego, especially when he is upset" (ibid., p. 105), which also deprives him of the ability to reflect on the ethical consequences of his actions.

In the clinical picture, a specific dilemma dominates: "Borderline patients seem to face the following dilemma: when they feel close to another person, they panic, fearing engulfment and total control; when they are alone, they feel traumatically abandoned. This central conflict of their emotional experience results in their swinging back and forth in relationships, including therapeutic ones, where neither closeness nor distance brings peace" (ibid., p. 106). This paradoxical behavioral pattern, according to Masterson, goes back to the rapprochement subphase in the process of separation-individuation, when the child experiences the need simultaneously for autonomy and for the confirmation of the stable presence of the object (Mahler, 1972b; Masterson, 1976). The inability to resolve this dilemma later generates relationships in which the object is either idealized as the embodiment of good or devalued as the source of evil. Thus, the borderline client lives in a world in which "the therapist is perceived either as the embodiment of good or as the embodiment of evil" (McWilliams, 2015, p. 106), and any intermediate states turn out to be inaccessible to perception.

In this regard, the defense mechanism of projective identification acquires particular significance. As McWilliams writes, "the patient tries to get rid of the feeling of the 'bad self'… but the transfer of image and emotion does not occur 'cleanly'… they continue to feel what they project" (ibid., p. 135). This explains why, even while idealizing the object, the borderline personality continues to experience the projected feelings as their own. Thus, good and evil, transferred outward, remain part of the inner world, being neither separated nor integrated—they exist as an unresolved dualism that intensifies the internal conflict.

This structure is vividly revealed in the concept of splitting as a basic defense mechanism. In the model of Transference-Focused Psychotherapy (TFP), developed on the basis of object relations theory, the task is the integration of idealized and persecutory aspects, the overcoming of splitting (Yeomans et al., 2018, p. 9). Splitting, according to Kernberg, functions as a mechanism for preserving the idealized segments of the Self and the object from destruction originating from hatred toward depriving, bad objects (ibid., p. 12). "Primitive defenses are organized around splitting, the radical

separation of good and bad affects, good and bad objects. These defensive mechanisms attempt to protect the idealized segment of the psyche, the inner world, from the aggressive segment. Such separation provides a certain sense of order (including the separation of good from evil, as well as self from other), but it is maintained at the expense of the absence of integration of images in the psyche" (ibid., p. 21). Yet this order turns out to be illusory—it exists by repressing integration rather than achieving it.

This confirms the idea that "the borderline client by definition lacks an integrated observing ego… he is subject to chaotic oscillations between different ego states" (McWilliams, 2015, p. 130). Resolution of this conflict is possible only through a gradual transition to the ability "to consolidate diverse aspects of the self… within a unified concept of the Self" (ibid., p. 136). The key direction of work here is the movement from dichotomous, "black-and-white" psychology to dialectical thinking, in which opposites do not exclude but condition one another (Kolhonen, 2023). It is precisely in this context that the concept of the dialectic of good and evil can become ego-syntonic for the borderline client: through philosophical acceptance of inner contradiction, it becomes possible to build an integrated Self-concept.

As Kernberg emphasizes, in the later stages of psychoanalytic research there is an "integration of the components of compassion, care, guilt, reparation… as indicators of the normal development of the superego, the dominance of love and loyalty as opposed to… the characteristics of evil" (Kernberg, 2022, p. 421). This means that normally the inner value system is formed not through the repression of the destructive principle, but through its symbolic recognition and integration within a mature ethical stance. Thus, work with the borderline personality becomes not only a therapeutic task but also a way of grasping the universal mechanism of the formation of moral consciousness as the dialectical interplay of love and aggression, good and evil.

1.7. Good and evil as a socio-psychological construct

At the turn of postmodernity, the accelerating processes of globalization, the collapse of universalist systems, and the expansion of mediatized information flows blur traditional criteria of good, justice, and responsibility, transforming them into a set of competing norms and producing a decline in the moral level of society, a rise in aggression and apathy, and sharp generational differences in moral orientations (Mironenko, 2010; Alekseeva, 2014; Shchipunov, 2015; Troitsky, 2019; Akulich, Ilyina, 2024). Such a situation generates moral uncertainty: deprived of firm universal criteria, the individual is forced to intuitively construct their own moral space, to take responsibility for choosing between incommensurable values, and to correlate personal representations with competing ethical systems, since no ready-made theory any longer offers unambiguous answers (Fransson, 2017; Ivanov, 2020; Shaveko, 2023; Ismailov, 2024).

Early pedagogical concepts emphasized the influence of the educational environment as the decisive factor in the moral development of the individual. Thus, J. A. Comenius, within the framework of naturalistic and Christian pedagogy, asserted: "The more fertile the field, the more abundantly it produces thorns and thistles. So too is an outstanding mind full of empty fantasies if it is not sown with the seeds of wisdom and virtues. Like a working mill, if grain, i.e., material for grinding, is not poured into it, it wears itself down, breaking off pieces from its own millstones, and, damaging and tearing its parts, pointlessly churns with noise and dust. So too does an active mind, deprived of serious work, fill itself with trivial, empty, and harmful content and become the cause of its own ruin" (Comenius, 1989, p. 19). This idea resonates with the ancient Socratic view of evil as a form of ignorance—where the absence of structuring knowledge, if left unattended, leads to destructive consequences. The constructive influence of education on moral structure was also emphasized by H. Spencer, who asserted the priority of knowledge as the condition of existence for civilized society: "As at present, so in the distant future, it will always be infinitely important for people, in order to regulate their activity, to understand the science of life—physical, mental,

and social—and to take every other science only as a key to this science of life. Yet, despite its immeasurable superiority in importance to all other knowledge, in our age of boastful education almost no attention is paid to it. Without science, what we call civilization could never have arisen, and at the same time this very science constitutes an almost invisible element in our so-called civilized education" (Spencer, 2013, p. 64). In both cases, evil is seen not as an innate quality but as a consequence of underdevelopment, emptiness, or the lack of moral direction—thus opening the way to its reinterpretation in terms of social construction.

Within the psychoanalytic and ego-psychological traditions, evil is understood as the result of early socialization experiences and primary emotional attachment. E. Erikson emphasizes that religious (and more broadly, normative) institutions play a key role in shaping ideas of good and evil in the early stages of an individual's life: "There is no doubt that it is religious institutions that systematize and socialize the first and deepest life conflict: they consolidate the vague images of the infant's first caregivers into collective images of primitive divine protectors; they explain the vague sense of primordial mistrust by giving it the metaphysical reality of Evil" (Erikson, 1996, p. 92). This process of internalizing cultural norms through early experience makes it possible to explain the variability of moral maps across different sociocultural contexts. As Erikson notes: "People belonging to the same ethnic group, being contemporaries of the same historical epoch, and interacting in the sphere of the economy, also have common representations of good and evil" (ibid., p. 61). Good and evil thus appear not only as consequences of individual experience but also as the result of collective symbolic work, producing cultural codes of moral differentiation that, however, in the conditions of contemporary cultural transformations, increasingly lose their stability. These changes undermine the universalist foundations of representations of good and evil, highlighting their historical and social contingency.

These collectively assimilated moral coordinates, however, are subject to historical change, especially in periods of radical cultural shifts. As I. A. Mironenko emphasizes, in the modern era humanity finds itself in a situation where moral

guidelines are no longer perceived as stable and universal: "For the first time in its history, humanity has faced the necessity of living in a situation where accepted societal notions of good and evil, of justice, of how one should act in a given situation and how one should relate to various phenomena are undergoing radical transformation" (Mironenko, 2019, p. 8). This process of redefining basic categories indicates a crisis of universalism, in which former moral anchors lose their stability. Against this backdrop, the author argues, it becomes necessary to reassess the very theoretical foundations on which the humanities build their knowledge of the human being: "Is it not time, following the sociologists, to recognize that the essence of the human being has undergone in recent decades as radical a transformation as the society in which he exists, and to abandon outdated theoretical schemes that no longer correspond to contemporary reality?" (ibid., p. 10). Mironenko points out that the acceleration of historical time and shifts in cultural paradigms have created difficulties in adaptation between generations, which in turn have called into question the old forms of ethical transmission: "The most important factor in the crisis of psychology and in the clash within it of the humanities and the natural sciences, about which Vygotsky wrote, has been the radical complication of the problem of human adaptation to the world: the acceleration of the historical process at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries led to the situation in which generational succession could no longer keep up with changes in culture. For the first time in its history, humanity has faced the necessity of living in a situation where accepted societal notions of good and evil, of justice, of how one should act in a given situation and how one should relate to various phenomena are undergoing significant change before our very eyes" (ibid., p. 211).

The transformation of ideas of good and evil in the conditions of modernity reflects not only cultural modifications but also a profound restructuring of social identity itself. The contemporary individual is increasingly compelled to independently structure their moral space, acting under conditions of devalued universal norms and the emergence of multiple competing ethical systems. This creates a unique situation of moral uncertainty, in which evil ceases to be an unambiguous ethical category and

becomes instead an indicator of the tension between personal identity and the rapidly changing social context.

1.8. Theoretical foundations for the selection of psychodiagnostic methods

In the context of intensifying moral fragmentation, value relativism, and the erosion of universal ethical orientations, there arises a need not only for philosophical and cultural-psychological reflection on the transformation of the categories of good and evil, but also for their empirical analysis. The relevance of such a research focus is determined by the fact that under contemporary conditions there is not merely a revision of the content of ethical concepts but also a transformation of the ways in which they are personally interpreted. Consequently, the empirical study of representations of good and evil must take into account not only the substantive but also the structural aspects of moral perception, which are associated with characterological traits of personality, moral maturity, and behavioral activity.

The semantic differential (SD) method, developed by Charles E. Osgood in the 1950s, is a psychometric tool designed to measure the connotative meaning of concepts, objects, and events. It allows researchers to identify subjective evaluations and affective reactions of individuals to various concepts through scaling along a set of bipolar adjectives. The method is based on the assumption that the meaning of concepts in human consciousness is multidimensional and can be described through three universal factors: evaluation, potency, and activity. These factors were identified through factor analysis of data collected across different cultures and demonstrated a high degree of universality.

The semantic differential method has found wide practical application: it is used for diagnosing students' perceptions of teachers, studying family and reproductive attitudes, analyzing gender differences in emotional word evaluations, assessing stereotypes toward people with disabilities, and for summarizing theoretical foundations and modifications of the method (Zakharova, Stryukova, 1999; Antonov, Karpova, 2024; Chapman et al., 2022; Jenaro, Chapman et al., 2018; Novikov, Novikova, 2011).

Applying SD to the study of moral categories such as "good" and "evil" makes it possible to quantitatively capture subtle shades of meaning that respondents associate with these concepts. This approach allows for the identification of latent semantic dimensions in human consciousness that reflect moral attitudes and value orientations. Historically, the method has been successfully applied to the analysis of value images and social phenomena, showing high effectiveness in uncovering semantic modalities of concepts, including emotional evaluation, activity, and potency. In particular, studies have demonstrated that the evaluative factor is the most significant in shaping attitudes toward an object or concept, which is especially important in the study of moral categories. In the context of ethical psychology, the use of SD enables empirical confirmation of differences in perceptions of good and evil among individuals with different ethical positions. For example, individuals inclined toward a categorical division of good and evil may assign these concepts opposite ratings on the scales of "good–bad," "strong–weak," "active–passive," whereas those who perceive good and evil as interdependent categories may demonstrate more balanced evaluations.

These differences in the semantic profile of moral categories allow researchers to capture not only the substantive content of the notions of "good" and "evil" but also their connection to deeper personality structures. It is in this context that the measurement of characterological traits reflecting predispositions toward particular types of moral response becomes essential. Of particular importance is the concept of the Dark Triad — a constellation of three interrelated but distinct traits: narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. The concept of the "Dark Triad" entered psychological terminology in 2002 through the work of Canadian researchers Delroy Paulhus and Kevin Williams at the University of British Columbia. Studies have shown that these three psychological traits — nonclinical narcissism, nonclinical psychopathy, and Machiavellianism — form a distinctive syndrome of personality properties, offering a promising framework for the study of the negative aspects of personality (Paulhus, Williams, 2002). The development and adaptation of the short Dark Triad questionnaire (SD3) in Russian was carried out by M. S. Egorova and colleagues (Egorova, Sitnikova,

Parshikova, 2015). Research on the Dark Triad continues to be relevant in contemporary psychological discourse (Soldatova, Ilyukhina, 2023).

In international literature, the concept of the Dark Triad is often referred to as the "dark side of personality" or the "negative side of personality" (Derish, 2015). This complex of traits thus claims to capture "everything bad" in human nature. In one article describing the contours of a meta-individual model of destructiveness from an integrative perspective, authors employ the metaphors of "light" and "dark" to denote the meta-individual and the destructive worlds, their complex interplay, and the transitions from one into the other. The authors also pose the task of developing a multifactorial questionnaire (Dorfman, Zlokazov, 2017).

The use of the metaphor of the "dark side" and its translation into quantifiable constructs makes it possible to compare the "dark" in a person with other psychological characteristics (Kolhonen, Mironenko, 2023b). Interestingly, some studies reveal links between the Dark Triad traits and positive characteristics. For instance, one article states: "an exhaustive number of studies highlight the presence of an association between this phenomenon [the Dark Triad] and … empathy" (Kositsina, 2021, p. 494). In another study, the authors write: "The traits of the Dark Triad — narcissism, Machiavellianism, and nonclinical psychopathy — are considered to be the most salient characteristics of negative personality manifestations; individuals with these traits are prone to manipulating others and display low levels of empathic capacity" (Ledovaya, 2018, p. 160). The relationship between empathy and high levels of Dark Triad traits thus remains a matter of debate.

Numerous studies have examined the correlations between Dark Triad traits and various personality properties. In 2015, research was conducted on a sample of 256 students from Perm universities, comparing Dark Triad traits with personality characteristics similar to those of the Big Five, with an additional factor of "honesty–humility" measured by the HEXACO-PI-R questionnaire (Derish, 2015). The authors found: "The relationship between narcissism and extraversion is explained by a high

level of social boldness — one of the components of extraversion, which is a characteristic feature of narcissistic personalities" (Derish, 2015, p. 25). More "narcissistic" individuals tend to be more socially active, make use of unexpected expressions and humor, and at the same time demonstrate high self-confidence (Paulhus, Williams, 2002). Data indicating that high Dark Triad scores are associated with self-confidence suggest that there may be potential positive aspects of the Dark Triad traits.

The popularity and breadth of engagement with the "dark traits" — Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy — in psychological discourse is so extensive that "most psychologists believe that the five-factor model does not fully reflect the dark sides of human nature and propose the inclusion of three additional traits — Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy (the so-called 'Dark Triad')" (Jarrett, 2022, p. 19).

Based on the understanding of the relationship between ethical positions and characterological traits, we also decided to use a new standardized method, the construct of the "Light Triad," which was introduced as a kind of antithesis to the "Dark Triad" (Kaufman et al., 2019). If the traits of the Dark Triad can be conditionally associated with evil, then the traits of the Light Triad may be conditionally viewed as good. In 2019, the authors of the Light Triad concept wrote: "While the body of literature on the 'dark traits' (i.e., socially aversive traits) continues to grow, there is a lack of research literature on positive traits and life outcomes oriented toward fulfillment and growth" (Kaufman et al., 2019). The Light Triad is measured with the Light Triad Scale (LTS), which consists of 12 items and includes three aspects: Kantianism (treating people as ends rather than means), Humanism (valuing the dignity and worth of each individual), and Faith in Humanity (the belief in the fundamental goodness of people). This questionnaire has not yet been validated on Russian-speaking samples. We chose to use it with the aim of comparing the moral category of "good" with the Light Triad and the category of "evil" with the Dark Triad. We assume that representations of the relationship between good and evil may be connected to the psychological traits of both

the Dark and Light Triads. From this perspective, the dialectical acceptance of the unity of good and evil, as described earlier, may be determined by the structure of personality that includes, but is not limited to, the traits of the Dark Triad. Conversely, the position implying a mutually exclusive relationship between good and evil may be linked to a personality structure that does not integrate Dark Triad traits.

In the context of this study, which aims to identify and analyze ethical positions of individuals regarding good and evil, the concept of self-actualization acquires particular significance. This construct, developed within humanistic psychology, is considered an indicator of personal maturity and inner integrity, which is directly related to the formation of stable moral orientations.

The notion of self-actualization was first introduced by Kurt Goldstein (Kondratsky, 2020; Akhmadullina, Gabdreeva, 2008) and later developed by Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-actualization occupies the highest level, representing the striving of the individual toward the full realization of their potential after basic needs have been met. Maslow defined self-actualization as "the intrinsic growth of what is already in the organism, or more accurately, of what the organism is itself." Carl Rogers, in turn, considered self-actualization as a continuous process of "self" development, in which the individual strives to fully realize their abilities and potential. He emphasized that the highest maturity is achieved by those who take responsibility for their values and seek to realize them despite external pressures (Rogers, 1951; Rogers, 1961; Kelland, 2011; Maurer, 2020; Dammann, 2021).

A self-actualizing person is characterized by a high degree of autonomy, responsibility, and internal consistency, which contributes to the formation of stable moral principles. Such individuals are capable of following their ethical beliefs even when facing external pressure or moral dilemmas. Research shows that a higher level of self-actualization is associated with a developed sense of responsibility, empathy, and prosocial behavior (Kolomiets, 2009; Rastorgueva, 2014; Ilyinykh et al., 2016;

Gerasimova, 2024). Thus, self-actualization can be regarded as a key factor determining the ability of the individual to form and maintain their ethical position, as well as to interpret the categories of good and evil within the context of personal experience and values.

For the quantitative assessment of self-actualization in this study, we used the Self-Actualization Test (SAT), developed by Everett Shostrom and adapted for Russian-speaking samples. This tool measures various aspects of self-actualization and includes 12 scales: value orientations, self-acceptance, perception of human nature, synergy, interpersonal sensitivity, acceptance of aggression, contact with the inner "self," self-improvement, need for cognition, creative attitude toward life, behavioral flexibility, and autonomy. The obtained scores allow for the evaluation of the level of personal maturity, the capacity for self-reflection, openness to experience, and stability of ethical orientations. This is particularly important in the context of analyzing ethical positions: the higher the degree of self-actualization, the greater the likelihood that moral convictions are internally formed rather than externally imposed. Thus, the SAT provides not only a quantitative measure of maturity but also an understanding of the depth and consistency with which representations of good and evil are integrated into the personality structure and acted upon independently of external pressures.

We also employed the Proactive Personality Scale (PPS). This method is based on the construct introduced by Bateman and Crant; modern Rasch analyses have demonstrated that the shortened six-item version of the scale is unidimensional and highly reliable (Teye Kwadjo, de Bruin, 2022). More recent studies often use the 10-item PPS version, in which participants rate statements such as "I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life." Adapted versions show high internal consistency (e.g., $\alpha \approx 0.88$) (Hu, Liao, 2024; Jia, Yuan, 2025). This construct is particularly relevant to moral behavior, as active defense of moral principles is closely tied to motives of self-actualization. Contemporary research shows that self-actualization enhances intrinsic motivation, orients individuals toward meaningful

goals, and strengthens internal locus of control, which in turn promotes proactive pursuit of their values (Guan et al., 2025).

