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VITALITY AND VITAL SECURITY: SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF RESILIENCE FORMATION IN CRITICAL LIFE SITUATIONS

Abstract

The article offers an interdisciplinary socio-philosophical, psychological, and anthropological analysis of vitality as an integrative category that characterises the capacity of individuals and social communities to preserve life potential, value-based orientation, and subjectivity under conditions of critical life situations. The methodological relevance of introducing the authorial concept of the vital-crisis situation is substantiated as an analytical framework for describing states in which intensive threats are combined with a deficit of coping resources, thereby significantly increasing the risk of loss of viability, autonomy, and subjectivity.

It is demonstrated that vitality cannot be reduced to psychophysiological parameters of functioning, but rather constitutes a multidimensional anthropological phenomenon encompassing bodily, psycho-emotional, motivational, and moral-value components. Vitality is realised through the

subject's capacity to make responsible existential choices and to preserve dignity in boundary states characteristic of critical life situations. Boundary and vital-crisis states are interpreted as sensitive indicators of the level of vitality, since it is precisely under such conditions that the distinction between constructive and destructive modes of experiencing reality becomes most explicit, determining the preservation or erosion of subjectivity.

On the basis of a synthesis of philosophical, psychodynamic, stress-related, and psychometric approaches, the theoretical preconditions for the operationalisation of vitality are clarified, and its interrelation with the phenomena of resilience, adaptive energy, and moral autonomy is explicated. The antivital consequences of deliberately destructive social influences are outlined, manifesting themselves in decreased life tone, erosion of value-normative orientations, and growing existential and social vulnerability.

In conclusion, the conceptual integration of vitality with *vital security* is substantiated as a humanitarian and anthropocentric paradigm aimed at integrating individual life resources with legal, educational, psychosocial, and institutional mechanisms of support and prevention of degradation of the individual's internal life potential.

Keywords: vitality; vital security; vital-crisis situation; boundary states; resilience; institutional ethicality (*Sittlichkeit*); vital victimhood; existential choice.

Introduction

In the contemporary world marked by multidimensional threats, the problem of preserving life and human integrity acquires renewed theoretical and practical significance. The full-scale war in Ukraine, terrorist attacks, massive missile and aerial strikes, information-psychological operations, and systemic humanitarian crises create an environment in which individuals, communities, and social institutions constantly function under conditions of heightened uncertainty, risk,

and the threat of losing social and existential support [14]. Such a condition imparts a marginal character to social existence in the sense of socio-existential boundary conditions and the marginalisation of certain social groups, manifesting itself in a departure from stable normative, value-based, and institutional frameworks of being [10; 11].

In response to this complex of crises, the need for a specific approach to security becomes increasingly evident – namely, the concept of ***vital security***. It is grounded in the recognition that the protection of life and physical health, although necessary, constitutes an insufficient condition for sustainable survival and development under multifactorial threats [14]. *Vital security* is oriented towards preserving mental and social integrity, human dignity, freedom of moral choice, and the individual's capacity to remain a subject of action even in situations of violence, uncertainty, and prolonged crisis pressure [12; 13; 15–17]

The category of vitality, widely developed in philosophical anthropology, psychology, and biomedical sciences, emerges as a key concept for understanding what enables individuals to withstand the burden of war, extreme crisis situations, trauma, loss, and destruction [1; 3; 4].

Within contemporary socio-philosophical reflection, it is emphasised that the analysis of vitality leads to an unstable boundary between constructive and destructive forms of social experience. The problem of life force arises primarily in the context of the individual's capacity to remain "on the side of life" in boundary situations, when the subject encounters demands of reality that exceed adaptive capacities and internal reserves. Under such conditions, *vitality* manifests itself not merely as a psychophysiological resource, but also as an existential and moral capacity to preserve integrity, meaningful orientation, and subjectivity [8; 9; 10]. This perspective encompasses not only the biopsychological dimension but also a deeper existential level: human vitality appears as a morally charged

capacity to choose the constructive precisely where the logic of destruction seems inevitable.

Within the framework of this study, ***vital-crisis situations*** are conceptualised as states of individual or collective existence in which high-intensity threats converge with a deficit of coping resources, and the boundary between life and death, integrity and destruction assumes the character of an immediate existential reality. The authorial concept of the vital-crisis situation captures not merely the presence of danger, but a qualitative transformation of the subject's internal conditions of existence, manifested in heightened vulnerability, a narrowing of the horizon of meanings, intensified moral choice, and an increased risk of loss of subjectivity. Under such circumstances, the balance between constructive and destructive modes of experiencing reality becomes decisive, directly shaping the preservation of dignity, resilience, and the capacity for meaningful action. Accordingly, the introduction of the concept of vital-crisis situations establishes a necessary methodological bridge between the analysis of boundary conditions and the subsequent development of the concepts of vitality and vital security [12; 13].

This study adopts an interdisciplinary socio-philosophical perspective grounded in philosophical anthropology, the psychology of crisis states, and humanitarian-oriented security approaches [14].Its methodological foundation rests on conceptual-analytical and hermeneutic approaches, which enable a refined clarification of the categories vitality, boundary conditions, and vital-crisis situation, as well as their systematic correlation with the concepts of resilience, moral autonomy, and adaptive energy [8; 9].

In this study, operationalisation is understood primarily as the theoretical delineation of potential indicators and analytical levels of vitality and related states, thereby providing a foundation for subsequent empirical validation. The method of theoretical synthesis facilitates the integration of philosophical,

psychodynamic, stress-related, and psychometric interpretations of vitality [3; 7], while conceptual modelling is employed to substantiate the relationship between vitality and vital security as an anthropocentric humanitarian paradigm [12; 13].

