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## Chapter 30

YURIY ALEXEYEVICH GAGARIN: HIS UNIQUENESS,  
TYPICALNESS AND WEALTH OF PERSONALITY\*

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An attempt is made to present the synthetic image of the personality of the first cosmonaut on the basis of a scientometric investigation of more than 200 literary sources, published in Cyrillic script (books, articles, comments, notes about and by Y. A. Gagarin).

Yuriy Alexeyevich Gagarin was the first individual to experience the cosmonaut's activity, which is extreme in its physical and psycho-emotional tension. He was the first to outline the moral and psychological parameters of this activity, as well as the necessary and sufficient conditions for its successful realization. It may be stated that Y. A. Gagarin was the first person to play the role of the cosmonaut convincingly; he was also the first to approach the ideal of the first discoverer of space, therefore this qualification has been justifiably granted to him.

In view of the above, it is particularly interesting to study the dialectics of the unique and of the typical, incarnate in his personality, as well as to explicate the law-governed trends in his development as a personality: the change of roles, the repeated testing of his own abilities, the accelerated rates of his individual development, the organic "belonging" of the outstanding personality to the creatively oriented collective, and the tapping and development of the "reserves of the personality." This is a topic which merits the attention of historians, psychologists, ethicists and paedagogues, and which is worthy of future studies by scientists and writers, as well as by "physicists" and "lyricists." It is worthwhile to present the personality of the first cosmonaut in development, outlining at the same time the psychological and value (moral, aesthetic, etc.) dimensions of his activity. In this way it will be possible to reveal the dialectical relations between *individual and collective, the potential and the activity of the individual, the transition from the divided cultures of the present (after C. P. Snow) to the syncretism of the future.*

The written heritage left by Y. A. Gagarin is not large in volume, but it bears the features of the first discovery of the most difficult and prestigious profession of a cosmonaut. In writings by and about Gagarin, it is possible to discover the invari-

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ant and the lasting — that which indisputably has intransigent value. Indeed, the contact of man with space at a new — already practical — level, the materialization of the **Anthropocosmic** views of such great 20th century thinkers as K. E. Tsiolkovsky, V. I. Vernadsky, A. L. Chizhevsky, N. G. Holodny, P. T. de Chardin, Antoine de Saint-Exupery and others, could be achieved only by a great personality, by a personality possessing the best characteristics of 20th century man, but carrying at the same time an outstanding individuality.

Millions of people have listed his qualities both orally and in writing: brave, generous, honest, a man of principle, extremely industrious, a personification of youth, the best among the best, handsome, intelligent, kind, charming, a sportsman, a pilot, "with a princely family and . . . a classical red biography." The American astronauts N. Armstrong, F. Borman and T. Stafford pointed out that he opened the way to Space and called them there.

And nevertheless, has everything important been said about this "Columbus of Space"? Did those who knew him closely and those who evaluated him from a distance reveal all important features of his image? He was simple and cordial, and at the same time unusually complex, concentrated, exacting, conscientious and with a sense of responsibility; he had his joys and victories, his sadness and his sorrows, his revelations as discoverer, and his mistakes. Incidentally, self-criticism and a serious attitude about his own mistakes were among his most remarkable merits. The Editor-in-Chief of the Molodaya Gvardia Publishing House at that time tells how Gagarin and Lebedev brought him the manuscript of "Psychology and Space" and how Gagarin later thanked him for the manly frankness of his criticism. The further work of the authors on the manuscript indicates that they had made creative use of the strict, critical notes.

The qualities of Gagarin listed above were already an intrinsic part of the wealth of his personality, even at the time of his valiant confrontation with the unknown during his spaceflight. Later he gave an example of modesty when he shouldered the burden of world fame. In his confrontation he preserved himself: his simplicity, frankness, cordiality, generosity, and friendly concern.

The formation of all these qualities should be traced throughout his entire life. At each stage in his development, he had to overcome the inertia of life. He could continue working at the foundry, or he could remain an instructor of parachutists, a fighter-pilot or a test-pilot. And he would have worked with dignity at any of these posts. But every change was for him yet another *test of his abilities and acceleration of the rates* of his perfection as a personality. Thus, he was gradually transformed into a symbol of the multidimensionality and of the ever growing rates of our present era.

At the same time, it is not hard to claim that Gagarin's qualities referred to are not unique at all. On the contrary, they are multiple and invariant; they are typical of Soviet young people, of young people all over the world, of the discoverers who had the courage to link reality and fantasy, the present and the future, hard work and creative enthusiasm. It is remarkable that *all* cosmonauts and modern space researchers are consciously trying to learn from him and are persistently at-

tempting to reproduce in themselves his best qualities. This has been stated by all cosmonauts. Here we cite some comments by the first Bulgarian cosmonaut Georgi Ivanov: "Yuriy Gagarin lit the torch of man's irresistible striving toward Space"; "the fact performed by Yuriy Gagarin is the materialization of the highest achievements of Soviet science and technology, of the Soviet people, of real socialism and of human reason"; "the first spaceflight of Yuriy Gagarin was a triumph of optimists. Man had coped successfully with the conditions of the unusual, unknown and dangerous Space" (G. Ivanov, Notes of a Cosmonaut. Sofia, pp.13, 209, 17).

Scientists and writers, "physicists" and "lyricists" from many countries will undoubtedly investigate the unusual life of Yuriy Gagarin, analyzing every line written by him and studying photographs and documents. He will undoubtedly have an impact on space researchers, on travelers, on fantasists, on creative individuals, on those who love the fight of the frail man against the elements, and on all those who want to discover man's real potential! Thus Yuriy Gagarin will remain the eternal symbol of the organically intertwined dream and reality, individual and collective, present and future, work and creativity, youth and wisdom. And the more seriously, deeply and multilaterally we investigate Gagarin's work, his heroism and his qualities, the more effective they will pulse in and through us.