In clinical studies among nurses, the pursuit of self-improvement is considered a self-actualization need that becomes salient only once basic needs are met (Xie et al., 2024). This pursuit accompanies high levels of personal growth. The concept of a proactive personality, introduced by Bateman and Crant (1993), refers to the stable tendency of individuals to initiate change in their environment (Seibert et al., 1999). Proactive individuals do not simply react to external events: they scan their environment for opportunities, take initiative, act, and persist in achieving change (Hu, Liao, 2024). These traits are confirmed by modern tools, where respondents endorse items such as "I am always looking for ways to do things better" (Hu, Liao, 2024). Proactive individuals anticipate change and take responsibility for reaching their goals; this is supported by studies linking proactivity to personal growth and career success (Xie et al., 2024; Jia, Yuan, 2025).

The interrelation of proactivity and self-actualization is emphasized in contemporary research. A study of students in English-language learning contexts found that self-actualization enhances intrinsic motivation, facilitates goal-setting, and strengthens internal locus of control, prompting individuals to proactively pursue personal goals (Guan et al., 2025). Similarly, a study in Chinese companies showed that satisfaction of growth and self-actualization needs stimulates proactive career behavior (Ji et al., 2025). The concept of the "ideal self" is viewed as a motivational guide that directs behavior toward self-actualization and fosters initiatives for skill development and networking (Martinez et al., 2021). Modern tools for studying self-actualization (e.g., the Self-Actualization Attributes Scale and the Innovation Potential Scale) include measurements of innovation, creativity, and proactivity; one item states: "I innovate in my work in order to become more productive" (Souza et al., 2024), which further confirms the link between self-actualization and proactive behavior.

Recent empirical findings also show that medical professionals and educators with proactive personalities report higher job satisfaction, lower burnout, and stronger growth orientation, while proactivity positively correlates with career success (Xie et al., 2024; Jia, Yuan, 2025).

In the context of this study, proactivity is seen as an important component of personal maturity, linked to the formation and enactment of ethical positions. Based on the above data, we may draw the analogy that individuals with high levels of proactivity are more likely to hold clear and active convictions about their ethical views concerning the interrelation of good and evil in human nature, and they are more willing to act in accordance with those convictions in real-life situations.

Overall, the set of methods used in this study allowed us to capture many key dimensions necessary for a comprehensive analysis of an individual's ethical position. The author's questionnaire "Attitudes toward Good and Evil" provided the basic conceptual framework and ensured a substantive typology of ethical representations. The semantic differential captured the deeper modalities of perception of the categories of good and evil in individual consciousness, allowing us to trace differences in evaluation, potency, and activity of these concepts. The Dark Triad (SD3) and Light Triad (LTS) scales provided access to characterological traits. The Self-Actualization Test (SAT) offered a quantitative assessment of personal maturity across groups with different ethical representations, while the Proactive Personality Scale (PPS) measured readiness to act according to one's convictions. Together, these methods complement one another and form a unified diagnostic system.

1.9. The ethical position of the individual as an integrative structure: the relationship between representations of good and evil and characterological traits

Summarizing the key points of the previous sections (1.1–1.8), it is possible to propose a holistic understanding of the ethical position of personality as an integrative formation that synthesizes the system of ethical representations of good and evil with the stable characterological traits of the individual. The preceding analysis of

philosophical, religious, and psychological approaches to the problem of good and evil revealed that the relationship between these categories is conceived through a limited number of basic models or types of ethical representations. In different cultural-historical contexts, a structural dichotomy emerges: on the one hand, the monistic approach, which interprets evil merely as the absence of good (privatio boni in Augustine, ethical monism in a number of religious-philosophical doctrines); on the other hand, the dialectical approach, which recognizes evil as an independent force, opposed to good and interacting with it (the Manichaean tradition, Hegel's dialectics, existential psychotherapy, etc.). This opposition manifests itself in two types of ethical representations of good and evil. In the first type, evil is perceived as the absence or deficiency of good (morality rests on the "zero-sum" principle: more good means less evil, and vice versa). In the second type, good and evil are regarded as autonomous principles existing in a complex dialectical unity and mutual conditioning, where evil is not merely the negative but a necessary opposing pole of development. As shown earlier, this division appears to be of universal character: through the prism of these two forms, one can interpret the type of ethical representations of the individual. However, it is equally important to take into account the characterological traits, which, as will be shown later, may be interconnected with one or another type of ethical representations. When characterological features of personality are considered, what is formed is not merely an ethical representation but an ethical position, which constitutes a more complex and integrated unifying whole. The ethical position is the result of the interaction between characterological traits and representations; they influence each other, creating a stable inner conviction. As Alexander Grigorievich Asmolov said, "One is born an individual, becomes a personality, and asserts one's individuality." Applied to this aspect, it can be said that a person asserts his ethical position. This position becomes part of his individuality, reinforced and supported by the character of the personality.

As a result, such an integrated structure or construct, on the one hand, helps to operationalize the individual's inclination toward good and evil, translating it into

measurable psychological constructs such as narcissism, psychopathy, Machiavellianism, as well as their "light" contrasts, for example, humanism or belief in the fundamental goodness of people. On the other hand, it makes it possible to understand how characterological traits and ethical representations mutually influence the worldview of the individual, shaping his attitude toward ethical dilemmas and life choices. For example, an individual who has experienced destruction or extreme immorality may rationalize his narcissistic or aggressive trait as necessary for survival, thereby consolidating the corresponding ethical representation that permits or even justifies evil. Consequently, the ethical position is formed not merely as a sum of traits or judgments but as the result of the interaction between what a person has experienced, what he is as a personality, and how he shapes the subjective moral fabric of the world.

It should be emphasized that the proposed understanding of the ethical position of personality at this stage has the character of a research hypothesis "for the future." The proposed concept represents a theoretical model requiring empirical verification and specification. Nevertheless, its introduction already at the stage of theoretical analysis makes it possible to formulate a clear conceptual perspective.

Conclusions of Chapter 1

1. In philosophical and religious discourse, two main types of understanding good and evil in their interrelation can be identified:the monistic, interpreting evil as the absence of good (Augustine, religious traditions); the dualistic/dialectical, viewing evil as an independent force in tense interaction with good (Manichaeism, Hegel, Nietzsche, the Jungian tradition).

2. In psychological discourse, two main approaches can also be traced: the rationalistic (J. Piaget, L. Kohlberg), in which good and evil are understood through cognitive stages and norms of justice; the existential-humanistic and psychoanalytic, where evil is regarded as the inner side of human nature, necessary for growth, integration, and personality development.

3. The Jungian and existential traditions emphasize that good and evil form an archetypal polarity, and their conflict acts as a source of psychic and spiritual energy. Acceptance and integration of the "dark side" become a condition for individuation and maturity.

4. In the socio-psychological approach, good and evil are understood as social constructs formed in the process of cultural interiorization and changing under the conditions of globalization, relativism, and moral fragmentation.

5. In generalized form, two types of ethical representations of personality can be distinguished:
   evil as the absence of good (monistic model);
   good and evil as autonomous and interconnected principles (dialectical model). These models are universal and appear both in philosophical and religious concepts and in psychological theories.

6. The ethical position of personality is formed as an integrative structure that unites ethical representations and characterological features, opening the possibility for their further psychodiagnostic operationalization.

7. Within the framework of the Russian psychological tradition, a direction of ethical psychology (Bratus, Popov, Golubeva, and others) is being developed, centered on the categories of good and evil as the foundation of moral regulation of personality behavior. This tradition emphasizes the significance of conscience, moral ideal, and spiritual self-knowledge as key factors in the formation of the ethical position of personality.

CHAPTER 2. ORGANIZATION AND METHODS OF RESEARCH ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICAL POSITIONS OF PERSONALITY AND CHARACTEROLOGICAL FEATURES

This chapter is devoted to the organization and methods of the empirical study aimed at examining the relationship between individuals' ethical representations and characterological features. This part of the work describes the research strategy, the methods applied, the stages of data collection and processing, as well as the main analytical procedures that make it possible to identify the structure of ethical representations and their psychological correlates.

2.1. The aim, objectives, and hypotheses of the study.

Research aim: to identify and describe different ethical representations of personality regarding the categories of good and evil and to determine how these representations are related to the characterological features of personality. In other words, the study is aimed at identifying ethical positions and comparing them with specific personality traits.

Object of the study – the moral sphere of personality in the context of individual psychological characteristics.

Subject of the study – the relationship between ethical positions of personality regarding the categories of good and evil and characterological traits.

In accordance with the aim of the empirical study, the following objectives were formulated:

1. To analyze attitudes toward the categories of good and evil among respondents using the selected research methods. On this basis, to identify groups of respondents with different ethical positions. To conduct a comparative analysis of these groups in order to reveal differences in their characterological features. To describe and outline the characteristics of each group.

2. To conduct a semantic analysis of respondents' understanding of the categories of good and evil depending on the identified ethical positions.

3. To develop and describe a typology of personality in the context of ethical psychology, taking into account characterological features, behavioral traits, and ways of interpreting good and evil. To describe the advantages and disadvantages of the identified types.

Research hypotheses

The main hypothesis of the study is that the type of ethical representation of personality concerning good and evil is related to its characterological features. The perception of good and evil as dialectically interconnected, complementary categories versus the perception of these concepts as strictly separated and opposed corresponds to differences in the characterological traits of personality.

Additional hypotheses

1. It is assumed that the ethical representation characterized by the perception of good and evil as interconnected and complementary categories will correspond to a higher level of self-actualization.

2. It is assumed that differences in ethical representations of personality are related to the level of behavioral flexibility. It is expected that respondents inclined toward a dialectical interpretation of good and evil will demonstrate a higher level of behavioral flexibility, whereas adherence to a strict opposition of these categories may correlate with reduced behavioral flexibility.

3. It is assumed that respondents showing greater tolerance toward evil or perceiving it as a natural part of the world will be characterized by a higher expression of Dark Triad traits. In particular, the acceptance of evil may positively correlate with narcissistic and psychopathic traits, whereas its rejection will be associated with their lower expression.

2.2. Methods and Techniques of the Study

In this study, quantitative methods of analysis were applied. Quantitative methods included the analysis of questionnaire results using statistical data processing methods (see Section 2.3. Methods of Statistical Data Processing), which made it possible to identify factors, clusters, and variance differences. To investigate the relationship between individuals' ethical representations of good and evil and their characterological features, six methods were employed.

The author's questionnaire *"Attitudes toward Good and Evil."* The questionnaire consists of 10 closed-ended questions with multiple-choice answers. These closed-ended questions were aimed at identifying attitudes toward the dyad of good and evil, either in the sense of dialectical acceptance of their unity or as mutually exclusive representations. A full list of questions and answer options is presented in Appendix 1.

Semantic Differential (SD). A set of 25 pairs of adjectives expressing opposite qualities was used. Respondents were first asked to evaluate "good" and then "evil" using these pairs. Results were derived across three dimensions: evaluation, strength, and activity.

Short Dark Triad Questionnaire (SD3). This instrument consists of 27 items. It was created by D. N. Jones and D. L. Paulhus in 2014 as a brief tool to assess narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy (Paulhus, Williams, 2002; Southard, Zeigler-Hill, 2016). The SD3 includes three scales of nine items each. Respondents rate their agreement with each statement, usually on a five-point Likert scale. Separate scores are calculated for the three subscales: "Narcissism," "Machiavellianism," and "Psychopathy." Examples include: for narcissism—statements reflecting a sense of superiority or entitlement; for Machiavellianism—statements about the acceptability of lying or manipulation for personal gain; for psychopathy—statements reflecting callousness or risk-taking behavior. The theoretical basis of SD3 lies in longer dark-trait questionnaires such as the *Narcissistic Personality Inventory*, *Mach-IV*, and *Self-Report Psychopathy Scale*. Jones and Paulhus demonstrated that SD3 retains sufficient content

validity while being concise, making it suitable for research purposes. Validation studies (N>1000) confirmed its three-factor structure and correlations with classical instruments (Jones, Paulhus, 2014). External validity was supported by correlations with self-reports and independent assessments. In Russia, SD3 was adapted and tested on a sample of 571 participants (Egorova, Sitnikova, Parshikova, 2015). The Russian adaptation confirmed the three-factor structure, with Cronbach's alphas of 0.72, 0.74, and 0.70 across scales. Validity was confirmed by correlations with other personality traits, such as negative associations with Honesty–Humility (HEXACO) and Agreeableness, supporting the use of SD3 as a reliable diagnostic tool for dark traits.

Light Triad Scale (LTS). Developed by Kaufman et al. (2019), this 12-item scale measures three prosocial traits: belief in humanity, humanism, and Kantianism (four items per trait). Items assess positive interpersonal orientations, such as "I try to treat others as though they have their own inherent worth and purpose." Respondents rate their agreement, and summed scores are calculated for each subscale. Validation studies (N>1500) confirmed high reliability (Cronbach's alphas > 0.80) and correlations with prosocial outcomes such as subjective well-being and self-transcendence. LTS negatively correlated with Dark Triad traits but also measured distinct constructs. In Russia, a pilot adaptation (Ilyichev, Zolotareva, 2023) confirmed the three-factor structure, though with moderate reliability (α = 0.59–0.63). Despite this, convergent validity was confirmed through expected correlations with Big Five traits and well-being indicators. Thus, LTS is considered a promising diagnostic tool for assessing positive moral traits.

Self-Actualization Test (SAT). Based on the same principles as the POI, the SAT consists of 126 paired statements of value-based or behavioral nature. Respondents select the statement most consistent with their views or behavior. The SAT measures self-actualization across two basic and several additional scales.

Proactive Personality Scale. Developed by Bateman and Crant (1993), this 17-item scale measures the tendency toward proactive behavior. Individuals with proactive

personalities tend to seek opportunities, show initiative, take action, and persist until goals are achieved.

Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Form A). This instrument consists of 57 items and measures extraversion–introversion and neuroticism, with an additional scale for assessing response sincerity. Form A and Form B contain different question wordings, allowing for repeated comparative research.

2.2.1. The justification for using the SD3 and LTS instruments in the context of ethical psychology.

The use of both the "Dark" and "Light" Triad questionnaires in a single study provides a comprehensive assessment of the moral and ethical profile of an individual. The SD3 measures tendencies associated with the so-called "dark" side — egocentrism, manipulation, aggression — traits that are related in psychology to insensitivity to morality and evil. In contrast, the LTS identifies traits reflecting the "light" worldview of the individual — humanism, belief in the good, and ethical principles of interaction. Together, these methods cover the two poles of the moral sphere: from cynical amorality to altruistic humanism.

In the context of studying the relationship between individuals' ethical positions and characterological traits related to the perception of good and evil, including both questionnaires is crucial.

First, the dark and light triad traits serve as operationalizations of personal predispositions to "evil" and "good," respectively, enabling the translation of abstract ethical positions into measurable psychological constructs.

Second, these instruments are reliable and valid, as confirmed in both foreign and Russian research, which guarantees the accuracy of the data obtained when applied to our sample.

Third, comparing the results of the SD3 and LTS with individuals' personal views on good and evil will allow us to identify subtle interconnections: for example, do those

with high "dark" traits tend to see the world in a more cynical, relativistic light, while those with "light" traits tend to hold more positive ethical attitudes? Previous studies show that dark traits correlate with unethical behavior and attitudes, while light traits correlate with prosocial values and virtuous behavior (Paulhus, Williams, 2002; Jonason et al., 2012; Furnham et al., 2013; Muris et al., 2017; Paulhus, 2014, p. 421). Therefore, the application of SD3 and LTS within one study is justified both theoretically and empirically. These tools complement each other and are relevant to the purpose of the study — to analyze how the personality dispositions of "darkness" and "light" are related to how an individual conceptualizes the categories of good and evil. Their inclusion in the methodological framework of the study ensures a comprehensive and well-grounded measurement of individual psychological features of the moral sphere of personality, allowing for a deeper investigation of the study's subject and object.

At the same time, the other methods used play an equally significant role in the overall diagnostic system. The author's *Attitudes toward Good and Evil* questionnaire helps to identify the typology of ethical positions of respondents, while the semantic differential method captures the cognitive-evaluative characteristics of the categories of good and evil. The Self-Actualization Test (SAT) and the Proactive Personality Scale (PPS) provide an operationalization of personality maturity, autonomy, and behavioral activity, which are significant for interpreting attitudes toward moral dilemmas. Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire, in addition to assessing basic temperament parameters, ensures control over the sincerity of responses, which is critically important for enhancing data validity. A more detailed justification for the choice of methods is provided in Section 2.3.

2.3. Organization of the Study

At the initial stage of the study, a theoretical analysis of the problem was conducted, revealing a lack of standardized methods for assessing the perception of the categories of good and evil, as well as attitudes toward their interrelationship. Consequently, it was decided to combine both standardized and non-standardized

methods to create a comprehensive toolset for studying representations of good and evil in their content and structural aspects.

Stages of Methodological Tool Development

Initially, the Semantic Differential (SD) method in its classical version by C. Osgood was used, which allows for evaluating the characteristics of good and evil through pairs of opposite adjectives. However, this method provided information only about the perception of these categories and did not reveal how respondents understood and defined the concepts of good and evil. What do they consider good, and what do they consider evil? In this regard, an author's questionnaire was developed, consisting of 10 open-ended questions. A pilot study on a sample of 62 respondents confirmed that combining SD with open-ended questions allowed for capturing individual semantic representations of good and evil. The results of this research were published in two articles (Yumkina, Kolkhonen, Mironenko, 2023).

The next step was to expand the methodological toolset: the questionnaire was supplemented with 11 closed-ended questions aimed at identifying attitudes toward the dyad of good and evil. This part of the questionnaire included 10 questions with fixed answer options, designed to determine three possible ethical positions: viewing good and evil as interconnected phenomena, their opposition, or a complete lack of connection between them. Thus, the complete version of the author's questionnaire *"Attitudes toward Good and Evil"* was formed.

Since the author's questionnaire remained non-standardized, three additional standardized methods were included in the study: C. Osgood's *Semantic Differential (SD)* — for analyzing the perception of good and evil, the *Dark Triad Questionnaire (SD3)*, and the *Light Triad Scale (LTS)* — for assessing character traits associated with ethical orientations.

These methods were conceptually aligned with the study's goals, as their structure presupposes dialectical opposition of categories (e.g., narcissism–humanism, Machiavellianism–Kantianism), which logically correlates with the questionnaire.

Additionally, the *Self-Actualization Test (SAT)* and the *Proactive Personality Scale (PPS)* were included in the study. These methods were used to test the hypothesis that self-actualization and proactivity are linked to attitudes toward the interrelationship of good and evil. It was hypothesized that respondents who perceive good and evil as complementary categories would demonstrate higher levels of self-actualization and proactivity compared to those who view these categories as mutually exclusive. Thus, these methods allowed for identifying characterological features related to different ethical orientations.

Furthermore, Eysenck's Personality Inventory (EPI) was included in the study. Its use was twofold. First, the lie scale was applied to detect dishonest responses and exclude respondents with a tendency to provide socially desirable answers. Second, the test allowed for verifying whether the identified groups were explained by basic personality traits, such as extraversion and introversion. This ensured that the identified categories of respondents truly differed in their attitudes toward the dyad of good and evil, rather than by other personality variables.

Data Collection

After receiving approval from the Ethics Committee of the St. Petersburg State Psychological and Pedagogical University (SPbGPU), data collection was organized. The Ethics Committee approved the research procedure, including the use of the author's questionnaire, standardized methods, and the study format. The survey was presented through a Google Form, where, in addition to the test methods, respondents filled out a demographic section containing data on age, place of residence, and educational level. Before starting the survey, participants reviewed an informed consent form attached to the survey, confirming their voluntary participation in the study.

Data collection took place from March 2024 to August 2024. Initially, 234 respondents participated in the study. However, since cultural and social differences between regions may influence ethical perceptions (Akimova, 2017; Kuzmina, Oganesova, 2021), it was decided to narrow the sample to respondents who were permanent residents of Saint Petersburg and citizens of Russia. This approach minimized the influence of regional differences and ensured data homogeneity. As a result, after applying the regional criterion, the sample consisted of 208 respondents.