Contemporary psychological and social research emphasises the multidimensional nature of vitality, conceptualising it as an integrative phenomenon encompassing bodily energy, emotional-volitional resources, motivational orientation, inner freedom, the capacity for self-actualisation, and the preservation of personal dignity. Of particular significance is the concept of anthropic vitality, which describes human vitality as an integration of physical, psychological, and moral forces [8; 10; 11]. War and crisis-related forms of violence constitute an environment that deliberately undermines this integration, generating boundary situations in which not only physical endurance but also the capacity to preserve values, identity, and social agency is critically tested [6; 8; 14]. At this intersection, the concept of vital security emerges as a humanitarian and anthropocentric paradigm that integrates the protection of life and health with the safeguarding of mental integrity, dignity, moral orientation, and the individual's capacity for resistance to destructive influences [12; 13; 14]. Unlike traditional security models that focus primarily on external factors, vital security conceptualises the individual as the central referent and regards vitality as a key resource of state and societal resilience [12; 13].

In light of these contemporary challenges, it becomes imperative not only to renew scholarly attention to the category of vitality, but also to develop a conceptual model that integrates the individual's internal life force with institutional mechanisms of its preservation.

This shift enables a transition from understanding vitality as an individual state toward conceptualising it as the foundation of vital security — an integrated system that supports society's capacity to withstand extreme crisis-related threats,

dehumanisation, and large-scale destructive processes characteristic of contemporary Ukraine.

Problem Statement.

The problem of vitality becomes particularly acute precisely when an individual, a community, or a professional group finds itself in a boundary situation in which the question of preserving life and subjectivity acquires an explicitly existential character. The practical experience of the full-scale war in Ukraine convincingly demonstrates that under conditions of prolonged violence, constant threats of physical destruction, and the disruption of social ties and habitual life-support institutions, decisive significance is attributed not only to material resources or the level of external protection, but also to the internal vital resources of individuals and communities [8; 12; 13].

In particular, behavioural patterns observed among civilians, medical professionals, educators, volunteers, and military personnel in zones of active hostilities indicate that the capacity to preserve moral orientation, identity, a sense of dignity, and inner autonomy functions as a key factor of survival, adaptation, and recovery. This experience leads to the conclusion that vitality cannot be regarded exclusively as an individual psychological characteristic, but must instead be conceptualised as a systemic resource of resilience that is formed, sustained, and reproduced through the interaction of personal, social, and institutional factors [6; 8].

Accordingly, war as a boundary socio-existential experience provides grounds for rethinking vitality as a practically verified foundation of vital security, manifested not only in the capacity to resist destruction, but also in the ability to preserve humanity, social agency, and recovery potential even under conditions of radical threats to existence [12; 13].

Contemporary conditions of war and multifactorial crisis threats generate an environment of heightened and persistent risk, within which the analysis of crisis

consciousness requires careful consideration of the interaction between individual and social determinants. In this context, diverse neurotic symptoms accompanying social conflicts in transitional societies emerge as the outcome of the intersection between personal psycho-emotional processes and structural social transformations [3; 6].

From an analytical perspective, recourse to theories of identity development acquires particular methodological significance, since it makes it possible to trace how individual crisis experiences are linked to large-scale historical, social, and cultural transformations.

E. Erikson's assertion that identity crisis in individual life cannot be separated from the crisis dynamics of historical development necessitates the integration of macro- and micro-sociological perspectives in the analysis of conflict-related and neurotic states of the personality under conditions of profound societal rupture [6].

For individuals situated in conditions of marginality, vitality cannot be reduced to mere biological survival; rather, it emerges as an internal life force that sustains dignity, moral orientation, the capacity for meaningful action, and sense-making even in situations of radical danger – that is, in a boundary condition "between life and death" – enabling the individual to remain "on the side of life" [8].

The boundary situation, as a socio-existential phenomenon, assumes in its vital-crisis manifestations the character of an extreme intensity of being, in which the rupture between constructive and destructive modes of human experience becomes sharply pronounced. Under conditions of such existential intensity, constructive experience supports the preservation of personal integrity and the maintenance of capacities for empathy, reflection, and social interaction, whereas destructive experience precipitates the fragmentation of the integrated self, a

decline in life tone, a loss of trust in the world and in others, and the formation of depressive and aggressive patterns of response [3; 8].

Vital-crisis situations in contemporary society may be characterised as systemic states of destabilisation arising from war, violence, social ruptures, or large-scale humanitarian shocks, thereby reproducing conditions of boundary existence. A defining feature of such situations is that individuals or communities confront real or potential threats to life, security, and identity, while behavioural and psychological responses are shaped not only by external circumstances, but also by the level of internal life force, motivational structure, emotional resilience, and the degree of moral integration of the individual or group [12; 14].

The problematic nature of the situation under analysis is further intensified by the fact that crisis states burdened by social anomie acquire a distinctly anti-vital character. Anomie (from the Greek anomia, meaning “lawlessness” or “absence of norms”) in socio-philosophical and sociological discourse denotes a condition of disintegration of the normative-value system of society, in which generally accepted norms, values, and behavioural rules lose their regulatory capacity or become internally contradictory, while new mechanisms of social regulation have not yet been established [11].