After completing data collection, the sample was additionally checked using the Eysenck Lie Scale, which allowed for identifying and excluding 37 respondents who gave dishonest answers. The final analysis included 170 respondents.

2.3.1 Description of the Study Sample

A total of 170 respondents participated in the study (72% women, 28% men), aged between 22 and 35 years (M = 27.3, SD = 3.5), all with higher education and permanent residence in Saint Petersburg. Participants were selected randomly, and the survey was conducted online.

Upon analyzing the sample, it was found that 32% of the respondents were psychologists, 44% were humanities majors, and the remaining 24% worked in technical fields. Regarding marital status, 60% of respondents were not in relationships, 30% were in long-term relationships, and 10% were married.

After dividing the sample into groups based on professional orientation, marital status, and other variables, statistical processing revealed no significant differences in gender, age, education, or professional orientation.

All respondents were citizens of the Russian Federation and permanent residents of Saint Petersburg, which allowed for minimizing the influence of regional cultural factors that could potentially determine variability in ethical orientations.

The sample was formed through random selection: respondents independently filled out the questionnaire in an online format (Google Forms), with the link distributed

in specialized scientific and educational communities, as well as among students of the Faculty of Psychology at SPbSU. Data on the homogeneity of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

Characteristic	Value
Women	122 (72%)
Men	48 (28%)
Mean age (M, SD)	27.3 (3.5) years
Predominant age range	25–30 years
Education	100% higher education
Analysis of variance (F, p)	$F(2, 167) = 1.23$, $p = 0.29$
Kruskal–Wallis test (H, p)	$H = 2.67$, $p = 0.12$

A check for potential systematic differences in key demographic parameters (gender, age) was conducted. The results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed no statistically significant differences between the groups ($F(2, 167) = 1.23$, $p = 0.29$). Additionally, the Kruskal-Wallis test was applied, which also found no significant differences ($H = 2.67$, $p = 0.12$), confirming the homogeneity of the sample and its representativeness.

2.4. Methods of Statistical Data Processing

Mathematical data processing was carried out using statistical software Statistica and JASP. The following methods were used for data analysis:

2.4.1. Correlation Analysis

Significant connections between the scales of the Semantic Differential, Dark Triad, and Light Triad.

Correlation analysis was performed using Pearson's linear correlation to explore the relationships between the questionnaire indicators. This analysis identified statistically

2.4.2. Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was applied to reduce the number of variables (scales of the methods). The data from three methods were used in the factor analysis: Semantic Differential, Dark Triad, and Light Triad. To identify the latent structure of the variables, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used with the Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) method and Promax rotation. The choice of oblique rotation (Promax) was justified because the variables included in the analysis, such as the Dark and Light Triad scales, are conceptually related (Paulhus, Williams, 2002; Kaufman et al., 2019). Orthogonal rotation (Varimax) is not suitable in this case, as it assumes factor independence. The validity of the factorization was confirmed by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) analysis (KMO = 0.686) and the significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < 0.001$). The optimal number of factors was determined based on the parallel analysis method and the scree plot, which suggested a three-factor solution.

2.4.3. Cluster Analysis

Hierarchical cluster analysis (Hierarchical Clustering) was performed to identify groups of respondents based on the factors obtained. This was followed by verification through differences between clusters using ANOVA and Post Hoc tests.

Euclidean distance was used as the distance metric, and the Ward.D method was employed for clustering, ensuring compact and interpretable groups. Ward.D

hierarchical clustering was chosen as the optimal strategy to identify groups of respondents with different ethical positions and characterological traits.

The number of clusters (n = 4) was justified based on the BIC and AIC criteria, which indicated optimal division at k = 4, dendrogram analysis, and the examination of within-cluster heterogeneity. Theoretical interpretation also supported this division, with the four clusters reflecting different strategies for perceiving good, evil, and personality traits. Alternative models with 3 and 5+ clusters showed worse interpretability, confirming the appropriateness of the chosen division.

To verify the significance of differences between the identified clusters, one-way ANOVA was used, revealing statistically significant differences between the clusters. Post Hoc tests (Tukey HSD) further detailed the differences for each factor, identifying the specific clusters where significant differences existed. This analysis clarified which clusters showed pronounced differences in personality characteristics and ethical positions. Despite the moderate Silhouette Score (0.280), indicating relatively blurred cluster boundaries, the statistically significant differences confirmed the validity of the clustering.

2.4.4. Chi-Square Test

The chi-square test was applied to analyze the responses to the Attitudes toward Good and Evil questionnaire, allowing for the identification of statistically significant differences in answers between the identified clusters. This method was used to analyze the closed questions of the questionnaire, assessing the frequency of different answers provided by respondents regarding the interrelationship between good and evil.

2.4.5. ANOVA for SAT and PPS Scales

In addition to the methods described above, one-way ANOVA was used to analyze the differences between the identified clusters on the SAT and Proactive Personality Scale (PPS). Post Hoc tests (Tukey HSD) were then used to detail the differences between the clusters.

2.5 Main Stages of the Study

The study was conducted in several stages:

First Stage: Development of the Instrumentation

At this stage, the author's questionnaire *"Attitudes toward Good and Evil"* was created, including open-ended questions. To verify its validity, a pilot study was conducted, and the results were published. This stage ensured the pilot testing of the methodology and allowed for adjustments before further use.

Second Stage: Creation of the Battery of Methods and Data Collection

At this stage, the final battery of methods was formed, including the updated *"Attitudes toward Good and Evil"* questionnaire (with both open-ended and closed-ended questions). After the preparation of the instrumentation was completed, data collection was organized. Once the data collection was finished, the homogeneity of the sample was checked: data from respondents not meeting the required criteria were excluded, minimizing the influence of extraneous factors and ensuring the correctness of subsequent analysis.

Third Stage: Identification of Respondent Groups

At this stage, latent data structures were identified using mathematical methods of analysis. Correlation analysis, factor analysis, and cluster analysis were used. As a result, four groups of respondents were identified, differing in their perception of good and evil as well as in characterological traits.

Fourth Stage: Comparative Analysis of Groups by Quantitative Indicators

At this stage, the identified groups of respondents were checked. A comparison was made between the groups based on the results of the *"Attitudes toward Good and Evil"* questionnaire (analysis of closed questions) using the chi-square test. Additionally, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the self-actualization (SAT) and proactivity (PPS) scales to identify significant differences between the groups. Furthermore, a check for alignment with classical personality typologies was conducted

using the Eysenck test, ensuring that the identified groups were not merely reflective of typical distinctions between extraverts and introverts. The demographic characteristics were also analyzed, confirming the statistical insignificance of differences in gender and age.

Fifth Stage: Description of Groups

At this stage, the groups of respondents were described, highlighting their ethical positions, representations of the interrelationship between good and evil in the individual, and their characterological traits. The potential advantages and disadvantages of the identified positions were discussed, and conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

2.6. Conceptual Framework of the Study

To ensure conceptual clarity and consistency in definitions, the two central concepts of this study — *"representation"* and *"ethical position"* — are defined as follows:

Ethical representations of good and evil — a form of everyday consciousness (common sense knowledge) through which the social, material, and ideal realities are interpreted and organized in the categories of good and evil, which serve as poles of moral consciousness within the holistic unity of the worldview. These representations reflect the individual's attitude toward the categories of good and evil. In our study, two types of ethical representations of good and evil are theoretically justified and empirically demonstrated. In the first type, evil is interpreted as the absence of good, arising due to its deficiency. The second type considers good and evil as autonomous forces engaged in a complex dialectical interaction.

Ethical position — a stable, systematic formation that reflects the integrative understanding of good and evil in relation to characterological traits and is considered within the holistic unity. The ethical position includes ethical representations but is not limited to them. Its structure also integrates the characterological features of the subject,

which are interconnected with the ethical representations. These components do not exist in isolation; they are mutually conditioned and form an indivisible whole, possessing qualities that cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts. Typological variations of the ethical position, based on two types of ethical representations and characterological traits associated with the individual's activity and pro-social orientation, are empirically identified and described.

CHAPTER 3. RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICAL REPRESENTATIONS AND CHARACTEROLOGICAL FEATURES OF PERSONALITY

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the analysis of the relationships between representations of good and evil and personality traits described by the Dark and Light Triad scales.

3.1. The results of the study on characterological traits of personality, measured by the Dark and Light Triad tests.

Table 1 presents the mean values, standard deviations, as well as the minimum and maximum scores obtained in our sample for the Dark and Light Triad tests.

The scores on the Dark Triad scales (Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Psychopathy) range from moderate to high, with the most pronounced variability observed in the Narcissism scale (SD = 5.75). As for the Light Triad scales, their mean values were relatively moderate, and the standard deviations were relatively small (SD ranging from 2.5 to 2.8), which could potentially limit the strength of the correlations identified in the subsequent analysis.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Dark and Light Triad Scales

Scale	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	Min.	Max.
Machiavellianism	30.57	5.28	18	42
Narcissism	24.87	5.75	13	40
Psychopathy	19.52	4.96	10	39
Faith in Humanity	13.37	2.76	7	20
Humanism	15.48	2.56	8	20

Scale	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	Min.	Max.
Kantianism	15.15	2.48	8	20

To determine and assess the relationships between the studied characterological traits (indicators of the Dark and Light Triad tests), a correlation analysis was conducted using Pearson's linear correlation (Appendix 2).

The correlation analysis predictably showed positive correlations within both the Dark Triad and the Light Triad scales. In the Dark Triad, the Machiavellianism and Psychopathy scales have a statistically significant correlation ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$), while the Narcissism scale correlates with Psychopathy ($r = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$). However, the correlation between the Narcissism and Machiavellianism scales does not reach statistical significance ($r = 0.12$, $p = 0.128$).

Figure 1 presents the correlation matrix of the relationships between the Dark and Light Triad indicators.
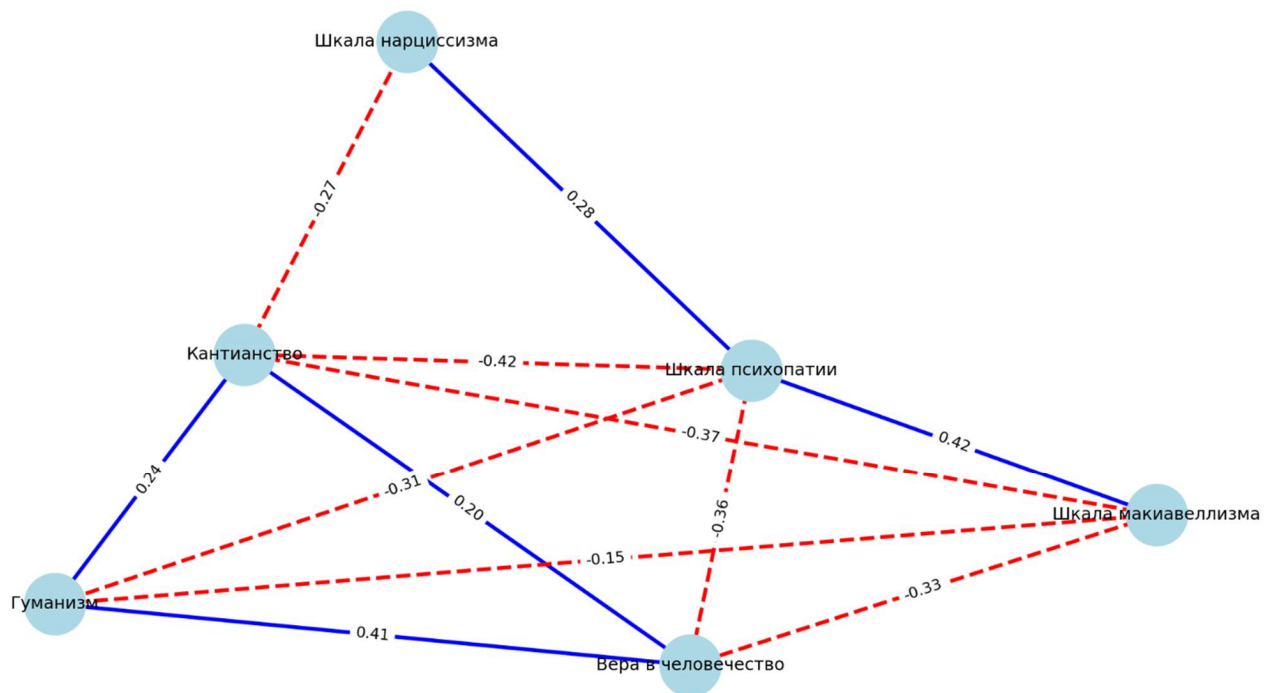
Figure 1. Correlations between Dark and Light Triad Scales

Note – Solid lines represent positive correlation relationships, while dashed lines represent negative correlations.

Within the Light Triad, all scales demonstrate statistically significant positive correlations with each other. The Humanity scale correlates with the Humanism scale ($r = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$) and with the Kantianism scale ($r = 0.20$, $p = 0.009$), while Humanism and Kantianism correlate with each other at the level of ($r = 0.24$, $p = 0.002$). These findings support the validity of the methods used, as positive links between Dark Triad traits were recorded in the original study on a sample of 245 students (Paulhus, Williams, 2002), and positive correlations between Light Triad scales were confirmed in the research by the author of the Light Triad method, S. B. Kaufman (Kaufman, 2019).

The scales from the Light and Dark Triad methods show negative correlations with each other. Opposing content scales, such as Machiavellianism and Kantianism, exhibit a statistically significant negative correlation ($r = -0.37$, $p < 0.001$), which is

quite expected, especially when comparing statements used in the Machiavellianism scale: "Almost everyone can be manipulated" and the statement from the Kantianism scale: "I tend to treat others as ends (seeing value in everyone), not as means to my own ends."

Additionally, the Kantianism scale shows negative correlations with all three Dark Triad traits: Machiavellianism (r = -0.37, p < 0.001), Narcissism (r = -0.27, p < 0.001), and Psychopathy (r = -0.42, p < 0.001). The Humanity scale negatively correlates with Machiavellianism (r = -0.33, p < 0.001) and Psychopathy (r = -0.36), while the Humanism scale correlates negatively with Machiavellianism (r = -0.15, p < 0.001) and Psychopathy (r = -0.31, p < 0.001). Meanwhile, the Narcissism scale does not show negative correlations with the Humanity (r = 0.01, p = 0.862) and Humanism (r = 0.06, p = 0.445) scales. These values are statistically insignificant, but they deserve attention as they are positive, unlike other Dark Triad scales.

3.2. Results of the Empirical Study on Representations of Good and Evil Using the Semantic Differential Method

Table 2 presents the mean values, standard deviations, as well as the minimum and maximum scores obtained in our sample.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for SD

Measure	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	Мин.	Макс.
Оценка_Добро	57.21	7.84	34	70
Сила_Добро	30.27	4.79	20	43
Активность_Добро	30.11	4.30	21	41
Оценка_Зло	31.05	11.60	11	56

Measure	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	Мин.	Макс.
Сила_Зло	28.44	6.07	14	42
Активность_Зло	29.46	5.30	19	43

The results of the correlation analysis of the Semantic Differential indicators revealed an inverse correlation between the evaluation of good and the evaluation of evil ($r = -0.68$, $p < 0.001$) — this is the strongest relationship identified in this analysis. There was also a correlation between the strength and activity of evil ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$). The correlation between the strength and activity of good was found to be significant ($r = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, there was a correlation between the evaluation of good and the strength of good ($r = 0.23$, $p = 0.002$). All correlations within the modalities of the evil object showed significant positive correlations at the level of $p < 0.05$ (Figure 1).
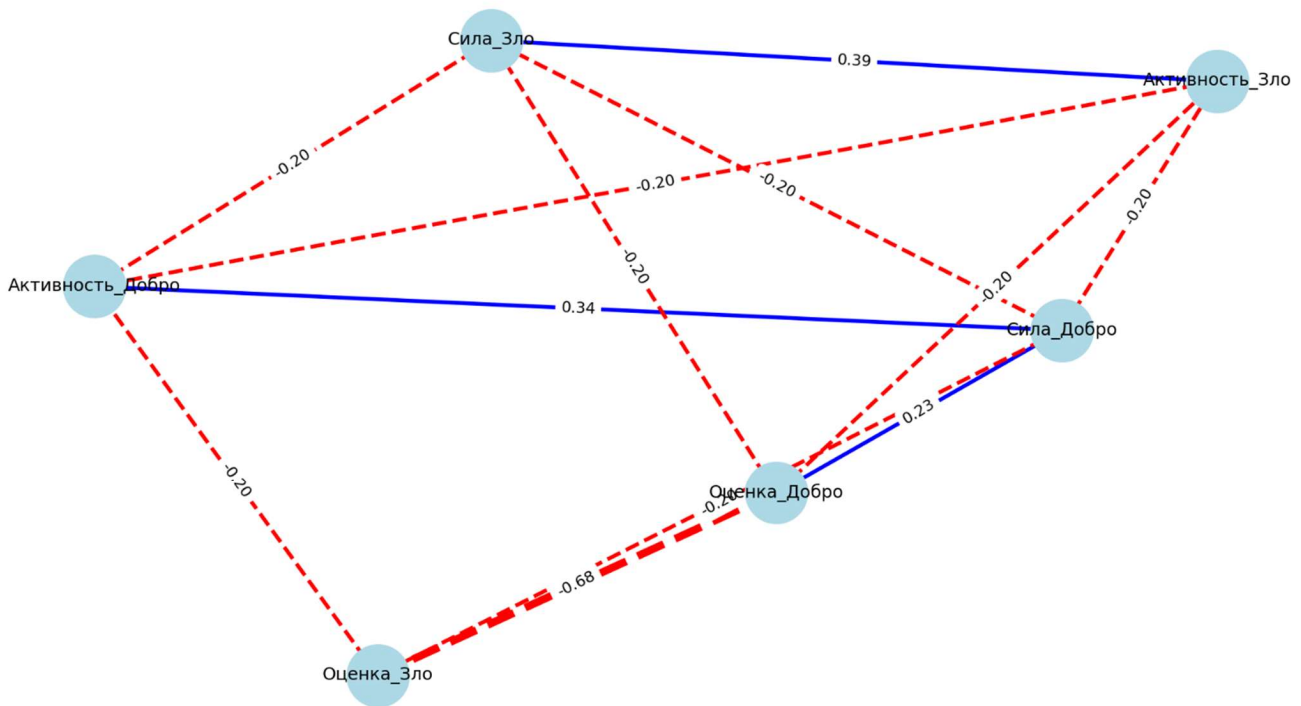
Figure 2. Correlation Relationships Between Modalities of the
Semantic Differential (Good and Evil)

Note 1 – Solid lines represent positive correlation relationships, while dashed lines represent negative correlations.

Note 2 – The strongest negative correlation between the evaluation of good and evil (r = -0.68) is highlighted by a bold dashed line.

All modalities within the "good" object (evaluation, strength, and activity) show significant inverse correlations ($p < 0.05$) with the corresponding modalities of the "evil" object. The data indicate that the modalities describing good generally have higher mean values compared to the modalities describing evil. Additionally, the *Evaluation of Evil* scale shows the highest variability (SD = 11.60), which may indicate a heterogeneous perception of evil within the sample.

3.3. Study of the Relationships Between Semantic Differential Modalities and Personality Traits (Triads)

The correlation analysis between the Semantic Differential indicators and the Dark and Light Triad scales showed that:

The evaluation of good positively correlates with the Humanity scale ($r = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$), the Humanism scale ($r = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$), and the Kantianism scale ($r = 0.27$, $p < 0.001$). The evaluation of good negatively correlates with the Machiavellianism scale ($r = -0.22$, $p < 0.001$) and the Psychopathy scale ($r = -0.34$, $p < 0.001$). The evaluation of good positively correlates with the Narcissism scale, but not at a statistically significant level ($r = 0.06$, $p = 0.453$). Figure 3 presents the correlation matrix.
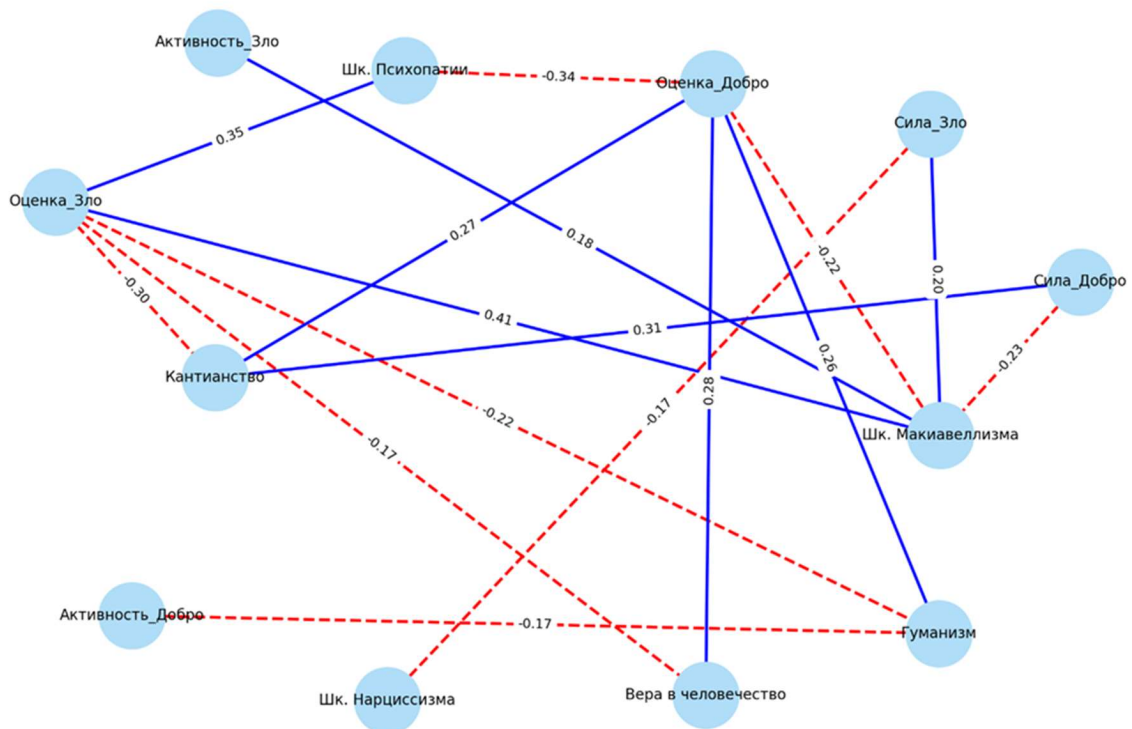
Figure 3. Relationships Between Semantic Differential Modalities and Traits of the Dark and Light Triads

Note – Solid lines represent positive correlation relationships, while dashed lines represent negative correlations.

The strength modality for the "good" object negatively correlates with the Machiavellianism scale ($r = -0.23$, $p = 0.004$) and positively correlates with the Kantianism scale ($r = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$). The activity modality for the "good" object has only one statistically significant correlation — with the Humanism scale ($r = -0.17$, $p = 0.026$).

The evaluation of evil shows a positive statistically significant correlation with the Machiavellianism scale ($r = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$) and the Psychopathy scale ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$). It also shows negative statistically significant correlations with all three scales of the *Light Triad* test: with the Humanity scale ($r = -0.17$, $p = 0.030$), Humanism ($r = -0.22$, $p = 0.005$), and Kantianism ($r = -0.30$, $p < 0.001$).

The strength of evil positively correlates with the Machiavellianism scale ($r = 0.20$, $p = 0.022$) and negatively correlates with the Narcissism scale ($r = -0.17$, $p = 0.046$). The latter correlation stands out as an exception to the general trend, where the "evil" object positively correlates with Dark Triad traits.

The activity of evil statistically significantly correlates only with the Machiavellianism scale ($r = 0.18$, $p = 0.022$).

An interesting point to note is that the activity modality in both objects has only one significant correlation. In the "good" object, it is a negative correlation with Humanism, while in the "evil" object, it is a positive correlation with Machiavellianism.

Overall, the correlation analysis predictably showed significant consistency within each method's scales and a negative correlation between the objects "good" and "evil" in the Semantic Differential.

3.4. Factor Analysis of the Semantic Differential Indicators of Good and Evil and the Dark and Light Triad Scores

To reduce the number of variables and identify latent factors describing the relationship between ethical representations of good and evil and the scores on the Dark and Light Triad scales, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted. The analysis used data from 170 respondents.

Methodology:

The Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) method with Promax oblique rotation was used. This choice was justified by the fact that the scales used in the factor model are empirically and theoretically not strictly independent. For example, the traits of the *Dark Triad* (Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Psychopathy) are positively correlated with each other (Paulhus, Williams, 2002), and similarly, the scales of the *Light Triad* (Kantianism, Humanism, and Belief in Humanity) demonstrate internal consistency (Kaufman et al., 2019). The Semantic Differential indicators (evaluation, strength, activity) are also interconnected and form a complex structure of representations of good and evil. Therefore, correlations between the extracted factors are more realistic than assuming their complete independence. Unlike orthogonal methods (e.g., Varimax), which force factors to be independent, the oblique method (Promax) allows for correlations between them, preventing distortions in the data structure (Gorsuch, 1983; Tabachnick, Fidell, 2019). If the factors in real data are independent, their correlation coefficients will be close to zero, effectively turning the model into an orthogonal one. Our choice of rotation method aligns with the theoretical assumptions of the study and the correlation analysis. Since this study assumes that the personality traits and evaluations on the SD scales may form related clusters, the use of oblique rotation allows for a structure that most accurately reflects the real relationships between the variables (Cattell, 1978).

Factor Determination:

The number of factors was determined based on the screen plot (Figure 1) and parallel analysis. The scree plot clearly shows an inflection point after the third factor, indicating the presence of three stable latent factors. This decision was also confirmed by the parallel analysis method, in which the eigenvalues of the empirical data exceeded the values obtained for random data. Therefore, the choice of the three-factor model was statistically justified.
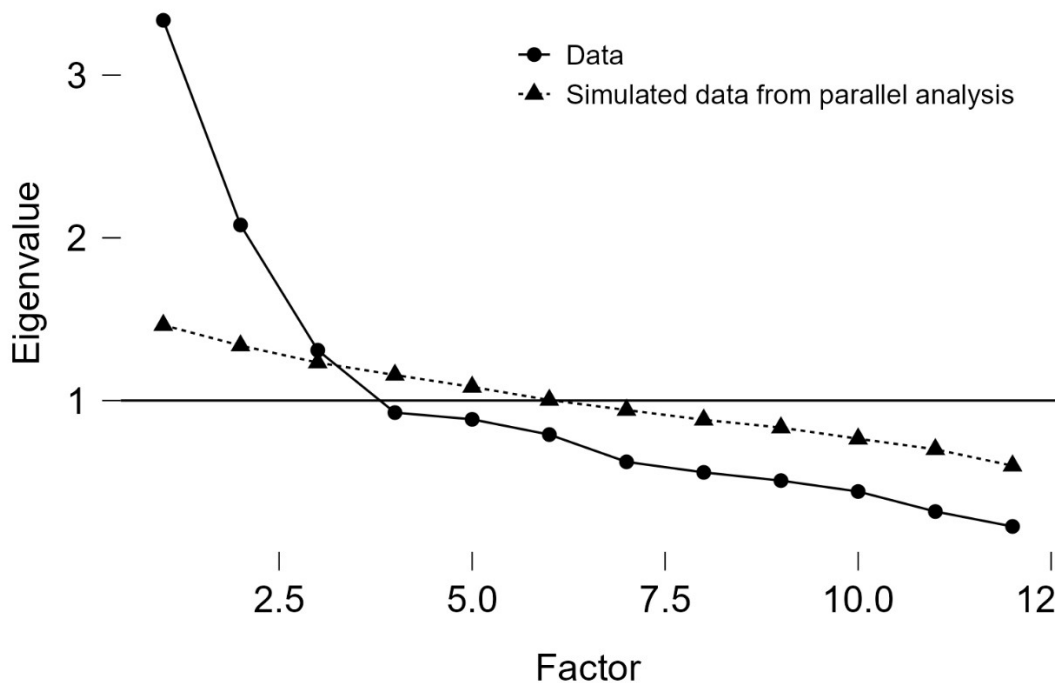
Graph 1. Scree plot

The obtained three-factor model explains 51% of the variance, which meets the standard criteria for factor analysis in the social sciences. According to research (Costello, Osborne, 2005; Williams et al., 2010; Tabachnick, Fidell, 2019), models explaining variance in the range of 50-60% are widely used and considered acceptable for the interpretation of psychological data.

To assess the suitability of the data for factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test for sample adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were conducted (Table 3).

Table 3. Sample Adequacy Values According to the Kaiser–Meyer–
Olkin Criterion

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test	
	MSA
Overall MSA	0.686
Оценка_Добро	0.672
Сила_Добро	0.790
Активность_Добро	0.521
Оценка_Зло	0.696
Сила_Зло	0.770
Активность_Зло	0.638
Шкала макиавеллизма	0.647
Шкала нарциссизма	0.511
Шкала психопатии	0.766
Вера в человечество	0.692
Гуманизм	0.650
Кантианство	0.731

The overall KMO value was 0.686, indicating an acceptable level of sample adequacy for factorization. According to Kaiser's (1974) classification, values between 0.6 and 0.7 suggest satisfactory data suitability for factor analysis. The individual KMO values for the variables ranged from 0.511 to 0.790, confirming their acceptability for inclusion in the model. The value of $\chi^2 = 560.651$, df = 66, p < 0.001 indicates a statistically significant deviation from the identity correlation matrix. The variables demonstrate sufficient interrelatedness, which justifies the application of factor analysis. The results of the preliminary tests confirm the adequacy of the sample and the justification of the factorization conducted. Additionally, a chi-square test (χ^2 =

114.308, df = 33, p < 0.001) was performed to verify the model's fit, which also confirmed the statistical significance of the factor structure.

3.4.1 Interpretation of the Factors

The identified factors reflect key latent structures that define the representation of good and evil and their relationship with personality traits. To interpret the factors, factor loadings were analyzed, which show which variables are most strongly associated with each of the extracted factors (Table 4).

Table 4. Factor Loading Matrix of Variables

Factor Loadings			
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Uniqueness
Гуманизм	0.651			0.653
Вера в человечество	0.596			0.683
Оценка_Добро	0.567			0.545
Оценка_Зло	-0.477	0.527		0.353
Шкала психопатии	-0.464		0.472	0.472
Шкала макиавеллизма	-0.390			0.670
Активность_Зло		0.656		0.581
Сила_Зло		0.641		0.580
Сила_Добро		-0.569		0.617
Активность_Добро		-0.561		0.691
Шкала нарциссизма			0.684	0.644
Кантианство			-0.518	0.553

Note — The table presents the factor loadings of the variables according to the results of factor analysis with Varimax rotation. The values reflect the degree of

association of each variable with the identified factors. The Uniqueness column shows the proportion of unique variance.

1. First Factor: Acceptance of Good

High positive factor loadings on the Humanism scale (0.651), Belief in Humanity scale (0.596), and Evaluation of Good scale (0.567) indicate a holistic positive worldview, moral qualities, and a striving for higher moral ideals.

- Humanism involves respect for the human being as a self-valuing person, with the right to freedom, development, and self-determination (Maslow, 1968; Fromm, 1955). In the humanistic paradigm, good is understood not as an external norm but as an internally experienced orientation towards respect, empathy, and recognition of others. Here, humanism expresses unconditional acceptance of others and their value.

- Belief in Humanity, as noted by E. Fromm (1947), represents an attitude based on basic trust in people, belief in their ability for cooperation, goodwill, and moral stability. This can be seen as a projection of acceptance onto the social group: while humanism is about accepting individual persons, belief in humanity is about accepting the group as a moral agent.

- Evaluation of Good (0.567) indicates not just a cognitive categorization but also an affective and evaluative involvement. A high evaluation of good implies the integration of these representations into self-assessment and worldview structures. Research in lexical personality models shows that such attitudes correlate with personality maturity and moral integration (Osgood et al., 1957; Saucier, 1994).

This factor reflects not just agreement with the existence of good but a commitment to it as a value choice, trusting in the moral potentials of both individuals and humanity. This factor can be interpreted as the latent construct "Acceptance of Good", understood not in a pragmatic sense but in an existential-moral sense—as an

inner readiness to recognize values, dignity, and human nature as meaningful guides in relationships with oneself and others. The term "acceptance" here is not derived from any particular scale but reflects the semantic and ethical logic of the factor construction, integrating moral and value-oriented attitudes. It is conceptually rooted in the humanistic tradition of psychological analysis.

2. Second Factor: Acceptance of Evil

The second factor groups variables related to the perception of evil as possessing the characteristics of strength, activity, and evaluative significance. High positive loadings on the Activity of Evil scale (0.656), Strength of Evil scale (0.641), and Evaluation of Evil scale (0.527) indicate a complex and multidimensional perception of the concept of evil.

- This pattern is interpreted as a latent attitude reflecting the recognition of evil as a real and significant part of human experience, not just an abstract or exclusively rejected construct.

- The Semantic Differential method (Osgood, Suci & Tannenbaum, 1957) allows for assessing not the content of the object but the affective-meaning relationship to it, expressed across three main scales: evaluation (good–evil), strength (weak–strong), and activity (passive–active). When applied to the concept of "evil," this method allows for reconstructing an individual's attitude toward evil not only as destructive but also as influential, strong, and dynamic, capable of impacting interpersonal and social spheres.

- The uniqueness of the model stems from its focus on the object "evil" as a target for evaluation, which distinguishes it from most studies using the semantic differential that do not focus on ethical categories as independent objects. This adds novelty to the study and calls for careful philosophical-psychological interpretation. Philosophical traditions (Agulov, 2004; Ricoeur, 1986) suggest that evil can be perceived not just as the opposite of good but as a structural

element of human existence—a necessary part of the moral field that must be dealt with, even if not approved.

Thus, interpreting this factor as **"Acceptance of Evil"** does not mean justifying or positively valuing evil. Rather, it reflects a cognitive and existential stance in which the individual acknowledges the existence of evil, its strength, activity, and influence. This attitude may include ambivalence: on one hand, a critical perception, and on the other, the recognition of its reality and significance as a force in the world and in interpersonal relations. This factor represents the phenomenon of accepting destruction as an ontological element, included in the structure of life and psyche. It can be interpreted in terms of integrating the "shadow side" (Jung, 1959) and understood in the logic of moral maturity as the readiness to recognize and understand evil without reducing it to absolute evil, which should be entirely eradicated (Baudrillard, 2021).

3. Third Factor: Dark Dyad

The third factor is characterized by a high positive contribution from the Narcissism scale (0.684), a moderate positive contribution from the Psychopathy scale (0.472), and a negative loading on the Kantianism scale (-0.518), which allows us to describe it as the "Dark Dyad". Unlike the classic Dark Triad, Machiavellianism is minimally represented here. This factor reflects the manifestation of antisocial traits, with a focus on grandiose self-perception and a lack of empathy.

- An interesting feature is the negative loading on the Kantianism scale, which may indicate the exclusion of universal moral principles and a rejection of morality as the foundation for interaction. This factor could describe a personality prone to self-aggrandizement, dominance, and aggressive behavior, with the absence of an internal moral regulator.

- The image of a strategically oriented yet unscrupulous subject driven by vanity and power emerges here.

Ethical Positions

We believe that the identified factors, which combine ethical representations and characterological features, can be considered as indicators of different ethical positions. Specifically, the combination of the first and second factors reflects representations in which good and evil are contrasted, but in different ways. We can hypothesize the existence of at least two ethical positions:

- First Ethical Position (Dialectical Ethical Position): This position stems from the idea of the interconnection and synergy of good and evil, where evil is not excluded but perceived as a necessary and meaningful element of the moral field. The focus is on the dialectical interaction of these categories, where evil may serve not only a destructive function but also a transformative one. This position is termed Dialectical Ethical Position in this text.

- Second Ethical Position (Normative Ethical Position): This position is characterized by the desire to eliminate evil, viewing it as lacking independent value and not contributing to the enhancement of good. It emphasizes strict moral boundaries and the rejection of the functionality of evil in the moral structure of the personality. It is oriented toward clear ethical boundaries and the exclusion of any justification for evil. This position is termed Normative Ethical Position in this text.

To empirically test the hypothesis of the existence of different ethical positions, a cluster analysis will be conducted in the next stage of the research. This will help identify stable groups of respondents with different combinations of factor weights and determine which combinations of ethical representations and characterological traits are most characteristic of the different ethical positions.

3.5 Cluster Analysis and Description of the Identified Groups of Respondents

The study of ethical positions of the individual required the identification of stable groups of respondents with different representations of the relationship between good and evil. For this purpose, clustering was applied, which made it possible to

structure the data and distinguish latent groups based on the obtained factors. The use of cluster analysis was driven by the need for empirical verification of the two theoretically described types of representations of the relationship between good and evil, as well as to identify their connection with characterological traits. The following section presents the methodological justification for the choice of clustering method, the characteristics of the identified clusters, and the verification of the statistical significance of the differences between them.

3.5.1 Choice of Clustering Method and Evaluation of Model Quality

To identify groups of respondents based on their perception of good, evil, and personality characteristics, a hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted, followed by verification using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and analysis of differences between clusters (ANOVA, Post Hoc tests). Euclidean distance was used as the distance metric, and Ward.D was chosen as the clustering method, ensuring compact and interpretable groups.

Before making the final choice of clustering method, preliminary testing with the K-means algorithm was carried out, in which respondents were divided into four clusters based on theoretical assumptions. However, this method showed significant limitations. First, there was a pronounced imbalance in cluster sizes: out of 170 respondents, one cluster contained 60 people, while another included only 18 respondents. This indicates that K-means tends to minimize within-cluster variance but does not account for the complex structural features of the data. Second, the K-means method assumes strict boundaries between clusters, whereas in psychological research—especially in the domain of moral representations—group boundaries are usually blurred. As a result, K-means did not adequately capture the complex structure of the perception of good and evil. These conclusions are consistent with the findings of a previous study (Kolhonen, Mironenko, 2025).

The choice of four clusters was justified by the AIC (238.73) and BIC (276.36) criteria, which indicated that a four-group division was the most informative. The

alternative three-cluster model yielded less distinguishable groups, while the model with five or more clusters resulted in excessive segmentation, reducing data interpretability.

Within-cluster heterogeneity was distributed evenly, allowing for an interpretable model (Table 5). The coefficient of determination (R^2) = 0.576 shows that 57.6% of the total variance is explained by the identified clusters. This indicator is acceptable, though not ideal, and points to the presence of a stable cluster structure. The Silhouette Score = 0.280 indicates that the boundaries between clusters are blurred. However, the low silhouette coefficient is not a critical limitation in this study, since the ethical categories of good and evil do not have strict boundaries but represent a continuum, making some blurring of cluster boundaries quite expected.