Under such conditions, crisis processes affect not only the external parameters of human activity but also undermine the internal resources of resilience of both individuals and communities, eroding moral-value orientations, a sense of meaning, and the capacity for constructive and responsible action [8; 11]. The anti-vital effect of such states manifests itself not merely in the generation of fear, loss, and material destruction, but also in the formation within mass consciousness of feelings of helplessness, devaluation of effort, and the conviction that active existential choice is no longer possible.

In this context, the imperative emerges for a conceptual rearticulation of vitality as a resource that determines the individual’s capacity to affirm

constructive modes of orientation, sustain subjectivity, and preserve moral coherence in situations governed by the logic of destruction.

Concurrently, it becomes necessary to transcend an exclusively individual-psychological interpretation of vitality in favour of a socio-institutional model of its protection – namely, the articulation of the concept of vital security. Such integration lays the conceptual groundwork for the development of a comprehensive system of safeguarding and sustaining human life force, capable of securing its continuity even within the boundary condition "between life and death" – under conditions of war, extreme crisis threats, and other forms of organised violence [12; 13].

The Aim of the Study.

The aim of this study is to provide a theoretical and methodological substantiation of vitality as a foundational philosophical and psychological category that determines individual resilience in boundary and vital-crisis situations, conditions of extreme crisis threats, social destabilisation, and violent ruptures, as well as to elucidate its interrelation with the concept of *vital security* as an integral system for safeguarding and sustaining human life, dignity, and psychosocial integrity [8; 12; 13].

Within the framework of the stated aim, the study undertakes an analysis of key theoretical approaches to the conceptualisation of vitality in contemporary philosophy and social science, in particular within philosophical anthropology, psychodynamic and stress-related models, as well as current interdisciplinary concepts of resilience and psychosocial adaptation [1; 2; 3; 4; 5].

The research is further directed toward identifying how the concept of vitality may serve as a theoretical foundation for the development of *vital security* as a new humanitarian paradigm capable of safeguarding human life force under conditions of multifactorial threats, war, and prolonged crisis transformations [12; 13; 15–17].

Analysis of Recent Research and Publications.

The problematics of vitality as an expression of human life force span a broad disciplinary spectrum, extending from philosophical anthropology and psychology to medicine, sociology, and the humanities. Contemporary understandings of vitality are rooted in classical philosophical thought. Aristotle, through the concept of *entelechy*, articulated an inner principle of vital actualisation, while H. Bergson subsequently elaborated the idea of *élan vital* as a creative impulse sustaining the dynamism of life [1; 2]. These perspectives established the conceptual groundwork for interpreting vitality as a phenomenon irreducible to biological mechanisms alone, instead expressing the inner dynamics of life as manifested in its volitional, spiritual, and existential dimensions.

In the twentieth century, the concept of vitality received further elaboration within the psychoanalytic tradition. S. Freud, in his economic model of the psyche, conceptualised psychic energy (*cathexis*) as the foundation of human activity and vital tone, linking its depletion to the emergence of neurotic states [4]. C. G. Jung, W. Reich, D. Winnicott, and other theorists interpreted vitality as an expression of integrated psychic energy, emphasising that internal conflicts, frustrations, and trauma diminish vital impulse, whereas the harmonisation of inner psychic structures restores access to life energy [5]. A particularly significant contribution to the medico-psychological dimension was made by H. Selye, who, within the framework of stress theory, formulated the concept of “adaptive energy” — an immaterial yet critically important resource that determines the organism’s capacity to respond to threat and maintain equilibrium [3].

Eastern intellectual traditions have likewise exerted a substantial influence on contemporary interpretations of vitality, most notably through the Chinese concept of *Qi* and the Japanese *Ki*, which conceive life force as a dynamic flow of energy that can be cultivated, restored, and balanced through practices of breathing, movement, mindfulness, and bodily harmony. These perspectives have

further expanded the understanding of vitality as a phenomenon integrating bodily, emotional, spiritual, and social dimensions.

A significant stage in the development of scientific conceptions of vitality was marked by the establishment of systems for its empirical measurement, which facilitated the transition from abstract-theoretical reflection on life force to its operationalisation in psychological and medico-social research. Within this framework, vitality is conceptualised as a subjectively experienced state of internal energy, activity, and vital tone, reflecting the individual's capacity to sustain goal-directed activity, psychological equilibrium, and adaptive interaction with the social environment.

Thus, within psychometric approaches, the POMS questionnaire (McNair, Lorr, Droppleman) identified the factor of "energy/activity" associated with positive mental states and a general sense of vital capacity [7]. This is of fundamental importance, as it opens the possibility of operationalising vitality as a measurable indicator of individual resilience under conditions of crisis and boundary situations.

Subsequent empirical investigations have demonstrated that vitality displays well-defined behavioural correlates, including levels of physical and cognitive activation, motor dynamism, attentional focus, and the capacity to sustain prolonged goal-directed engagement even under conditions of sustained strain.

The elaboration of clinical indicators of life energy within medico-psychological research has enabled vitality to be conceptualised not merely as a psychological phenomenon, but as an integrative marker of quality of life, overall health, and adaptive potential, encompassing physical, psycho-emotional, and motivational dimensions of human functioning.

Consequently, within contemporary psychology vitality has consolidated its status as a formalised construct amenable to quantitative assessment and applicable to the diagnostic evaluation of individual resilience.

Within socio-philosophical inquiry, vitality is construed as a quality that becomes activated under conditions of radical danger and in states of precarious tension between constructive and destructive modes of social experience. Under such circumstances, the problem of life force manifests itself with particular acuity in boundary situations, when the subject stands at the threshold between life and death and is compelled to enact an existential choice oriented toward the preservation of life [8].

This conceptual framing provides the basis for articulating the existential dimension of vitality, within which vitality is understood not merely as a resource for survival, but as the capacity for reflective, value-mediated choice in contexts of radical threat.

Current psychological research conceptualises vitality as an integrative construct that brings together bodily energy, emotional resilience, motivational orientation, subjective well-being, and the individual's inner freedom. Vitality is further understood as a dynamic resource whose level fluctuates in response to the intensity of stress, the availability of social support, value orientations, and the individual's capacity for self-regulation.

Of particular relevance to the present study is the concept of *anthropic vitality*, according to which human vitality is conceived not merely as a biological resource, but as the capacity to preserve personal integrity, moral autonomy, dignity, and subjectivity. From this perspective, anthropic vitality functions as a criterion of resilience under conditions of war, extreme crisis threats, dehumanisation, and profound social ruptures [12; 13].

Vitality (Lat. *vitalis* — "pertaining to life") emerges as a multidimensional philosophical and psychological category encompassing not only the bodily-biological dimensions of human functioning, but also the psychic, emotional-volitional, motivational, and moral-value components that constitute the individual's inner life force. In this sense, vitality is understood not as a static

state, but as an integrative resource of the subject that determines the capacity to sustain resilience, subjectivity, and dignity in boundary — particularly vital-crisis — situations characteristic of war and other forms of existential and social destruction [15; 16].

Of particular importance for the present study is the *concept of anthropic vitality*, according to which human vitality is construed not merely as a biological resource, but as a capacity to preserve personal integrity, moral autonomy, dignity, and subjectivity. Within this conceptual framework, anthropic vitality functions as a criterion of resilience under conditions of war, extreme crisis threats, dehumanisation, and profound social ruptures [12; 13].

The historical origins of the category of vitality can be traced to ancient philosophy, where Aristotle conceptualised *entelechy* as an inner energy directing the organism toward the actualisation of its own nature and potentiality. In early modern philosophy, H. Bergson further developed this idea through the concept of *élan vital* – the creative impulse of life that overcomes inertial resistance and endows living development with a distinctive dynamism. These approaches established the foundations for understanding vitality as an ontological ground of existence that cannot be reduced to biological mechanisms [1; 2].

Subsequent conceptions of vitality evolved within the psychoanalytic tradition. In Freud's framework, psychic energy functions as a central condition of subjective activity: its free circulation sustains psychological health and the capacity for self-realisation, whereas its blockage leads to neurotic disturbances, exhaustion, and a decline in vital tone [4]. Jung, Reich, Winnicott, and other representatives of psychodynamic thought interpreted personal energy as a dynamic complex integrating bodily, emotional, and spiritual dimensions into a unified structure of the self (a coherent "I" that ensures inner integration and subjectivity) [5]. Within this conceptual logic, vitality is understood both as an

indicator of inner harmony and as a factor determining the capacity to overcome traumatic experience.

Contemporary scholarly thought increasingly reflects a shift from understanding vitality as an internal energetic state toward its interpretation as a complex anthropological phenomenon that determines the resilience of both individuals and societies in the face of military, crisis-related, and social threats, particularly in vital-crisis situations associated with the risk of depletion of life force and the erosion of subjectivity. Such an approach establishes the conceptual foundation for the development of *vital security* as a state of protection of human life force [12; 13; 17].

Conceptual Results and Discussion

Under conditions of war, extreme crisis threats, and prolonged social instability, particular significance is attached to the individual's capacity not only to survive physically, but also to preserve inner integrity, subjectivity, and moral orientation [8].

Within these circumstances, a specific type of socio-existential experience becomes salient – *vital-crisis situations*, in which threats to life are combined with the risk of depletion of internal life force, the erosion of meaning orientations, and the loss of subjectivity [6; 8].

In the present article, the *vital-crisis situation* is treated as an analytical framework rather than as a synonym for danger or stress. It is understood as a specific configuration of *socio-existential conditions* in which: (1) the threat is characterised by high intensity and prolonged duration; (2) coping resources (psychological, social, and institutional) are insufficient or exhausted; (3) horizons of meaning are narrowed and normative–value supports are weakened; and (4) the risk of losing autonomy and subjectivity increases. Such an analytical framework makes it possible to coherently integrate the analysis of boundary existence with the further conceptual elaboration of vitality and the transition toward the concept

of *vital security* as a system for sustaining the life potential of individuals and communities [6; 8].

Contemporary psychology has made substantial progress in the *operationalisatio*n of the concept of *vitality*. Within this approach, the notion of *subjective vitality* has emerged, encompassing the phenomenologically experienced sense of energy, activity, and inner dynamism of the individual, and is regarded as one of the key indicators of vital tone and psychosocial capacity [7].

Empirical research demonstrates that vitality is constituted by a constellation of interrelated factors, including physical health, emotional resilience, personal autonomy, motivational engagement, and value orientation. Crucially, vitality cannot be confined to a purely psychophysiological parameter; rather, it operates as an indicator of the individual's holistic engagement with lived experience, wherein moral judgement, reflective capacity, and tolerance for uncertainty assume a formative role in shaping existential orientation and behavioural coherence [7; 8].