Table 5. Summary Indicators of the Hierarchical Clustering Model

Clusters	N	R²	AIC	BIC	Silhouette
4	170	0,576	238,73	276,36	0,28

Additionally, the evaluation of cluster characteristics showed that the group sizes varied from 20 to 64 respondents, indicating a balanced distribution of the sample. The explained proportion of within-cluster heterogeneity reflects different levels of variability within the clusters: for the first and second clusters, this indicator was 0.342 and 0.339, respectively, reflecting higher homogeneity, whereas the third and fourth clusters demonstrated greater internal variability (0.186 and 0.133).

The within-cluster sum of squares (WSS) indicates the degree of similarity among respondents within each cluster: the highest values (73.346 and 72.770) were observed in the first two clusters, while the third and fourth had considerably lower

values (40.029 and 28.582), which may indicate a higher degree of specificity of these groups.

The silhouette coefficient analysis shows that the distinction between clusters varies, with the clearest boundaries observed for the third and fourth clusters (Silhouette Score = 0.321 and 0.317, respectively), while the first two demonstrate more blurred boundaries (0.280 and 0.242). This, however, is expected in the context of the studied moral orientations.

The analysis of total and between-cluster variance further confirms the quality of the identified cluster structure. The total sum of squares (TSS) was 507, reflecting the overall level of data variability. The between-cluster sum of squares (BSS) was 292.27, indicating that a significant part of the total variability is explained by differences between the identified groups (Table 6).

Table 6. Summary Characteristics of the Cluster Model

Cluster	Size	Explained proportion within-cluster heterogeneity	Within sum of squares	Silhouette score
1	62	0,342	73,346	0,28
2	64	0,339	72,77	0,242
3	24	0,186	40,029	0,321
4	20	0,133	28,582	0,317

Note — The between-cluster sum of squares for the 4-cluster model is 292.27. The total sum of squares is 507.

3.5.2 Description of Clusters

As a result of the cluster analysis, four groups of respondents were identified, differing in the expression of the factors of acceptance of good, acceptance of evil, and the dark dyad (Table 7).

Table 7. Mean Values of Factors in Clusters (Acceptance of Good, Acceptance of Evil, and Dark Dyad)

Cluster	Acceptance of Good	Acceptance of Evil	Dark Dyad
Cluster 1	0,396	0,330	-0,827
Cluster 2	-0,093	-0,258	0,512
Cluster 3	-1,476	1,189	1,402
Cluster 4	0,841	-1,625	-0,759

The first cluster is characterized by moderately positive values of the factor of acceptance of good (M = 0.396) and acceptance of evil (M = 0.330), which reflects the respondents' readiness to accept both categories as legitimate. At the same time, this cluster demonstrates a negative value on the dark dyad factor (M = -0.827), indicating a low expression of dark personality traits such as narcissism and psychopathy. Thus, respondents in this group tend to acknowledge the dialectical interrelation of the categories of good and evil while being characterized by low levels of manipulativeness and antisocial tendencies.

The second cluster demonstrates slightly negative values of the factors of acceptance of good (M = -0.093) and acceptance of evil (M = -0.258), which indicates a distanced attitude toward moral categories. However, the values on the dark dyad factor (M = 0.512) are positive, pointing to a higher level of narcissism and psychopathy compared to the first cluster. These respondents may be distinguished by a pragmatic approach to moral issues and less pronounced ethical reflection.

The third cluster is characterized by the most pronounced negative orientation toward the acceptance of good (M = -1.476), while the values of acceptance of evil (M = 1.189) are the highest among all clusters. This result points to a group of respondents inclined to justify evil as a social phenomenon or to use it instrumentally. At the same time, the high positive score on the dark dyad (M = 1.402) indicates strong antisocial tendencies, allowing this cluster to be described as a group with a highly expressed dark dyad of personality traits that accepts evil and may use it.

The fourth cluster has the highest values on the factor of acceptance of good (M = 0.841) and, conversely, the lowest on the factor of acceptance of evil (M = -1.625). This indicates the presence of a group of respondents who strongly reject evil as an acceptable concept and adhere to a strictly positive moral model. We assume that this group is committed to the first ethical position. This cluster also demonstrates a negative value on the dark dyad (M = -0.759), which points to a low expression of manipulative and egocentric personality traits.

The obtained results indicate that respondents' ethical representations and characterological traits form four distinct groups reflecting different ethical positions of the individual — from a dialectical perception of good and evil to the pronounced rejection of one of the categories, accompanied by varying degrees of narcissism, psychopathy, humanism, and belief in humanity. These differences are subject to further clarification through analysis of variance, which will allow for the identification of statistically significant differences between the groups.

3.5.3 Verification of the Significance of Differences Between Clusters

For each of the factors (Acceptance of Good, Acceptance of Evil, Dark Dyad), a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to test for statistically significant differences between the clusters (Table 8).

Table 8. Results of One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the
Factors: Acceptance of Good, Acceptance of Evil, and Dark Dyad

Фактор	df (группы, остаток)	F	p	η^2	M (Кл.1)	M (Кл.2)	M (Кл.3)	M (Кл.4)
Принятие добра	3, 166	37.823	<.001	0.454	0.351	-0.082	-1.307	0.744
Принятие зла	3, 121.597	82.870	<.001	0.578	0.292	-0.228	1.052	-1.437
Тёмная диада	3, 64.685	107.220	<.001	0.697	-0.672	0.416	1.140	-0.617

Note — The values of the F-statistic, degrees of freedom, significance level (p), effect size (η^2), as well as the mean values of the factors for each cluster are presented.

The analysis of differences for the factor *Acceptance of Good* showed a statistically significant cluster membership effect, $F(3, 166) = 37.823$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.454$. This indicator explains 45.4% of the variance, which indicates pronounced differences between the groups. The mean values show that the highest levels of acceptance of good are characteristic of respondents in the fourth cluster ($M = 0.744$), whereas the third group demonstrates the lowest value for this factor ($M = -1.307$). The first and second clusters show intermediate values, with the first cluster ($M = 0.351$) scoring higher than the second ($M = -0.082$). These results confirm the differences in the moral orientations of the identified clusters.

For the factor *Acceptance of Evil*, statistically significant differences between clusters were also found, $F(3, 121.597) = 82.870$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.578$. In this case, the differences between clusters are even more pronounced, since 57.8% of the variance is explained by group membership. The highest level of acceptance of evil was observed in the third cluster ($M = 1.052$), consistent with its high tolerance for morally ambiguous or antisocial practices. At the same time, the lowest values for this factor were recorded in the fourth cluster ($M = -1.437$), reflecting its clear orientation toward

the moral unacceptability of evil. The first and second clusters occupy intermediate positions, but the second cluster (M = -0.228) demonstrates a more restrained stance toward evil compared to the first cluster (M = 0.292) (Table 8).

The *Dark Dyad* factor also demonstrated significant differences between groups, $F(3, 64.685) = 107.220$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.697$, meaning this factor explains 69.7% of the variance — the highest among all indicators. The highest Dark Dyad values were recorded in the third cluster (M = 1.140), indicating elevated narcissism and psychopathy. The lowest scores were observed in the first (M = -0.672) and fourth clusters (M = -0.617), confirming their low tendency toward manipulative and egocentric behavior. Interestingly, the second cluster demonstrated a positive value (M = 0.416), indicating a moderately expressed predisposition to these personality traits (Table 8).

Thus, the analysis confirmed statistically significant differences between the clusters across all three factors. The next stage is to refine these differences using Post Hoc tests (Tukey HSD).

Analysis of Pairwise Differences Between Clusters (Post Hoc Tests, Tukey HSD) For a more in-depth examination of differences between clusters, a Post Hoc test (Tukey HSD) was conducted, which made it possible to determine between which groups statistically significant differences occurred for each factor (Table 9).

Table 9. Summary Table of Post Hoc Tests (Tukey HSD) for the Factors of Acceptance of Good, Acceptance of Evil, and Dark Dyad

Фактор	Кластеры	Mean Difference	Cohen's d	p(Tukey HSD)	** p < .01,
*** p < .001					
Принятие добра	1 vs 2	0.433	0.656	0.002	**
Принятие добра	1 vs 3	1.658	2.510	<.001	***
Принятие добра	1 vs 4	-0.394	-0.596	0.098	
Принятие добра	2 vs 3	1.225	1.855	<.001	***

Фактор	Кластеры	Mean Difference	Cohen's d	p(Tukey HSD)	** p < .01,
Принятие добра	2 vs 4	-0.827	-1.252	<.001	***
Принятие добра	3 vs 4	-2.051	-3.107	<.001	***
Принятие зла	1 vs 2	0.520	0.897	< .001	***
Принятие зла	1 vs 3	-0.760	-1.310	< .001	***
Принятие зла	1 vs 4	1.729	2.983	< .001	***
Принятие зла	2 vs 3	-1.280	-2.207	< .001	***
Принятие зла	2 vs 4	1.210	2.086	< .001	***
Принятие зла	3 vs 4	2.489	4.293	< .001	***
Тёмная диада	1 vs 2	-1.089	-2.412	< .001	***
Тёмная диада	1 vs 3	-1.813	-4.016	< .001	***
Тёмная диада	1 vs 4	-0.055	-0.122	0.965	
Тёмная диада	2 vs 3	-0.724	-1.604	< .001	***
Тёмная диада	2 vs 4	1.034	2.290	< .001	***
P-value and confidence intervals adjusted for comparing a family of 4 estimates (ci for mean difference corrected using the tukey method; ci for effect size corrected using the bonferroni method).					

Note — The p-values and confidence intervals were adjusted using the Tukey method for mean differences and the Bonferroni method for effect size correction.

P-value and confidence intervals adjusted for comparing a family of 4 estimates (ci for mean difference corrected using the tukey method; ci for effect size corrected using the bonferroni method).

Acceptance of Good. The test results showed that the differences between the third cluster (M = -1.307) and all other groups are statistically significant (p < .001, Cohen's d = 2.510), confirming its pronounced negative orientation toward the category of good (Tables 8, 9). Significant differences were also observed between the third and the second clusters (p < .001, Cohen's d = 1.855), as well as between the third and the

fourth (p < .001, Cohen's d = -3.107), demonstrating the stability of this group's distinctions. However, the differences between the first and fourth clusters were not significant (p = 0.098, Cohen's d = -0.596), indicating the absence of marked distinctions between these groups. This result confirms that although the first and fourth clusters show similar levels of acceptance of good, their principal difference lies in their attitude toward evil. The fourth cluster adheres to an ethical position in which evil hinders development and must be eradicated (it rejects evil, M = -1.625), whereas the first cluster allows for the possibility of its existence as a factor contributing to development (M = 0.330) (Table 7).

Acceptance of Evil. The largest differences were recorded between the third cluster (M = 1.052) and the fourth cluster (M = -1.437), confirmed by high statistical significance (p < .001, Cohen's d = 4.293). Substantial differences were also observed between the third cluster and the second (M = -0.228, p < .001, Cohen's d = 2.207), as well as between the first and third clusters (M = 0.292 vs. -1.813, p < .001, Cohen's d = 2.412). However, the difference between the first and second clusters was not significant (p = 0.965, Cohen's d = -0.122), indicating similarity in their views on evil (Tables 8, 9). Yet, their fundamental difference lies in the expression of the *Dark Dyad* factor, which is not characteristic of the first cluster (M = -0.827) but is present in the second cluster (M = 0.512). This indicates the existence of two groups with similar perceptions of evil but differing levels of narcissistic and psychopathic personality traits (Table 7).

Dark Dyad. The *Dark Dyad* factor showed the most pronounced differences, especially between the third cluster (M = 1.140) and the first (M = -0.672, p < .001, Cohen's d = 3.107), as well as between the third and the fourth (M = -0.617, p < .001, Cohen's d = 3.894). These data confirm the hypothesis of a group of respondents with high levels of antisocial traits. Substantial differences were also observed between the second and fourth clusters (M = 0.416 vs. -0.617, p < .001, Cohen's d = 2.290), indicating a stronger tendency of the second cluster toward manipulative attitudes (Tables 8, 9).

General Conclusion on ANOVA and Post Hoc Tests

The conducted Post Hoc analysis confirmed significant differences between clusters across most factors, but also revealed certain overlaps between the first and second clusters in terms of acceptance of good and evil, as well as between the first and fourth in terms of acceptance of evil. However, the key difference between the first and second clusters lies in the Dark Dyad factor, which shows a significant divergence. This indicates the presence of two groups of respondents who are similar in their attitudes toward good and evil but differ in the degree of narcissistic and psychopathic traits. This result requires additional analysis, particularly regarding the level of self-actualization in these groups.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed that the first and fourth clusters demonstrate similar levels of acceptance of good, but differ fundamentally in their attitude toward evil. It is possible that the fourth cluster is characterized by the conviction that evil hinders development and must be eradicated, while the first cluster allows for its existence as a possible factor in development. This distinction points to the presence of different ethical positions among respondents.

Additionally, it was established that the first and second clusters are similar in their perception of good and evil, but their key difference lies in the Dark Dyad factor, which is expressed only in the second cluster. This indicates the existence of two groups of respondents with a similar ethical position, involving the simultaneous acceptance of good and evil, but differing in the degree of narcissism and psychopathy — a finding that requires further discussion.

The analysis of differences between clusters, conducted using ANOVA and Post Hoc tests, not only confirmed the statistical significance of the identified groups but also revealed new patterns that deepen the understanding of the structure of respondents' ethical positions.

The third cluster, which accepts evil, is largely determined by a high level of narcissistic and psychopathic traits (the Dark Dyad), which may indicate a strict link between this ethical position and these characterological features. Within this cluster, no differentiation is observed: if respondents accept evil, they also exhibit high levels of narcissism and psychopathy. This means that for this group, evil is not conceptually separated from personal dispositions; on the contrary, their characterological traits are organically integrated into their ethical system.

Similarly, the fourth cluster, oriented exclusively toward good, also demonstrates consistency: all respondents in this group lack an expression of the Dark Dyad. This suggests that for them, acceptance of good is not merely an ethical position but is fundamentally linked to the structure of character, which does not permit manifestations of narcissism and/or psychopathy. These respondents, apparently, perceive evil as something entirely excluded from their value system, along with the "dark traits" from their character structure.

At the same time, only in the first and second clusters — those that accept both good and evil — is variability observed in the Dark Dyad indicator. This points to the existence of two different subgroups within one ethical position, making it the most complex and heterogeneous. The first subgroup (Cluster 1) combines acceptance of good and evil with low levels of narcissism and psychopathy, whereas the second (Cluster 2) demonstrates the same ethical stance but with a strong expression of the Dark Dyad. This is a key point: by accepting both categories — good and evil — respondents in these clusters do not form a unified characterological profile but represent two distinct personality structures.

This conclusion is of fundamental importance for further research: it shows that not all ethical positions are equivalent in terms of their personality correlates. If the acceptance of only good or only evil is unequivocally (according to our data) associated with a specific characterological profile, then the acceptance of both phenomena can be realized in different personality forms.

3.6. Analysis of Respondent Groups' Attitudes Toward the Categories of Good and Evil

Unlike the semantic differential, in which ethical representations of good and evil were analyzed through their modal characteristics (evaluation, potency, activity), this section examines the semantic aspects of these representations — through respondents' attitudes toward the categories of good and evil. The analysis was based on the author's questionnaire *"Attitude toward Good and Evil"* (see Appendix 1), designed to identify semantic differences within the two theoretically described types of ethical representations.

3.6.1 Analysis of Differences Between Clusters Based on the Closed-Ended Questions of the Questionnaire

To test for statistically significant differences between the clusters based on respondents' answers to the closed-ended questions of the *"Attitude toward Good and Evil"* questionnaire, the chi-square test (χ^2) was used. This method makes it possible to determine whether the frequencies of choosing different response options among the groups of participants (clusters) differ more than would be expected under random distribution.

Choice of Analysis Method. Since the variables in the questionnaire are presented as categorical data (respondents' answers are represented by the choice of one of the fixed options), the most appropriate way to analyze differences between groups is the chi-square test (χ^2), applied to contingency tables. In cases where statistically significant differences were found, Cramér's V coefficient was additionally calculated to assess the strength of the association between variables.

For interpretation of the results, the standard significance level of $p < 0.05$ was used. If the p-value was below this threshold, it indicated the presence of significant differences in the distribution of responses between clusters. Otherwise, the differences were considered statistically insignificant. Additionally, Cramér's V coefficient was

calculated to show the strength of the relationship between response distribution and respondents' cluster membership (Table 10).

Table 10. Results of the χ^2 Analysis of Differences in the Distribution of Responses Across Clusters

Question	χ^2 (df)	p-value	Cramér's V	(p < 0.05)
The fact that there is evil in the world, I consider:	10.584 (3)	0.014	0.250	✔
Does evil complement the nature of good, does evil serve as a continuation of good, or are they separated by a boundary and should be considered independently of each other?	29.146(9)	0.001	0.239	✔
Between good and evil, is there a relationship of antagonism or synergy?	19.129(6)	0.004	0.237	✔
How are good and evil connected in a person?	44.715(6)	0.001	0.363	✔
For you, to a greater extent, is good or evil something alien, foreign, and distant?	15.997	0.001	0.307	✔
In your opinion, good and evil:	7.888(6)	0.246	0.152	—
Do you agree with the statement that there is true and false good?	6.185(6)	0.403	0.135	—
To be aware of the presence of evil in oneself and to remember it:	0.454(3)	0.929	0.052	—
Imagine that you meet a wise man who can reveal to you the essence of either good or evil, but only one of them. What would you choose?	12.113(6)	0.059	0.189	—
Have there been cases in your life when evil became a source of development?	10.592(3)	0.014	0.250	✔

Note: χ^2 (df) – chi-square test and degrees of freedom; p-value – level of statistical significance (p < 0.05 indicates significant differences); Cramér's V – strength of association (0.1–0.2 – weak, 0.2–0.3 – moderate, >0.3 – strong).
✔ – significant differences, ✘ – not significant

Additional calculations were also carried out for the following indicators: (1) Observed frequencies (Count) — the actual number of respondents in each cluster who chose a given response option. (2) Expected frequencies (Expected count) — the hypothetical number of respondents that would be expected in each category if there were no relationship between clusters and response options. (3) Percentage distribution (% within column) — the relative frequency of each response option within a cluster. (4) Standardized residuals — an indicator of the deviation of the observed frequency from the expected frequency: if the residual > ±2, this indicates a significant deviation from the expected distribution and points to important differences between clusters. Positive residuals (e.g., +2.5) mean that a given response option was chosen more often than expected, while negative residuals (e.g., -2.5) mean that it was chosen less often than expected.

These indicators were classified as supplementary information for each question of the *"Attitude toward Good and Evil"* questionnaire and placed in the appendices (Appendix 3). We included this information only for those questions that showed statistical significance, namely questions 1–5 and 10 (see Table 10).

3.6.2 Analysis of Results

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the differences between clusters, the answers to the questionnaire items that showed statistically significant differences were analyzed. Below is a sequential discussion of these questions with interpretation of the obtained data.

Question 1. The fact that there is evil in the world, I consider: Answer options:

1. A necessary condition for the development of the individual and humanity as a whole

2. A sad consequence of the lack of good in people

The results of the analysis indicate statistically significant differences between clusters for the question "1. The fact that there is evil in the world, I consider" (χ^2 = 10.584, p = 0.014, Cramér's V = 0.250). The third cluster more often chose the first option: "A necessary condition for the development of the individual and humanity as a whole," meaning that this cluster perceives evil as a necessary condition for development (Standardized residual = +2.447), consistent with its general characterization, which involves perceiving evil as a functional element of the moral system, an ethical position where evil apparently plays an important role (Table 10, Appendix 3). The second cluster more often chose the second option: "A sad consequence of the lack of good in people," reflecting a tendency to perceive evil as a deficiency of good (Standardized residual = +1.954), which may indicate a dialectical view of good and evil in this cluster combined with their low Dark Dyad scores. The fourth cluster was less likely than expected to choose the first option (Standardized residual = -1.543), consistent with its orientation toward excluding evil from the picture of the world and its commitment to the first ethical position.