Within medical psychology, vitality may be interpreted through the lens of H. Selye's stress theory, which introduced the notion of *adaptive energy* as a key resource of the organism determining its resistance to threats and its capacity to restore equilibrium. In Eastern health traditions (Chinese *Qi* and Japanese *Ki*), life force is conceptualised as a flow of energy sustaining both bodily and spiritual harmony. Despite differences in terminology and conceptual frameworks, these approaches converge in a shared insight: vitality constitutes a fundamental inner potential that enables the human being to withstand destructive influences, preserve integrity, and realise one's nature even under adverse existential conditions [3; 14].

The foregoing analysis necessitates a transition toward understanding vitality as a resource that secures not merely physical survival, but, more fundamentally, the individual's moral–existential capacity for choice. Within

contemporary humanitarian perspectives, vitality is interpreted as an integral characteristic emphasising the preservation of personal integrity, moral autonomy, and dignity as core dimensions of human vitality [8; 10]. In this framework, vitality emerges not simply as life energy, but as a spiritual–moral force that sustains the human being within the horizon of humanity, enables resistance to dehumanisation, and preserves the freedom of value-based choice even under conditions of extreme threat.

In this regard, anthropic vitality is closely intertwined with the concept of morality understood as the inner value–normative foundation of human vitality. In scholarly discourse, morality is interpreted as an internal disposition of the individual to act in accordance with conscience and free will, in contrast to moral norms, which constitute a system of external social rules and regulatory requirements [10].

The term morality (etymologically derived from the Old Slavic nravŭ – denoting character or an inner human quality; in the philosophical tradition correlated with the Latin moralitas and the German Sittlichkeit) denotes the subject's capacity for conscious ethical choice, autonomous determination of the boundaries of what is permissible and humane, and responsibility for one's actions [9]. In this sense, morality functions not as an external prescription, but as an internal regulator of behaviour that secures the preservation of personal integrity, dignity, and a life-affirming orientation under conditions of existential and social threat.

Within the present study, a principled distinction is drawn between the concepts of morality, moral norms, and ethicality (nravstvennost). The term ethicality is employed as a category of the philosophical–anthropological tradition to denote the deep ethical core of personality and does not carry a colloquial or everyday connotation [9].

Conceptually, the category of ethicality is aligned with the classical tradition of European practical philosophy, above all with Hegel's notion of Sittlichkeit as a form of socially embodied ethical life, as well as with contemporary communitarian interpretations of moral identity (Ch. Taylor; A. MacIntyre), within which moral autonomy is understood as an internally grounded life practice embedded in value narratives, traditions, and institutional contexts [9–11].

If moral norms constitute a normative–ethical system of socially institutionalised values, rules, and prescriptions regulating individual behaviour (moralitas), morality is understood as the individual's inner value–normative autonomy — that is, the capacity for responsible self-determination, conscious ethical choice, and action in accordance with one's conscience. Ethicality (nravstvennost), in turn, is conceptualised as the deep anthropological and existential core of personality, determining its orientation toward life, the preservation of dignity, subjectivity, and humanity in boundary and crisis situations. In this sense, Hegel's notion of Sittlichkeit (ethical life of the community rooted in social practices and institutions) represents the level at which individual ethicality becomes socially embodied and consolidated within the structure of collective existence [9–11].

For the purposes of generalisation and structural consolidation of the above terminological distinction, it is appropriate to present it in the form of an analytical table.

The table presented does not replace a detailed analytical discussion; rather, it serves as a conceptual reference point for the subsequent use of the above categories throughout the text. Hereafter, these concepts are employed in the specified meanings as level-based analytical markers, and their repeated extended clarification is not required unless otherwise indicated.

Table 1

Terminological and Level-Based Differentiation of Moral–Ethical Categories in the Context of Vital Security

Analytical Level	Concept	Core Meaning (Fixed Usage)	Function within the Vital Security System
Socio-normative	Moral norms	An external, socially institutionalised system of norms, values, and prescriptions regulating individual behaviour from outside.	Ensures basic normative coordination of behaviour and establishes minimum boundaries of permissibility.
Anthropological–existential	Morality / Moral autonomy	The subject's internal capacity for responsible ethical choice, self-determination, and action in accordance with conscience.	Sustains subjectivity, dignity, and the capacity for life-affirming choice in boundary situations.
Existential–anthropological (deep level)	Ethicality (nravstvennost)	The deep existential-moral core of personality that determines orientation toward life, humanity, and dignity irrespective of external pressure.	Stabilises vitality in situations of radical threat and moral disintegration.
Socio-institutional	Sittlichkeit	The ethical life of the community – a constellation of social practices, customs, and institutions through which individual morality and ethicality acquire social form.	Institutionally consolidates vital orientation and transforms it into a component of societal resilience.

With reference to the tradition of classical German philosophy, it is appropriate to note that *Moralität* primarily designates the internal dimension of the subject's moral autonomy, whereas *Sittlichkeit* represents the socio-

institutional “ethical life” of the community – that is, the established practices, norms, and institutions through which individual morality acquires social embodiment. It is precisely in this socio-institutional sense that the concept of *Sittlichkeit* is employed in the present study [9].

Under these conditions, the individual’s inner moral core emerges as a decisive factor shaping the capacity to act in accordance with the principles of good, justice, responsibility, and humanity, thereby sustaining a resilient orientation toward life even in the presence of radical threats [10]. In this understanding, morality secures the internal coherence of life choices and behavioural strategies, enabling the individual to preserve humanistic commitments under conditions of existential tension.