Question 2. Does evil complement the nature of good, does evil serve as a continuation of good, or are they divided by a boundary and should be considered separately?

Answer options:

1. Evil complements good

2. Evil continues in good

3. Evil replaces good

4. They are divided by a boundary and should be considered separately

The results demonstrate statistically significant differences between clusters (χ^2 = 29.146, p < 0.001, Cramér's V = 0.239) (Table 10). The first cluster more often chose the view that evil complements good (Standardized residual = +2.347), suggesting a perception of good and evil as interconnected categories where evil is viewed as an

element of development and transformation, aligning with the second ethical position. The second cluster was less likely to select this option (Standardized residual = -2.414) and more likely to select the view that good and evil are divided by a boundary (Standardized residual = +1.124). The fourth cluster showed a strong tendency to exclude the idea of interconnectedness of good and evil (Standardized residual = +2.792), consistent with its orientation toward unambiguous ethical constructs and rejection of moral ambivalence (Appendix 3).

Question 3. Between good and evil, is the relationship antagonistic or synergistic? Answer options:

1. Synergistic

2. Antagonistic

3. They are not related to each other

The results show statistically significant differences between clusters (χ^2 = 19.129, p = 0.004, Cramér's V = 0.237, see Table 10). The first cluster shows a tendency to perceive good and evil as unrelated, as confirmed by a positive standardized residual for this option. They more often chose option 3 ("They are not related to each other") – 66.667% within the cluster (Standardized residual = +1.564). Choosing synergy occurred at the expected frequency, while antagonism was less frequent than expected (Standardized residual = -0.745). This suggests that this group does not endorse the idea that evil strengthens good (or vice versa), but also does not perceive them as opposites.

The third cluster more often selected the synergistic option (Standardized residual = +3.412), which requires further analysis, since earlier this group was found to accept evil but not good. The fourth cluster showed a stable tendency to reject the idea of synergy (Standardized residual = -2.151), consistent with its preference for clear ethical boundaries and refusal to justify evil in moral reasoning (Appendix 3).

Question 4. How are good and evil connected in a person? Answer options:

1. The more good, the more evil

2. The more good, the less evil

3. They are not related to each other

The results indicate statistically significant differences between clusters (χ^2 = 44.715, p < 0.001, Cramér's V = 0.363, see Table 10). The relationship between answer distribution and cluster membership is strong. The third cluster more often chose the option "The more good, the more evil" (Standardized residual = +5.705), which, as in the previous question, requires further analysis. The second cluster, by contrast, was less likely to choose this option (Standardized residual = -4.828) and more often selected the view that good and evil are independent forces, answering "They are not related to each other" (Standardized residual = +2.874), suggesting a preference for stricter separation of categories despite their acceptance of both (as previously established). The fourth cluster showed low support for the idea of interconnection between good and evil (Standardized residual = -2.900), consistent with its general orientation (Appendix 3).

Question 5. For you, to a greater extent, is good or evil something alien, foreign, distant?
Answer options:

1. More good

2. More evil

The results show statistically significant differences between clusters (χ^2 = 15.997, p = 0.001, Cramér's V = 0.307, see Table 10). The relationship between answer distribution and cluster membership is strong. The third cluster more often chose the view that good is something alien and distant (Standardized residual = +3.793),

supporting our earlier assumption that they perceive evil as a natural component of the world and view good as inaccessible. On this basis, we can introduce the phenomenon of "inaccessibility of good" into the description of this cluster: earlier results showed that they do not evaluate or attribute meaning to good not because they despise it, but because it may currently seem inaccessible to them. Thus, good appears alien and distant. At the same time, they more often chose in the previous question the option "the more good, the more evil." Given their high Dark Dyad scores, this group can be viewed as those who, lacking good, elevate evil—not out of contempt for or denial of good, but because it currently feels alien. The second cluster, by contrast, more often chose the option in which evil is perceived as alien (Standardized residual = +2.385) (Appendix 3).

Questions 6, 7, 8, and 9 did not show statistically significant differences between clusters (see Table 10), meaning no reliable connection between answer distribution and cluster membership. However, Question 9 showed noteworthy tendencies: although the p-value was close to the threshold ($p = 0.059$), some clusters showed pronounced deviations. For instance, respondents in the second cluster were less likely to select "To know the essence of evil" (Standardized residual = –2.396) and more likely to choose "To know the essence of good" (Standardized residual = +2.349), consistent with their orientation toward dialectical perception of good and evil combined with low Dark Dyad scores. Participants in the third cluster showed some inclination toward "To know the essence of evil" (Standardized residual = +1.321), although this result did not reach significance (Appendix 3).

Question 10. Have there been cases in your life when evil became a source of development?
Answer options:

1. Yes

2. No

The results revealed statistically significant differences between clusters (χ^2 = 10.592, p = 0.014, Cramér's V = 0.250, see Table 10). The third cluster more often chose "Yes" (Standardized residual = +2.740), consistent with their orientation toward recognizing evil as a natural element of reality and a potential factor for development. This confirms the previously noted feature of this cluster, linked to high evaluation of evil and its acceptance as a tool for personal growth. The second cluster, by contrast, was less likely to select this option (Standardized residual = -1.723), consistent with their view of separating good and evil (Appendix 3).

Analysis of results by cluster. After examining the distribution of answers to individual questions, it is necessary to consider the characteristics of each cluster across the range of their responses. This approach allows us to generalize typical response tendencies, identify dominant patterns, and gain deeper understanding of the specific attitudes toward good and evil characteristic of each group.

First cluster. Respondents in the first cluster show a tendency to acknowledge the interconnection and potential synergy of good and evil, while not rejecting the possibility of their independence. They more often chose the position that evil complements good (Standardized residual = +2.347; Question 2) and also indicated that the categories are independent (e.g., "They are not related to each other"; Standardized residual = +1.564; Question 3). These responses reflect a dialectical perception of moral categories in which interaction is allowed without rigid opposition.

Second cluster. Respondents in the second cluster do not show consistent adherence to one of the identified ethical positions, but their answers point to a unique configuration of how good and evil are perceived. Their responses reflect contradictory attitudes. On the one hand, they more often chose the view that evil is a deficiency of good (Standardized residual = +1.954; Question 1) and expressed the view that good and evil are divided by a boundary (Standardized residual = +1.124; Question 2). At the same time, they were much less likely to agree that evil complements good (Standardized residual = –2.414) and more likely to state that good and evil are

unrelated (Standardized residual = +2.874; Question 4), highlighting a tendency toward strict separation of categories. Further confirmation of this is seen in their tendency to perceive evil as alien (Standardized residual = +2.385; Question 5) and their reluctance to choose the option where evil is a source of development (Standardized residual = –1.723; Question 10). Meanwhile, in Question 9 they showed an interesting tendency: more often choosing "To know the essence of good" (Standardized residual = +2.349) and less often "To know the essence of evil" (Standardized residual = –2.396). Thus, this cluster combines acceptance of both categories with a simultaneous desire to keep them strictly separated, possibly related to their high Dark Dyad scores and reflecting instability in their value position within the studied field of meanings.

Third cluster. Respondents in the third cluster show the most pronounced distinctions across several measures. They more often considered evil as a necessary condition for the development of the individual and humanity (Standardized residual = +2.447; Question 1), consistent with their perception of evil as a functional system element. They also more often endorsed the synergistic position that good and evil complement each other (Standardized residual = +3.412; Question 3), although this requires further consideration, since earlier they were found to prefer evil but not good. Especially notable is their tendency to endorse "The more good, the more evil" (Standardized residual = +5.705; Question 4), supporting the idea of their dialectical perception of these categories. At the same time, participants in this cluster more often stated that good feels alien and distant to them (Standardized residual = +3.793; Question 5), which may be interpreted as a manifestation of the phenomenon of "inaccessibility of good," possibly explaining their preference for evil. Finally, they more often selected the option "evil became a source of development" (Standardized residual = +2.740; Question 10), confirming their perception of evil as a natural part of life and a potential factor of growth in their value system. This cluster reflects an orientation toward evil as an organic part of reality while perceiving good as inaccessible. This configuration can be interpreted as an early stage of forming a

dialectical position, where evil is recognized and accepted, while good is not yet integrated into their personal moral framework.

Fourth cluster. Respondents in the fourth cluster show a consistent orientation toward strict separation of good and evil. They more often rejected the concept of their interconnection (Standardized residual = +2.792; Question 2) and the idea of synergy between them (Standardized residual = –2.151; Question 3), highlighting their refusal to accept ambiguous or mixed moral positions. They were also less likely to agree with "The more good, the more evil" (Standardized residual = –2.900; Question 4), further confirming their rejection of the functional role of evil in ethics. Overall, their answers reflect a stable orientation toward clear ethical boundaries and rejection of justifying evil as part of moral choice. This cluster corresponds to the second ethical position, characterized by refusal to recognize evil as an acceptable element of the ethical system and a tendency toward rigid separation of good and evil.

3.7 Characteristics of Clusters Based on the Obtained Data

Now we systematize the results of the factor analysis, cluster analysis, and chi-square test, and provide a preliminary characterization of each cluster.

First cluster: mature dialectical position

The first cluster of respondents demonstrates moderately positive values on the factor "Acceptance of Good" (M = 0.396) and on the factor "Acceptance of Evil" (M = 0.330) (see 3.4). This indicates that representatives of this group are not prone to extremes in their perception of moral categories but, on the contrary, show a balanced attitude toward good and evil, perceiving them as interconnected but not mutually exclusive concepts.

Factor analysis shows that the factor "Acceptance of Good" in this cluster is strongly correlated with humanism (0.651), faith in humanity (0.596), and a positive evaluation of good (0.567) (see Factor Analysis). This suggests that respondents in this group hold humanistic values, believe in people's ability to perform good deeds, and

positively evaluate the ethical dimension of human nature. At the same time, the factor "Acceptance of Evil" includes characteristics such as the activity of evil (0.656) and its strength (0.641), which reflects recognition of evil as a dynamic and significant force in social reality. However, the key feature of this group is that acknowledging the existence of evil does not imply justifying it or identifying with it. This is confirmed by the lowest value on the "Dark Dyad" factor among all clusters (M = -0.827), indicating a low level of narcissistic and psychopathic traits (see Cluster Analysis). Thus, the first cluster represents a group with the most mature ethical position, in which good and evil are considered as objectively existing phenomena but without simplified or extreme evaluations.

The results of the chi-square test confirm the specific features of this cluster. Respondents in this group more often chose the answer "Evil complements good" (χ^2 = 29.146, p < 0.001, Standardized residual = +2.347) (see 3.6). This points to their dialectical perception of good and evil: evil is not completely rejected but is seen as a factor interacting with good and influencing the moral system. At the same time, the first cluster less often chose the option "The more good, the more evil" (Standardized residual = -3.705), which distinguishes it from the third cluster. This highlights that respondents in this group are not inclined to view good and evil as mutually reinforcing phenomena but instead see them in a complex, non-mechanistic interaction. Additionally, respondents in the first cluster are not inclined to consider evil as a source of development (χ^2 = 10.592, p = 0.014) (see 3.6), which again underlines their conscious and mature perception of ethical categories. Unlike the third cluster, for which evil can play a functional role in personal growth, this cluster does not attribute such significance to evil and does not regard it as a necessary condition for progress. Thus, the first cluster can be described as a group with the most mature and dialectical ethical position. Respondents in this group acknowledge the existence of both good and evil but do not oppose them, do not make one of them dominant, and do not interpret their interaction in extreme terms. Their views are balanced: they accept that evil plays a role in human life but do not attribute to it central importance in the moral system. The absence of narcissistic and psychopathic traits in this cluster allows us to conclude

that their ethical attitudes are based on conscious choice rather than instrumental reasoning.

Second cluster: ethical uncertainty and pragmatism.

The second cluster of respondents demonstrates average but negative values on the factor "Acceptance of Good" (M = -0.093) and on the factor "Acceptance of Evil" (M = -0.258) (see Cluster Analysis). This indicates the absence of a pronounced position regarding good and evil: representatives of this group are not inclined to actively follow either of these categories but also do not completely reject them. Their stance can be described as one of ethical uncertainty, in which good is not regarded as an absolute value, and evil is not perceived as an essential tool for engaging with the world. As Merab Mamardashvili noted, "they do not commit evil, but neither are they capable of doing good" (Mamardashvili, 2015, p. 47). Factor analysis shows that the factor "Acceptance of Good" in this cluster includes humanism (0.651), faith in humanity (0.596), and evaluation of good (0.567) (see Factor Analysis). However, unlike the first and fourth clusters, these indicators do not form a stable moral orientation—as shown in Table 6. The mean values of factors in the clusters indicate that respondents do not reject the values of good but do not actively embrace them either. Similarly, the factor "Acceptance of Evil" includes characteristics such as the activity of evil (0.656) and its strength (0.641), but in this cluster, these indicators are also not strongly expressed (see Table 8). This means that respondents do not deny the influence of evil in social reality but do not accept it as a necessary tool or identify with it, unlike members of the third cluster. They can be described as demonstrating an indifferent attitude toward the categories of good and evil. The key feature of the second cluster is its value on the "Dark Dyad" factor (M = 0.512), which is significantly higher than that of the first cluster (see Cluster Analysis). This indicates the presence of narcissistic and psychopathic traits, which may explain their more pragmatic and situational approach to moral dilemmas. Unlike the first cluster, where evaluations of good and evil are high (see Table 8) and judgments are based on value orientations (see Table 10), representatives of the second cluster are likely to approach ethical issues

from the standpoint of personal benefit or situational expediency. Chi-square analysis confirms the absence of a stable moral position in this cluster. They more often chose the option "Good and evil are not connected" ($\chi^2 = 44.715$, $p < 0.001$, Standardized residual = +2.874) (see 3.6), which shows that they do not perceive good and evil as interconnected concepts. Unlike the first cluster, members of this group less often chose the option "Evil complements good" ($\chi^2 = 29.146$, $p < 0.001$, Standardized residual = -2.414), confirming their skepticism toward the dialectical interaction of these categories. At the same time, these respondents more often perceive evil as something alien (Standardized residual = +2.385) but do not identify with it, unlike the third cluster (see 3.6). Thus, the second cluster represents a group of respondents in a state of moral uncertainty. They do not reject evil but do not fully accept it either, remaining in the position of observers rather than active participants in ethical choice. Their conviction that good and evil are unrelated allows us to assume that, for them, these categories are separate social constructs rather than complementary forces. The high expression of narcissistic and psychopathic traits may indicate a pragmatic and situational approach to morality, where decisions are made not on the basis of value convictions (a stable ethical position) but depending on circumstances. This interpretation makes it possible to distinguish this group from the fourth cluster, where the same stance (denial of the connection between good and evil) is apparently dictated by ethical reasoning (see Table 5). The second cluster can be described as a group of respondents who do not form a stable ethical position but instead adapt their behavior to the situation, guided by flexible strategies of interaction with the world.

Third cluster: transitional ethical position

The third cluster demonstrates the sharpest contrasts among all the identified groups, as expressed in the lowest value on the factor "Acceptance of Good" (M = -1.476) and the highest value on the factor "Acceptance of Evil" (M = 1.189) (see Cluster Analysis). This may indicate that respondents in this group do not attach significance to good but consciously perceive evil as an important element of social reality. In addition, this cluster shows the highest levels of narcissistic and psychopathic

traits (M = 1.402), which may suggest a tendency toward egocentric attitudes and manipulative behavioral strategies.

Factor analysis shows that members of the third cluster display a negative value on the factor "Acceptance of Good," i.e., humanism (0.651), faith in humanity (0.596), and evaluation of good (0.567) (see Factor Analysis). This may mean that for this group the concept of good either does not play a central role or is perceived as something inaccessible or distant. At the same time, the factor "Acceptance of Evil," including high scores on the activity of evil (0.656), its strength (0.641), and its evaluation (0.527), indicates that evil is perceived as a significant mechanism of influence within these respondents' internal system of coordinates.

An important aspect of the analysis is the need for cautious interpretation. The fact that members of the third cluster do not emphasize good does not mean a complete rejection of it. Chi-square analysis data show that respondents in this group more often chose the option "Good seems alien and distant" (χ^2 = 15.997, p = 0.001, Standardized residual = +3.793) (see 3.6). This statistically significant result suggests that this cluster does not reject the existence of good but perhaps perceives it as something outside their personal experience or worldview. Good seems to them alien and distant.

Further confirmation of this interpretation can be found in their answers to other questions: respondents in the third cluster more often chose the option "The more good, the more evil" (χ^2 = 44.715, p < 0.001, Standardized residual = +5.705), which may indicate a perception of good and evil not as opposites but as interdependent categories. Moreover, they more often selected the statement that evil became a source of development (χ^2 = 10.592, p = 0.014, Standardized residual = +2.740), which may suggest a tendency to see evil not as destructive but as a functional tool through which goals can be achieved or life lessons learned.

It is also important to note that the third group more often chose the answer about the synergy of good and evil (χ^2 = 19.129, p = 0.004, Standardized residual = +3.412) (see 3.6). This allows us to assume that despite their predominant orientation toward

evil, members of this cluster do not exclude the possibility of the existence of good, though perhaps they have not yet come to recognize its value. Based on these data, one can cautiously assume that this cluster represents a group in the process of moral formation. They have already accepted evil as part of their worldview but have not yet integrated good into their value system.

Thus, the third cluster cannot be perceived exclusively as a "group of adherents of evil." Their ethical position may be in a state of transformation, and they may be "passing through evil" but have not yet realized its boundaries. If one considers the respondents' moral stance as a dynamic system, it can be hypothesized that for some members of this group, evil is not the ultimate goal but rather a necessary stage on the way to a mature dialectical ethical position.

Fourth cluster: normative ethical position

The fourth cluster demonstrates the most pronounced acceptance of good (M = 0.841) and the sharpest rejection of evil (M = -1.625) among all groups (see Cluster Analysis). These indicators show that respondents in this group are oriented toward good as the only acceptable ethical category and consider evil not merely as a negative phenomenon but as something that should be completely excluded from the moral system.

Factor analysis shows that the factor "Acceptance of Good" is expressed most strongly in this cluster, including such characteristics as humanism (0.651), faith in humanity (0.596), and evaluation of good (0.567) (see Factor Analysis). These data indicate respondents' conviction in the value of human nature and people's capacity for good. At the same time, the factor "Acceptance of Evil" demonstrates a sharply negative value, which may indicate not only the rejection of evil as a concept but also its exclusion at the level of principle. The activity of evil, the strength of evil, and its evaluation have minimal values, and given their answers to the questions, we can conclude that evil as a whole plays no constructive role for this group and is instead perceived as a threat to moral order.

An additional characteristic of the fourth cluster is the low level of the "Dark Dyad" (M = -0.759), which indicates minimal tendencies toward narcissism and psychopathy (see Cluster Analysis). This suggests that members of this cluster do not use moral norms instrumentally but are guided by internal convictions based on a strict separation of good and evil.

Chi-square analysis data confirm that respondents in this cluster more often reject the concept of interconnectedness between good and evil (χ^2 = 29.146, p < 0.001, Standardized residual = +2.792) (see Chi-square), pointing to their pursuit of strict moral delineation. In addition, they less often agree with the idea of the synergy of good and evil (χ^2 = 19.129, p = 0.004, Standardized residual = -2.151) and reject the statement "The more good, the more evil" (χ^2 = 44.715, p < 0.001, Standardized residual = -2.900). These data confirm that for this cluster, the categories of good and evil are mutually exclusive, and any attempts at integration are perceived as unacceptable.