Within the scientific–philosophical domain, morality is construed as an internal system of values and moral convictions grounded in the personal comprehension of good and evil and determining the subject’s capacity for autonomous moral choice. In this interpretation, it is conceptually aligned with the traditions of European philosophical thought, in particular with the notions of *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*, which articulate the idea of inner moral autonomy and an ethically grounded mode of life.

In contrast to *moral norms* as a system of externally imposed social rules and prescriptions regulating individual behaviour alongside legal requirements, morality emerges as an internal disposition of the personality expressing its deep value orientation, capacity for responsible self-determination, and conscious choice in favour of humanity and the preservation of life. Within this analytical perspective, *morality* functions as a *fundamental inner regulator of vitality*, sustaining personal integrity and resilience in situations of social and existential challenge.

The conducted theoretical and methodological analysis of *vitality* as a philosophical–psychological category substantiates the necessity of its integration into a

broader security context [12; 13; 15–17]. This perspective enables a transition from conceiving vitality merely as an internal psycho-energetic resource of the individual toward understanding it as a key anthropocentric factor in safeguarding life, dignity, and resilience under conditions of multifactorial threats.

The conceptualisation of *vitality* is grounded in its systematic integration with institutional, social, and humanitarian mechanisms of life protection, enabling a shift beyond an exclusively individual–psychological understanding of life force toward the formulation of the concept of *vital security* [12; 13; 15–17]. Within this framework, vitality is no longer treated merely as an intrapsychic resource, but as an anthropocentric factor structuring the preservation of life, dignity, and resilience under conditions of multifactorial threat.

At the same time, the analytical development of this paradigm necessitates the introduction of the authorial notion of *vital victimhood*, understood here not as a fixed identity position, but as a dynamic state of diminished vitality emerging under prolonged crisis, violence, and dehumanising influences. This state reflects the progressive erosion of life force, subjectivity, and moral autonomy, and therefore requires targeted humanitarian prevention and supportive intervention.

From the standpoint of the present study, an authorial interpretation of *vitality* is thus proposed within the framework of vital security, aimed at capturing both the constructive and degenerative trajectories of human life potential under conditions of sustained social and existential pressure.

For the purposes of conceptual operationalisation of *vital victimhood*, it is appropriate to delineate its principal analytical indicators (criteria), which may serve as a basis for subsequent empirical investigation and applied research [15–17]:

1. Energetic–motivational decline. A persistent reduction in vital tone, initiative, and the capacity for sustained goal-directed activity, accompanied by diminished behavioural activation and motivational engagement.

2. Semantic reduction. Constriction of future-oriented planning horizons, devaluation of prospective life goals, and the predominance of fatalistic or resignation-oriented cognitive attitudes.

3. Erosion of moral autonomy. Weakening of internal ethical reference points, increased external regulation of behaviour, heightened conformity under social or situational pressure, and reduced capacity for independent moral judgement.

4. Deactivation of subjectivity (agency attenuation). A shift from an active agentic position toward a predominantly reactive or objectified mode of functioning, characterised by the dominance of passive coping strategies and diminished self-directed action.

5. Heightened social susceptibility to manipulation. Increased suggestibility, dependence on authoritative figures or group pressure, and the internalisation of a victim role as a dominant behavioural and interpretative pattern.

Vitality in the context of vital security is understood as an integral property of individuals and communities that expresses the human capacity to preserve inner life force, personal integrity, moral autonomy, and subjectivity in boundary situations shaped by existential, social, or security-related threats, as well as to exercise conscious, value-oriented choice in favour of life, dignity, and humanity [12; 13; 15–17].

Within this interpretation, *vitality* appears not merely as a condition of individual survival, but as a fundamental resource of vital security that enables both the individual and society to resist dehumanisation, destructive influences, and systemic crisis processes, while sustaining an orientation toward life as a basic anthropological and axiological foundation [12; 13]. It is precisely through vitality that vital security acquires its anthropocentric content, integrating the inner life

resources of the person with the social, institutional, and cultural mechanisms of their preservation and support.

This conceptual perspective makes it possible to proceed to the analysis of the next key dimension – the interpretation of boundary and vital-crisis situations as a specific indicator of the level of human vitality [6; 8; 12].

Military hostilities, extreme crisis events, disasters, captivity, and experiences of loss create conditions in which the erasure of the boundary between life and death ceases to be a metaphor and becomes an immediate existential reality [8; 12].

Under conditions of radical threat, the problem of vitality acquires particular acuity, as the subject is confronted with the necessity of an existential choice – whether to preserve a life-oriented stance or to submit to the logic of destruction. Boundary situations clearly demonstrate that human life force encompasses the capacity to mobilise not only physical, but also emotional, cognitive, and value-based resources, which collectively constitute the foundations of subjectivity, resilience, and responsible self-determinatio [6; 8; 12].

At the same time, such situations also reveal the limits of human vitality. Constructive modes of experiencing crisis circumstances contribute to the strengthening of resilience, the development of empathy, the consolidation of meaning orientation, and the capacity to support others. Conversely, destructive patterns of response lead to the disintegration of the coherent self, a decline in inner vital tone, the formation of depressive and aggressive reactions, social withdrawal, and the gradual degradation of personality [3; 8; 12].

The foregoing analysis underscores that *vitality is not merely an individual psychological attribute, but also a socially constituted resource* that requires appropriate cultural, axiological, and institutional conditions for its full development and sustainability [10; 11; 12]. This consideration logically leads to a transition from the analysis of boundary situations to an examination of the anti-

vital content of crisis states, which are characterised by a persistent sense of threat, fear, and uncertainty, a diminished capacity for constructive action, and the erosion of moral and value orientations [3; 14].