The conducted cluster analysis made it possible to identify four groups of respondents differing in their levels of acceptance of good and evil as well as in their characterological traits. The first cluster demonstrates a mature dialectical position, allowing for the existence of evil but not identifying with it. The second cluster is characterized by moral uncertainty, where respondents do not form a stable ethical position. The third cluster is oriented toward the acceptance of evil as a meaningful tool but does not reject the possibility of reinterpreting moral categories in the future. The fourth cluster represents categorical moral absolutism, excluding evil from the moral system and adhering to a strict ethical order.

However, the question of the personal maturity of these groups remains open. If ethical positions indeed correlate with the depth of personal development, one can assume that differences between clusters will manifest not only at the level of their ethical views but also in their level of self-actualization. In this context, self-actualization is understood as the individual's ability to realize their potential, follow

internal values, and achieve a harmonious balance between different aspects of life (Bateman, Crant, 1993).

Of particular interest is the analysis of the fourth cluster, which demonstrates a strict rejection of evil. It is necessary to determine whether this position is a sign of moral completeness and maturity or whether its categorical nature may limit personal development, which we interpret through the level of self-actualization. In addition, it is important to consider the level of self-actualization of the third cluster, for whom evil plays a significant role. Perhaps their experience of confronting evil represents a transitional stage, and further personal development may lead to a reevaluation of ethical positions and the formation of a more holistic ethical worldview.

To answer these questions, a comparative analysis of the groups by their level of self-actualization will be conducted. This will make it possible to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between respondents' ethical views and their capacity for deep personal realization. Thus, the next stage of the study will focus on identifying structural patterns that will help to better understand the role of ethical position in personality self-actualization.

3.8 Comparative Analysis of Group Research Results and Self-Actualization

To identify differences between the selected respondent clusters on the self-actualization scales, statistical analysis was applied, including multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Post Hoc tests (Tukey HSD). According to the results of MANOVA, the differences between clusters were statistically significant (Pillai's Trace = 0.759, $F(3,166) = 6.025$, $p < 0.001$; Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.393$, $F(3,166) = 6.442$, $p < 0.001$), which justified proceeding to one-way analysis of variance. Based on ANOVA, statistically significant differences between clusters were found on the following self-actualization scales: support, behavioral flexibility, sensitivity, self-acceptance, concept of human nature, acceptance of aggression, creativity (Table 11).

Table 11.

Mean values and analysis of variance (ANOVA) of SAT scales by clusters

					Mean values and analysis of variance			
Factor	df (группы, остаток)	F	p	η²	M (Кл.1)	M (Кл.2)	M (Кл.3)	M (Кл.4)
Support	3, 166	17.986	< 0.001	0.261	50.19	38.53	47.50	40.50
Behavioral Flexibility	3, 166	8.513	< 0.001	0.123	12.42	14.19	16.00	12.00
Sensitivity	3, 166	2.916	0.039	0.056	5.968	6.938	6.667	7.100
Self-Acceptance	3, 166	4.069	0.009	0.068	10.065	10.063	12.750	9.700
Views of Human Nature	3, 166	9.076	< 0.001	0.126	5.806	5.438	4.167	5.300
Acceptance of Aggression	3, 880	4.672	0.004	0.084	7.032	7.156	9.167	7.000
Creativity	3, 166	2.854	0.042	0.053	6.935	7.156	7.667	6.000

At the next step, we conducted a Post Hoc analysis (Tukey HSD) to identify specific differences on these scales between respondent groups. This allowed for a more precise interpretation of the data and made it possible to determine the nature of differences in self-actualization levels between the groups (Table 12).

Table 12. Summary of Post Hoc Tests (Tukey HSD) for SAT Scales

Summary of Post Hoc Tests (Tukey HSD) for SAT Scales				
Шкала	Кластеры	Mean Difference	Cohen's d	p (Tukey HSD)
Поддержка	1 vs 2	11.662	1.286	< 0.001***
Поддержка	1 vs 4	9.694	1.069	< 0.001***
Поддержка	2 vs 3	-8.969	-0.989	< 0.001***
Гибкость поведения	1 vs 2	-1.768	0.495	0.031*
Гибкость поведения	2 vs 3	-3.581	1.003	< 0.001***
Гибкость поведения	3 vs 4	4.000	1.120	0.002**
Сензитивность	1 vs 2	-0.970	-0.500	0.029*
Самопринятие	1 vs 3	-2.685	-0.745	0.012*
Самопринятие	2 vs 3	-2.688	-0.746	0.012*
Самопринятие	3 vs 4	3.050	0.846	0.029*
Представления о природе человека	1 vs 3	1.640	1.172	< 0.001***
Представления о природе человека	3 vs 4	-1.133	-0.810	0.041*
Принятие агрессии	1 vs 3	-2.134	-0.874	0.002
Принятие агрессии	2 vs 3	-2.010	-0.823	0.004
Принятие агрессии	3 vs 4	2.167	0.887	0.020
Креативность	3 vs. 4	1.667	0.887	0.020*
p < 0.05 (* — статистически значимые различия на уровне 5%*) p < 0.01 (** — статистически значимые различия на уровне 1%**) p < 0.001 (*** — статистически значимые различия на уровне 0.1%***)				

The "Support" scale demonstrates the most pronounced differences between clusters, as confirmed by the high value $F(3,166) = 17.986$, $p < 0.001$ (see Table 11). The effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.261$) indicates a strong influence of cluster membership on the

level of support. Post Hoc analysis showed that the differences between clusters 1 and 2, as well as 1 and 4, are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), with cluster 1 demonstrating the highest level of support (M = 50.19) and cluster 2 the lowest (M = 38.53) (see Table 11). The differences between clusters 2 and 3 are also significant ($p < 0.001$), pointing to clear distinctions between them. At the same time, the differences between clusters 3 and 4 did not reach statistical significance ($p > 0.05$), indicating the similarity of these groups (see Table 12). The effect size coefficient (Cohen's d) confirms the strength of differences between groups, especially between clusters 1 and 2 (d = 1.286) and 1 and 4 (d = 1.069), which indicates a substantial effect of cluster membership on the perception of support (see Table 12).

The "Behavioral Flexibility" scale demonstrates statistically significant differences between clusters, as confirmed by the value $F(3,166) = 8.513$, $p < 0.001$ (see Table 11). The effect size $\eta^2 = 0.123$ indicates a medium degree of influence of cluster membership on behavioral flexibility. Post Hoc analysis showed that the differences between clusters 2 and 3, as well as 3 and 4, are statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), with cluster 3 demonstrating the highest level of behavioral flexibility (M = 16.00) and cluster 4 the lowest (M = 12.00) (see Table 11). The differences between clusters 1 and 3 ($p = 0.051$) are close to statistical significance, suggesting potentially higher flexibility among representatives of cluster 3. The differences between clusters 1 and 2 also approach statistical significance ($p = 0.031$), which may indicate a distinction in the level of behavioral flexibility between these groups (see Table 12). The effect size coefficient (Cohen's d) confirms the strength of differences between groups, especially between clusters 3 and 4 (d = 1.120) and between clusters 1 and 2 (d = 0.495), which points to a notable effect of cluster membership on behavioral flexibility (see Table 12).

The "Sensitivity" scale demonstrates weak differences between clusters, as confirmed by the value $F(3,166) = 2.916$, $p = 0.039$ (see Table 11). The effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.056$) indicates a low degree of influence of cluster membership on the level of sensitivity. Post Hoc analysis showed that statistically significant differences were observed only between clusters 1 and 2 ($p = 0.029$) (see Table 12). Cluster 4

demonstrates the highest level of sensitivity (M = 7.100), while cluster 1 shows the lowest (M = 5.968) (see Table 11). At the same time, the differences between the other clusters are statistically insignificant (p > 0.05), which indicates an overall similarity of groups on this scale. The effect size coefficient (Cohen's d) confirms the minor impact of cluster membership on sensitivity, since even in the statistically significant pair (1 vs 2), d = -0.500, which corresponds to a weak effect of differences (see Table 12).

The "Self-Acceptance" scale demonstrates moderate differences between clusters, as confirmed by the value F(3,166) = 4.069, p = 0.009 (see Table 11). The effect size (η^2 = 0.068) indicates a weak but nonetheless significant relationship between cluster membership and the level of self-acceptance. Post Hoc analysis revealed three statistically significant differences between clusters: cluster 1 and cluster 3 (p = 0.012), cluster 2 and cluster 3 (p = 0.012), cluster 3 and cluster 4 (p = 0.029) (see Table 12). Mean values show that cluster 3 demonstrates the highest level of self-acceptance (M = 12.750), while clusters 1 and 2 have the lowest scores (M = 10.065 and 10.063 respectively) (see Table 11). Differences between the other clusters did not reach statistical significance (p > 0.05). The effect size coefficients (Cohen's d) confirm that the most pronounced differences are observed between cluster 3 and clusters 1 and 2 (d = -0.745 and -0.746), as well as between cluster 3 and cluster 4 (d = 0.846) (see Table 12).

The "Conceptions of Human Nature" scale demonstrates significant differences between clusters, as confirmed by F(3,166) = 9.076, p < 0.001 (see Table 11). The effect size (η^2 = 0.126) indicates a medium influence of cluster membership on conceptions of human nature. Post Hoc analysis revealed two significant differences between clusters: cluster 1 and cluster 3 (p < 0.001), cluster 3 and cluster 4 (p = 0.041) (see Table 12). Mean values show that cluster 3 demonstrates the lowest level of conceptions of human nature (M = 4.167), while clusters 1 and 2 have higher scores (M = 5.806 and 5.438 respectively) (see Table 12). Effect size coefficients (Cohen's d) confirm that the most pronounced differences are observed between cluster 1 and cluster 3 (d = 1.172), as well as between cluster 3 and cluster 4 (d = -0.810) (see Table 12).

The "Acceptance of Aggression" scale revealed significant differences between clusters, as confirmed by $F(3,88) = 4.672$, $p = 0.004$ (see Table 11). The effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.084$) indicates a moderate influence of cluster membership on the acceptance of aggression. Post Hoc analysis revealed differences between cluster 1 and cluster 3 ($p = 0.002$), cluster 2 and cluster 3 ($p = 0.004$), cluster 3 and cluster 4 ($p = 0.020$) (see Table 12). Mean values show that cluster 3 demonstrates the highest level of acceptance of aggression ($M = 9.167$), while the other clusters have lower scores ($M = 7.032$, 7.156, 7.000 respectively) (see Table 11). Effect size coefficients (Cohen's d) confirm that the most pronounced differences are observed between cluster 1 and cluster 3 ($d = -0.874$), cluster 2 and cluster 3 ($d = -0.823$), as well as cluster 3 and cluster 4 ($d = 0.887$) (see Table 12).

The "Creativity" scale demonstrates statistically significant differences between clusters, as confirmed by $F(3,166) = 2.854$, $p = 0.042$ (see Table 11). The effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.053$) indicates a small influence of cluster membership on the level of creativity. Post Hoc analysis revealed a significant difference between cluster 3 and cluster 4 ($p = 0.020$) (see Table 12). Mean values show that cluster 3 demonstrates the highest level of creativity ($M = 7.667$), while cluster 4 has the lowest ($M = 6.000$) (see Table 11). Effect size coefficients (Cohen's d) confirm that the most pronounced differences are observed between cluster 3 and cluster 4 ($d = 0.887$) (see Table 12).

The results of the comparative analysis of groups on self-actualization scales confirm the research hypothesis about the relationship between ethical positions and characterological traits. In particular, the first cluster, which demonstrates a mature dialectical ethical position, is characterized by the highest level of self-actualization, as confirmed by $M = 50.19$ (see Table 11). This is significantly higher than in the other clusters, where the mean values are $M = 38.53$ (cluster 2), $M = 47.50$ (cluster 3), and $M = 40.50$ (cluster 4) (see Table 12). The effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.261$) indicates a high degree of influence of cluster membership on the level of self-actualization. Thus, the first cluster demonstrates the greatest personal maturity, confirming the link between the dialectical

approach to good and evil and personal development. In addition, the first cluster shows high scores on the conceptions of human nature and sensitivity scales.

The third cluster is particularly interesting, as it demonstrates the highest levels of behavioral flexibility (M = 16.00), acceptance of aggression (M = 9.167), and creativity (M = 7.667) (see Table 11). This suggests that the third group is in the process of moral choice, which is accompanied by a high degree of variability in their behavioral strategies. Their scores on the acceptance of evil (M = 1.189) and the high level of the dark dyad (M = 1.402) (see Cluster Analysis) may indicate that at this stage they have not yet reached a definitive moral position but possess a high degree of freedom in choosing their ethical orientations.

The fourth cluster, which demonstrates the strictest rejection of evil (M = -1.625) and the highest acceptance of good (M = 0.841) (see Cluster Analysis), shows low levels of behavioral flexibility (M = 12.00) and creativity (M = 6.000) (see Table 11). It can be assumed that rigid moral attitudes may be accompanied by reduced adaptability and less inclination to search for new solutions. However, for a more precise interpretation, additional analysis of proactivity is needed to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between moral absolutism and personal characteristics.

The identified differences on self-actualization scales confirm that respondents' ethical positions are associated with individual personality traits. In the next section, the level of proactivity will be examined as an additional indicator to provide deeper insights into the nature of these differences.

3.9 Comparative Analysis of Group Research Results and Proactivity

To identify differences between the identified clusters of respondents on the proactivity scale, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Post Hoc tests were also   applied.

The results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that the differences between the clusters on the proactivity scale were not statistically significant ($F(3,101) = 2.248$, $p = 0.087$, $\eta^2 = 0.040$). This means that, overall, cluster membership does not have a strong influence on the level of proactivity (Table 13).

Table 13. Descriptive statistics for the Proactivity Scale across clusters

clusters	N	Mean	SD	SE	Coefficient of variation
1	62	75.032	18.467	2.345	0.246
2	64	80.344	13.915	1.739	0.173
3	24	74.917	18.175	3.710	0.243
4	20	84.100	15.441	3.453	0.184

The mean values of proactivity across clusters demonstrate certain tendencies that can be further analyzed. The fourth cluster shows the highest proactivity ($M = 84.10$), while the third cluster shows the lowest ($M = 74.91$), but the differences do not reach the level of statistical significance. Additional pairwise comparisons (LSD) did not reveal statistically significant differences between clusters ($p > 0.05$ in all comparisons), confirming that the clusters do not differ substantially in terms of proactivity.

Proactivity is not a determining factor in the differences between clusters, which indicates that their moral positions and characterological features are not directly related to the level of initiative and the drive for change. Nevertheless, there is a tendency toward higher proactivity among respondents in the fourth cluster, which corresponds to their orientation toward good as an absolute value, possibly motivating them to take active steps aimed at achieving ethical goals. In this context, one may recall the famous idea attributed to Edmund Burke: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." If good requires effort to be realized, while evil may spread through inaction, the high proactivity of this cluster's respondents may reflect their conviction in the necessity of actively defending moral principles. At the same time, the first and third clusters show similar but lower levels of proactivity, which may

reflect their relative passivity or moderation in initiating change, although no statistically significant differences were found between them (Figure 2).
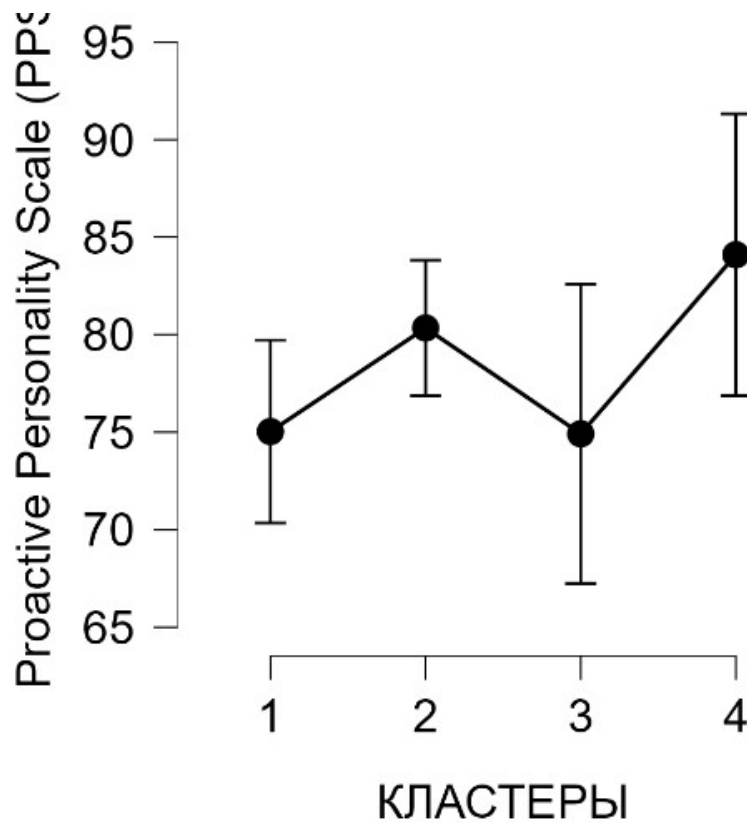
Figure 2. Mean values of proactivity across clusters

Differences in proactivity between the groups are insignificant and do not have a pronounced impact on their moral attitudes and characterological traits. However, there is a slight tendency for the fourth cluster to be the most proactive and the third to be the least proactive.

3.10 Verification of Clusters by Extraversion–Introversion and Demographic Characteristics

We conducted an analysis of differences between the clusters using the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire. The highest level of extraversion was demonstrated by Cluster 2 (M = 12.21, SD = 3.69), whereas Clusters 1 and 4 showed lower values (M = 10.00 and M = 10.10, respectively), which may indicate a greater tendency of these groups toward introversion. The Post Hoc analysis confirmed a significant difference

between Clusters 1 and 2 ($p = 0.006$, $d = -0.589$), while the other differences did not reach statistical significance ($p > 0.05$), indicating high within-group variability and the absence of a clearly defined typological structure (Table 14).

Table 14. Descriptive statistics for the Extraversion–Introversion Scale across clusters

Descriptives					
Clusters	N	Mean	SD	SE	Coefficient of variation
1	62	10.000	4.004	0.509	0.400
2	64	12.219	3.692	0.462	0.302
3	24	11.667	3.620	0.739	0.310
4	20	10.100	3.386	0.757	0.335

These results confirm that none of the clusters can be strictly classified as "extraverted" or "introverted," since a wide range of values is observed within the groups. Moreover, the level of extraversion or introversion is not a key factor determining the moral attitudes and characterological traits of the respondents, which suggests that their personality traits do not fit into Eysenck's rigid dichotomous categories but represent a more complex structure, where ethical positions are combined with different personality characteristics. Thus, in this study, the identified clusters are not typical typologies in terms of extraversion and introversion, and the ethical positions of the respondents appear to be shaped by more complex psychological factors that cannot be reduced to traditional personality models. We also conducted an analysis of the distribution of gender and age across clusters (Table 15).

Table 15. Distribution of respondents' gender and age across clusters

Cluster	Gender: Men (%)	Gender: Women (%)	Mean Age (M)	(SD)
1	48	52	27,5	3,2
2	39	61	27,3	3,5
3	46	54	26,4	3,6
4	49	51	27,8	3,4

The analysis of respondents' demographic characteristics showed that the distribution of gender across clusters did not reveal significant differences. Each group included both men and women in approximately equal proportions. This confirms that gender is not a determining factor for the division of respondents into clusters and that the identified groups are not formed on the basis of gender. The mean age values also did not demonstrate statistically significant differences between clusters. The age range in all groups was similar, indicating homogeneity of the sample by this criterion. However, at the level of tendency, respondents in the third cluster were slightly younger on average (M = 26.4) than those in the other clusters (M ≈ 27.5). This may suggest certain specific features in the perception of good and evil among younger participants, but the difference remains within the bounds of variation and does not reach the level of statistical significance.

The respondent groups in this study therefore do not differ significantly by gender or age, which confirms that their formation is specifically related to differences in ethical representations and characteristics, rather than demographic variables.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Theoretical analysis of philosophical and ethical-psychological approaches made it possible to identify and describe in psychological discourse two types of ethical conceptions of good and evil: the conception of evil as the absence of good and the conception of good and evil as autonomous but interconnected principles.

2. The concept of the ethical position of the individual was introduced, elaborated, and substantiated as an integral systemic construct that includes ethical conceptions and characterological features with which they are interconnected.

3. Based on the theoretical analysis of the conceptual content of the categories of good and evil, an original questionnaire was developed, aimed at identifying the ethical conceptions of the individual. The design of the questionnaire is based on the idea of the existence of two types of conceptions of good and evil.

4. The relationships between the modalities of the semantic differential of good and evil and personality traits confirm that the evaluation of good correlates with prosocial traits, while the evaluation of evil correlates with destructive traits, whereas the modalities of strength and activity reflect more complex and partially inconsistent interrelations.

5. Factor analysis of the results of the empirical study of the relationship between conceptions of good and evil and characterological traits revealed the existence of three stable factors, within which ethical positions of personality can be described, interpreted as: "acceptance of good," "acceptance of evil," and "dark dyad."

6. Based on the identified combinations of ethical conceptions and characterological features, four groups of respondents were distinguished, as confirmed by the results of cluster analysis, which identified four groups differing in the combination of ethical conceptions and characterological features underlying their ethical positions.

7. The original questionnaire "Attitude toward Good and Evil" made it possible to record differences in the conceptions of the relationship between good and evil among the groups of respondents identified through cluster analysis:

– The group assigned to the first cluster is characterized by an ethical conception in which good and evil are perceived as interconnected and interacting categories, allowing for synergy;

– The second cluster demonstrates a contradictory configuration of ethical conceptions: it simultaneously acknowledges both categories (good and evil) but strives for their rigid separation, which prevents it from being clearly attributed to one of the types of ethical conceptions;

– The third cluster corresponds to a type of ethical conception in which evil is perceived as functionally necessary and integrated into the value system, whereas good remains inaccessible or secondary;

– The fourth cluster corresponds to the ethical conception of good and evil as mutually exclusive categories, with an orientation toward the elimination of evil as having no independent value and being an unacceptable element of the ethical field.

8. Two stable types of ethical positions of the individual were empirically identified: The first position includes a dialectical conception of good and evil as interconnected categories: evil is not excluded but perceived as a necessary and meaningful element of the ethical field. A personality of this type is characterized by qualities such as humanism, belief in humanity, acceptance of good and evil, low levels of narcissism and psychopathy, a high level of self-actualization, behavioral flexibility, and views of human nature. The second ethical position includes the conception of good and evil as mutually exclusive categories, with a pronounced orientation toward excluding evil as an acceptable element of the ethical field; it is characterized by high levels of humanism, belief in humanity, strong acceptance of good and consistent rejection of evil, low levels of narcissism and psychopathy, and a high level of proactivity.

9. A connection was established between the type of ethical position and personality characteristics such as the level of self-actualization and behavioral flexibility. The ethical position that includes a dialectical conception of good and evil is distinguished by high self-actualization, positive views of human nature, and behavioral flexibility. In contrast, the ethical position based on the conception of a rigid distinction between good and evil is associated with lower values on the specified scales.

CONCLUSION

The goal of the study has been achieved: four groups of respondents were empirically identified, differing in their attitudes toward the categories of good and evil. Two of them represent stable ethical positions — the dialectical, which presupposes the interconnection of good and evil, and the normative, based on their strict separation. Another group demonstrates contradictory characteristics, allowing for the possibility of dynamic formation of an ethical position. The fourth group does not form an integral ethical orientation and is considered outside ethics — not included in the system of moral coordinates.

The fourth cluster represents an ethical position based on a strict opposition between good and evil. Respondents in this group reject evil as an acceptable category and demonstrate a rigid normative orientation in which evil is perceived as something to be excluded. Participants in this group are characterized by a fairly high level of proactivity, which may indicate an inner drive to act within a limited value field. Such a position may be associated with the need for stable moral guidelines and reliance on an external ethical order that excludes doubt about the nature of evil. It is not dialectical, but by virtue of its unambiguity, it may serve as an internal stabilizing factor for the individual who has chosen the path of unequivocal good.

Among the two dialectical positions identified in the study that recognize the interconnectedness of good and evil, the position demonstrated by the first cluster can be described as a mature ethical dialectical position. These respondents have accepted the idea of the interdependence of good and evil, actively explore both categories, and strive for conscious engagement with evil without losing their humanistic orientation. Perhaps it is this middle ground that allows them, in Nietzsche's words, "to gaze into the abyss" and "give birth to a dancing star," that is, to extract personal growth resources from confronting the dark side without destroying their moral integrity. Their high level of self-actualization, value orientation, and view of human nature indicate a

developed capacity for meaningful engagement with the opposing aspects of human experience.

We assume that the third cluster represents an immature ethical dialectical position. Its members are only beginning to encounter the dialectics of good and evil, showing a willingness to accept ambivalence and high behavioral flexibility. As is often the case at the beginning of the path, evil frequently appears to them more attractive, mysterious, and powerful, while good seems alien and distant. The unknown is often idealized — which is why, in this group, evil may be perceived as a source of strength and movement. However, this position appears not to be complete, but developing, and it is precisely this flexibility that makes further progress toward integration possible.

Outside this scale is the second cluster. Its members do not make a moral choice between good and evil and do not seek to comprehend the ethical dimension. They can be described as ethically inert. They neither reject evil, as the fourth cluster does, nor attempt to understand it, as the first or third clusters do, but simply bypass it, remaining outside the axis of moral reflection. This non-ethical position demonstrates a lack of inner ethical dynamics.

These conclusions are consistent with the fundamental principles of humanistic psychology, which assert that a mature personality integrates diverse aspects of the self and takes responsibility for life choices. The empirical patterns identified reveal new facets of the interaction between ethics and psychology: they demonstrate how the subjective understanding of good and evil is reflected in the pathways of individual self-realization. The findings may serve as a foundation for further research in ethical psychology, expanding our understanding of the interplay between ethical beliefs and individual character traits.

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APPENDIX 1

Author's Questionnaire "Attitude Toward Good and Evil"

1. The fact that there is evil in the world, I consider:
   A) a necessary condition for the development of the individual and humanity as a whole
   B) a sad consequence of the lack of good in people

2. Does evil complement the nature of good, is evil a continuation of good, or are they divided by a boundary and should be considered separately?
   A) Evil complements good
   B) Evil continues in good
   C) Evil replaces good
   D) They are divided by a boundary and should be considered separately

3. Do good and evil have a relationship of antagonism or synergy?
   A) Antagonism
   B) Synergy
   C) They are not related to each other

4. How are good and evil connected within a person?
   A) The more good, the more evil
   B) The more good, the less evil
   C) They are not related to each other

5. For you, to a greater extent, is good or evil something alien, distant?
   A) More good
   B) More evil

6. From your point of view, good and evil:
   A) Are two parts of a whole
   B) Can be compared in certain aspects
   C) Are incomparable

7. Do you agree with the statement that there is true and false good?
   A) Yes
   B) No
   C) Difficult to answer

8. To be aware of and remember the presence of evil within oneself is:
   A) Necessary in order to do good
   B) An obstacle to doing good

9. Imagine that you meet a wise man who can reveal to you the essence of either good or evil, but only one of them. What would you choose?
   A) To know the essence of good
   B) To know the essence of evil
   C) I would decline the offer

10. Have there been cases in your life when evil became a source of development?
    A) Yes
    B) No

APPENDIX 2

Correlation Matrix

Correlations (STATISTICA Spreadsheet)
Marked correlations are sgnificant at p < ,05000
N=170 (Casewise deletion of missing data)

Variable	Оценка_Добро	Сила_Добро	Активность_Добро	Оценка_Зло	Сила_Зло	Активность_Зло	Шкала макиавеллизма	Шкала нарциссизма	Шкала психопатии	Вера в человечество	Гуманизм	Кантианство
Оценка_Добро	1,0000 p= ---	,2316 p=,002	,0928 p=,229	-,6808 p=0,00	-,2607 p=,001	-,1570 p=,041	-,2227 p=,004	,0579 p=,453	-,3425 p=,000	,2792 p=,000	,2646 p=,000	,2739 p=,000
Сила_Добро	,2316 p=,002	1,0000 p= ---	,3363 p=,000	-,3437 p=,000	-,4141 p=,000	-,3246 p=,000	-,2281 p=,003	-,0232 p=,764	-,1231 p=,110	,1342 p=,081	,0598 p=,439	,3141 p=,000
Активность_Добро	,0928 p=,229	,3363 p=,000	1,0000 p= ---	-,1542 p=,045	-,2216 p=,004	-,4051 p=,000	,1289 p=,094	,0236 p=,760	-,0076 p=,922	-,0772 p=,317	-,1704 p=,026	,0584 p=,450
Оценка_Зло	-,6808 p=0,00	-,3437 p=,000	-,1542 p=,045	1,0000 p= ---	,4510 p=,000	,3538 p=,000	,4116 p=,000	,0305 p=,693	,3486 p=,000	-,1668 p=,030	-,2161 p=,005	-,3014 p=,000
Сила_Зло	-,2607 p=,001	-,4141 p=,000	-,2216 p=,004	,4510 p=,000	1,0000 p= ---	,3903 p=,000	,2012 p=,009	-,1668 p=,030	,0271 p=,726	,0110 p=,887	,0077 p=,920	-,1341 p=,081
Активность_Зло	-,1570 p=,041	-,3246 p=,000	-,4051 p=,000	,3538 p=,000	,3903 p=,000	1,0000 p= ---	,1759 p=,022	-,1343 p=,081	-,0626 p=,417	-,0269 p=,728	,0115 p=,882	,0728 p=,345
Шкала макиавеллизма	-,2227 p=,004	-,2281 p=,003	,1289 p=,094	,4116 p=,000	,2012 p=,009	,1759 p=,022	1,0000 p= ---	,1172 p=,128	,4230 p=,000	-,3300 p=,000	-,1535 p=,046	-,3733 p=,000
Шкала нарциссизма	,0579 p=,453	-,0232 p=,764	,0236 p=,760	,0305 p=,693	-,1668 p=,030	-,1343 p=,081	,1172 p=,128	1,0000 p= ---	,2790 p=,000	,0135 p=,862	,0590 p=,445	-,2707 p=,000
Шкала психопатии	-,3425 p=,000	-,1231 p=,110	-,0076 p=,922	,3486 p=,000	,0271 p=,726	-,0626 p=,417	,4230 p=,000	,2790 p=,000	1,0000 p= ---	-,3612 p=,000	-,3090 p=,000	-,4169 p=,000
Вера в человечество	,2792 p=,000	,1342 p=,081	-,0772 p=,317	-,1668 p=,030	,0110 p=,887	-,0269 p=,728	-,3300 p=,000	,0135 p=,862	-,3612 p=,000	1,0000 p= ---	,4113 p=,000	,1993 p=,009
Гуманизм	,2646 p=,000	,0598 p=,439	-,1704 p=,026	-,2161 p=,005	,0077 p=,920	,0115 p=,882	-,1535 p=,046	,0590 p=,445	-,3090 p=,000	,4113 p=,000	1,0000 p= ---	,2416 p=,002
Кантианство	,2739 p=,000	,3141 p=,000	,0584 p=,450	-,3014 p=,000	-,1341 p=,081	,0728 p=,345	-,3733 p=,000	-,2707 p=,000	-,4169 p=,000	,1993 p=,009	,2416 p=,002	1,0000 p= ---

Note. Evaluation of Good; Strength of Good; Activity of Good; Evaluation of Evil; Strength of Evil; Activity of Evil; Machiavellianism Scale; Narcissism Scale; Psychopathy Scale; Belief in Humanity; Humanism; Kantianism.

APPENDIX 3

Extended statistical data for questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 10 from the questionnaire "Attitude toward Good and Evil"

Question 1

Contingency Tables				
		1.The fact that there is evil in the world, I consider:		
CLUSTERS		1	2	Total
1	Count	54.000	8.000	62.000
	Expected count	51.059	10.941	62.000
	% within column	38.571 %	26.667 %	36.471 %
	Standardized residuals	1.229	-1.229	
2	Count	48.000	16.000	64.000
	Expected count	52.706	11.294	64.000
	% within column	34.286 %	53.333 %	37.647 %
	Standardized residuals	-1.954	1.954	
3	Count	24.000	0.000	24.000
	Expected count	19.765	4.235	24.000
	% within column	17.143 %	0.000 %	14.118 %
	Standardized residuals	2.447	2.447	
4	Count	14.000	6.000	20.000
	Expected count	16.471	3.529	20.000
	% within column	10.000 %	20.000 %	11.765 %
	Standardized residuals	-1.543	1.543	
Total	Count	140.000	30.000	170.000
	Expected count	140.000	30.000	170.000
	% within column	100.000 %	100.000 %	100.000 %

Question 2

		2. Does evil complement the nature of good, serve as its continuation, or are they divided by a boundary and should be considered separately?				
Contingency Tables						
CLUSTERS		1	2	3	4	Total
1	Count	38.000	14.000	2.000	8.000	62.000
	Expected count	30.635	17.506	2.918	10.941	62.000
	% within column	45.238 %	29.167 %	25.000 %	26.667 %	36.471 %
	Standardized residuals	2.347	-1.241	-0.690	-1.229	
2	Count	24.000	22.000	4.000	14.000	64.000
	Expected count	31.624	18.071	3.012	11.294	64.000
	% within column	28.571 %	45.833 %	50.000 %	46.667 %	37.647 %
	Standardized residuals	-2.414	1.382	0.739	1.124	
3	Count	10.000	12.000	2.000	0.000	24.000
	Expected count	11.859	6.776	1.129	4.235	24.000
	% within column	11.905 %	25.000 %	25.000 %	0.000 %	14.118 %
	Standardized residuals	-0.819	2.556	0.906	-2.447	
4	Count	12.000	0.000	0.000	8.000	20.000
	Expected count	9.882	5.647	0.941	3.529	20.000
	% within column	14.286 %	0.000 %	0.000 %	26.667 %	11.765 %
	Standardized residuals	1.008	-2.986	-1.058	2.792	
Total	Count	84.000	48.000	8.000	30.000	170.000
	Expected count	84.000	48.000	8.000	30.000	170.000
	% within column	100.000 %	100.000 %	100.000 %	100.000 %	100.000 %

Question 3

	Contingency Tables				
		3. Do good and evil have a relationship of antagonism or synergy?			
CLUSTERS		1	2	3	Total
1	Count	44.000	14.000	4.000	62.000
	Expected count	43.765	16.047	2.188	62.000
	% within column	36.667 %	31.818 %	66.667 %	36.471 %
	Standardized residuals	0.082	-0.745	1.564	
2	Count	42.000	20.000	2.000	64.000
	Expected count	45.176	16.565	2.259	64.000
	% within column	35.000 %	45.455 %	33.333 %	37.647 %
	Standardized residuals	-1.104	1.242	-0.222	
3	Count	24.000	0.000	0.000	24.000
	Expected count	16.941	6.212	0.847	24.000
	% within column	20.000 %	0.000 %	0.000 %	14.118 %
	Standardized residuals	3.412	-3.124	-1.011	
4	Count	10.000	10.000	0.000	20.000
	Expected count	14.118	5.176	0.706	20.000
	% within column	8.333 %	22.727 %	0.000 %	11.765 %
	Standardized residuals	-2.151	2.622	-0.911	
Total	Count	120.000	44.000	6.000	170.000
	Expected count	120.000	44.000	6.000	170.000
	% within column	100.000 %	100.000 %	100.000 %	100.000 %

Question 4

	Contingency Tables				
		4. How are good and evil connected in a person?			
CLUSTERS		1	2	3	Total
1	Count	20.000	34.000	8.000	62.000
	Expected count	16.776	37.929	7.294	62.000
	% within column	43.478 %	32.692 %	40.000 %	36.471 %
	Standardized residuals	1.156	-1.285	0.349	
2	Count	8.000	48.000	8.000	64.000
	Expected count	17.318	39.153	7.529	64.000
	% within column	17.391 %	46.154 %	40.000 %	37.647 %
	Standardized residuals	-3.320	2.874	0.231	

3	Count	18.000	4.000	2.000	24.000
	Expected count	6.494	14.682	2.824	24.000
	% within column	39.130 %	3.846 %	10.000 %	14.118 %
	Standardized residuals	5.705	-4.828	-0.563	
4	Count	0.000	18.000	2.000	20.000
	Expected count	5.412	12.235	2.353	20.000
	% within column	0.000 %	17.308 %	10.000 %	11.765 %
	Standardized residuals	-2.900	2.816	-0.261	
Total	Count	46.000	104.000	20.000	170.000
	Expected count	46.000	104.000	20.000	170.000
	% within column	100.000 %	100.000 %	100.000 %	100.000 %

Question 5

Contingency Tables				
		5. For you, to a greater extent, is good or evil something other, alien, distant?		
CLUSTERS		1	2	Total
1	Count	20.000	42.000	62.000
	Expected count	20.424	41.576	62.000
	% within column	35.714 %	36.842 %	36.471 %
	Standardized residuals	-0.144	0.144	
2	Count	14.000	50.000	64.000
	Expected count	21.082	42.918	64.000
	% within column	25.000 %	43.860 %	37.647 %
	Standardized residuals	-2.385	2.385	
3	Count	16.000	8.000	24.000
	Expected count	7.906	16.094	24.000
	% within column	28.571 %	7.018 %	14.118 %
	Standardized residuals	3.793	-3.793	
4	Count	6.000	14.000	20.000
	Expected count	6.588	13.412	20.000
	% within column	10.714 %	12.281 %	11.765 %
	Standardized residuals	-0.298	0.298	
Total	Count	56.000	114.000	170.000
	Expected count	56.000	114.000	170.000
	% within column	100.000 %	100.000 %	100.000 %

Question 10

Contingency Tables					
		10. Have there been situations in your life when evil became a source of development?			
CLUSTERS		1	2	Total	
1	Count	46.000	16.000	62.000	
	Expected count	48.871	13.129	62.000	
	% within column	34.328 %	44.444 %	36.471 %	
	Standardized residuals	-1.120	1.120		
2	Count	46.000	18.000	64.000	
	Expected count	50.447	13.553	64.000	
	% within column	34.328 %	50.000 %	37.647 %	
	Standardized residuals	-1.723	1.723		
3	Count	24.000	0.000	24.000	
	Expected count	18.918	5.082	24.000	
	% within column	17.910 %	0.000 %	14.118 %	
	Standardized residuals	2.740	-2.740		
4	Count	18.000	2.000	20.000	
	Expected count	15.765	4.235	20.000	
	% within column	13.433 %	5.556 %	11.765 %	
	Standardized residuals	1.302	-1.302		
Total	Count	134.000	36.000	170.000	
	Expected count	134.000	36.000	170.000	
	% within column	100.000 %	100.000 %	100.000 %	