War, alongside the interconnected humanitarian, socio-economic, demographic, informational-psychological, and existential crises it generates, significantly amplifies the anti-vital impact of contemporary threats, rendering boundary situations an everyday reality. Under these conditions, every act of sustaining vitality acquires not only individual but also social and civilisational significance, as it directly concerns the capacity of individuals and communities to withstand degradation, disintegration, and the erosion of humanistic orientations [10; 12; 13].

In response to the cumulative impact of these crises, a need emerges for a qualitatively distinct approach to security – the concept of vital security. It is grounded in the recognition that the protection of life and physical health constitutes a necessary but insufficient condition for sustainable survival and human development under multifactorial threats [14]. Vital security is therefore oriented toward the preservation of psychological and social integrity, human dignity, the freedom of moral choice, and the individual's capacity to retain subjectivity and agency even under conditions of violence, uncertainty, and prolonged crisis pressure [12; 13; 15–17].

The implementation of such an approach presupposes the integration of legal, medical, psychological, social, and educational mechanisms which, taken together, constitute an infrastructure of resilience for both the individual and society [14]. Vital security thus emerges as a system of safeguards aimed at ensuring that the individual's inner life force is not undermined by war, crises, disasters, or processes of dehumanisation, but instead receives the necessary support and conditions for its preservation and further development [12; 13; 15–17].

Within this framework, special attention is devoted to the conceptualisation of the role of moral integrity and moral autonomy as value-normative foundations shaping the vitality of individuals and communities [9–11; 12].

In philosophical-anthropological terms, moral integrity (*nravstvennist*) is understood as the inner moral core of the personality that determines its capacity to act in accordance with the principles of good, justice, responsibility, and humanity, thereby sustaining a stable orientation toward life under conditions of existential and social threat [10; 11].

Within the European philosophical tradition, this notion is conceptually associated with the German term *Sittlichkeit*, which denotes the ethical life of a community, embedded moral practice, and the integration of individual values into the system of social relations. In contrast to morality understood as a set of externally imposed norms and prescriptions regulating individual conduct alongside legal requirements, *nravstvennist* and moral autonomy — as articulated within the framework of *Sittlichkeit* — express the subject's internal ethical self-determination and capacity for autonomous moral choice [9–11].

From this perspective, human vitality proves to be intrinsically dependent on the axiological and cultural milieu within which it is constituted and exercised, and, consequently, on the overall ethical health of the community. Education and upbringing assume a strategic role in this dimension, insofar as they are directed not merely toward the transmission of knowledge and competencies, but toward the cultivation of worldview orientations, meaning-forming structures, and moral dispositions that constitute the very foundation of vitality and of the capacity to withstand dehumanising influences [10; 11; 16; 17].

Yet under prolonged crisis conditions, one observes not only mechanisms of sustaining and restoring vitality, but also processes of its systematic depletion, structural distortion, and gradual erosion, which engender heightened existential vulnerability in both individuals and communities [3; 14].

Concurrently, the disruption of value-normative foundations, the erosion of *nravstvennist (moral integrity)*, and the degradation of the ethical milieu under conditions of war and multifactorial crises create the conditions for the emergence of a specific state of diminished vitality, which may be analytically conceptualised through the category of vital victimhood. Whereas vitality functions as a resource for the preservation of life, dignity, and subjectivity, its weakening or deformation entails an increased vulnerability of individuals and communities to destructive influences, violence, manipulation, and processes of dehumanisation [12; 13].

Within this analytical framework, vital victimhood is conceptualised as an analytical category denoting both a state and a dynamic process of the erosion or substantial diminution of an individual's inner life force, accompanied by the progressive weakening of moral autonomy, subjectivity, and the capacity for constructive self-determination under conditions of prolonged existential, social, and security-related threats [12; 13].

In the context of vital security, vital victimhood denotes an integral state of heightened existential vulnerability affecting individuals or social groups, manifested in diminished resilience, the loss of meaning orientations, the disorganisation of value structures, and an increased propensity toward passivity, dependency, fear, and the internalisation of the victim role as a dominant mode of responding to crisis influences [12; 13].

From an analytical perspective, the dynamics of the erosion of vitality under conditions of war and multifactorial crises may be represented as a sequential chain of vital-crisis transformations. A vital-crisis situation emerges through the convergence of resource deficits, states of social anomie, and dehumanising influences, leading to the erosion of meaning orientations and the weakening of individual moral autonomy. A further consequence of this process is subjective deactivation – the gradual loss of the capacity for responsible action, self-

determination, and an active life stance — which ultimately culminates in the formation of a state of vital victimhood [3; 12–14].

Conversely, the concept of vital security emerges as a coherent system of mechanisms designed to interrupt this destructive chain [12; 13]. These mechanisms encompass education and upbringing as a formative space for cultivating value-based and meaning-oriented resilience; law as an instrument for safeguarding dignity and subjectivity; psychosocial support as a means of restoring internal resources; and social and humanitarian institutions that establish the conditions necessary for the preservation and regeneration of the life force of individuals and communities [14; 15–17].

It should be emphasised that the proposed concept of vital security fundamentally differs from conventional approaches within the field of human security, including *human security*, *health security*, and concepts of *societal resilience*. Whereas these models predominantly focus on external conditions of protection – such as access to resources, healthcare services, social infrastructure, or the institutional capacity of society to recover – vital security foregrounds the internal anthropological dimension of life preservation.

Its central referent is not merely a safe environment, but rather the capacity of individuals and communities to sustain vital force, moral autonomy, subjectivity, and an orientation toward humanity in boundary and vital-crisis situations. Viewed from this conceptual perspective, vital security complements and deepens existing humanitarian paradigms by integrating institutional mechanisms of protection with the analysis of the existential, value-based, and psychosocial foundations of human resilience [12–17].

Within the classical approaches to victimhood, analytical attention is primarily directed toward criminological or psychological determinants. By contrast, vital victimhood is conceptualised as a multidimensional, anthropocentric phenomenon encompassing the moral–axiological, psychosocial, existential, and secu-

rity-related dimensions of human existence [12; 13]. It emerges not only from individual characteristics, but also under the influence of destructive social processes, crisis-laden environments, and deficits in supportive institutional frameworks [14].

In the architecture of vital security, vital victimhood is conceptualised as an object of targeted governance and preventive intervention [12; 13; 15–17]. This does not imply control over the individual as such, but rather the creation of conditions, mechanisms, and policy frameworks aimed at reducing vital vulnerability, restoring vitality, strengthening moral autonomy, and reactivating the subject's capacity for active, responsible, and life-affirming agency. On this basis, overcoming vital victimhood is identified as one of the key objectives of vital security as a humanitarian-oriented system dedicated to safeguarding life, dignity, and human resilience under contemporary threat conditions [12; 13; 15–17].

In summary, vitality should be understood not merely as a psychological or biological phenomenon, but as an integral anthropological resource that determines the human capacity to preserve subjectivity, dignity, and resilience under conditions of radical threat and multifactorial crisis dynamics [8]. Vital security, in turn, constitutes a systemic framework for the protection and sustained support of this resource at the levels of the individual, the community, and the state [12; 13; 15–17]. Its humanitarian dimension entails the integration of ethical culture, education, and legal, medical, and psychological practices, with the aim of fostering a resilient society capable of withstanding war, dehumanisation, social disintegration, and other global challenges confronting contemporary civilisation [14; 16; 17].

Conclusions.

The present study confirms the achievement of its stated objectives and substantiates vitality as a foundational philosophical and psychological category that determines the resilience of individuals and communities in boundary and

vital-crisis situations, including contexts of violent destructive influence, social destabilisation, and multifactorial crisis threats [8]. The analysis demonstrates that vitality cannot be reduced to psychophysiological parameters of functioning; rather, it constitutes an integral anthropological phenomenon integrating bodily-biological, psycho-emotional, motivational, and moral-value dimensions, thereby enabling the subject to preserve life, inner integrity, dignity, and agency under conditions of radical threat [8; 10].

In addressing the research objectives, the analysis of philosophical-anthropological, psychodynamic, and stress-theoretical approaches demonstrates that vitality, as a multidimensional construct, is closely associated with the phenomena of resilience, adaptive energy, moral autonomy, and existential choice, which collectively constitute the internal resource enabling the individual to "remain on the side of life" under conditions of war and prolonged crisis transformation [3; 8; 14]. It is further clarified that the preservation of vitality depends not solely on the mobilisation of physical and psycho-emotional resources, but equally on the maintenance of value-based orientation and the internal moral coherence of action [9–11].

The study also establishes that boundary situations – including vital-crisis contexts such as war, armed attacks, technological and humanitarian disasters, systemic crisis threats, and the disruption of social environments – function as sensitive indicators of the level of vitality in both individuals and communities. Under such conditions, the differentiation between constructive and destructive modes of experiencing reality becomes especially acute, directly shaping the preservation or erosion of resilience, agency, and the capacity for responsible action [8].

It is theoretically substantiated that prolonged crisis-related, violent, and dehumanising influences may lead to a systemic erosion of vitality, manifested in

a sustained decline in vital tone, semantic contraction, erosion of moral autonomy, deactivation of agency, and increasing social vulnerability [3; 14].

On this basis, the scholarly legitimacy of delineating *vital victimhood* as an analytical category is established, as it captures a condition of diminished vitality and heightened susceptibility of individuals and communities to destructive, manipulative, and dehumanising influences [15–17].

One of the key outcomes of the present study consists in elucidating the relationship between vitality and the concept of vital security. It is demonstrated that the transition from an exclusively individual–psychological understanding of life force toward its interpretation within a security-oriented framework provides the conceptual foundation for the formation of vital security as an integral humanitarian and anthropocentric system aimed at the protection and support of life, dignity, and human psychosocial integrity [12; 13; 15–17]. Such a system integrates internal resources of vitality with legal, educational, psychosocial, and institutional mechanisms for their preservation and sustainable reinforcement.

It has been established that morality and moral integrity (in the sense of *Sittlichkeit*) constitute the core value-normative foundations of vitality, ensuring the internal coherence of life decisions, the capacity for responsible value-based choice, and a stable orientation toward life even under conditions of existential strain [9–11]. Within this perspective, education and upbringing emerge not merely as instruments of knowledge transmission, but as strategic determinants in the cultivation of individual and collective resilience.

In summary, under the contemporary conditions of war and multifactorial crises, vitality manifests not merely as an individual psycho-energetic resource, but as a fundamental anthropological foundation of vital security. It determines the capacity of both individuals and society to withstand dehumanisation, destructive influences, and crisis dynamics, while sustaining an orientation toward life as a basic axiological and existential principle [12; 13; 15–17].

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