

UNITED WISDOM

Can One Stay Consistent While Changing One's View of Oneself?

Human Nature and Inner World

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Can One Stay Consistent While Changing One's View of Oneself?

> *“A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines.”*
>
> *Ralph Waldo Emerson, Self-Reliance (Essays, First Series): Project Gutenberg #2944.*

What this article is about

For years a person said one thing about themselves, and then stopped seeing themselves that way. What now becomes of their earlier words, promises and principles: are they inconsistent? The word consistency usually mixes two demands: fidelity to what I used to say about myself, and fidelity to what I was saying it for. This article separates them.

We read Emerson and Nietzsche, who defend the right to change one's views; Confucius, who distinguishes firmness in what is right from obstinacy; the Gospel parable of the two sons; and a psalm and the Qur'an, from which a strong objection follows: one keeps one's word even to one's own hurt. Then the research: how stable adults' values are, how people adjust their opinions to what they have done, how the norm of consistency differs across cultures, what is known about the connection with one's future self and about deliberate self-change. The article's conclusion is the authors' argument, not a tested method. The example below is invented by the authors.

I. Two kinds of consistency

The word consistency hides two different demands, and confusing them makes a change in one's view of oneself more painful than it needs to be. A hypothetical example: for ten years a man called himself "not the kind who changes jobs", and it was true: he valued stability, his team, long projects. Then he realized that he had long wanted something else, and accepted an offer from another company. Next to the joy there is unease: what about the promise he gave his team to see the project through to launch?

He feels inconsistent in two places at once, although these are different things. The first is a self-description: "I'm not the kind who...". The second is a commitment: the team was told that the project would be finished. In our reading, consistency here has two different objects. One can be faithful to one's earlier words about oneself, to how one used to describe oneself. Or one can be faithful to what those words were said for: the values behind them and the people

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to whom something was promised. The first demand easily turns into obstinacy. The second into what the psalm, the Qur'an and the *Analects*, each in its own frame, value as faithfulness.

We find a kindred thought in Confucius: “The superior man is correctly firm, and not firm merely.” (*Analects*, Book XV, ch. 36, translated by James Legge, Project Gutenberg #4094). Firmness in itself is not yet a virtue; what matters is what a person is firm in.

Below we test this distinction from several sides: first with those who defend the right to change one's views, then with those who demand that one keep one's word, and finally against psychologists' data. We do not settle here the question of what makes a person the same through change: we are interested not in identity but in what a person is bound to keep when their view of themselves changes.

II. Emerson against foolish consistency

Emerson attacks not every consistency but fidelity to one's own earlier words, and at the same time he believes in a deeper constancy of character. In the essay *Self-Reliance* he asks why one should keep looking back at what one once said in public, afraid of contradicting oneself, and what harm there is if one does. The sentence used as our epigraph stands right here. It is followed by the advice: “Speak what you think now in hard words and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said to-day.” (Project Gutenberg #2944).

The word foolish matters. Emerson does not call for chaos. Right after this he writes that no one can violate his own nature, and that a character is like an acrostic: read it forward, backward or across, it says the same thing (paraphrase). And in the next paragraph comes the image of a ship that sails in a zigzag of many tacks and still keeps a general course; we will return to it at the end.

In our reading, Emerson separates the consistency of words from the consistency of character. He considers the first a false virtue: it makes a person defend yesterday's opinion only because it was his own. He assumes the second as a given: what is honestly done at different times will add up to one line, even if the person does not notice it.

The limit matters here. In the passage we read, Emerson speaks about the opinions and actions of a free person, not about promises to other people. His advice to say something else tomorrow concerns what a person thinks, not what he owes someone. So Emerson helps with the first half of our distinction, the self-descriptions, but says nothing about the second. The argument "I now think differently" justifies a new opinion, but it does not cancel a given word; to understand what to do about the word, we need other texts.

III. Obstinacy and constancy in Confucius

The *Analects* both value constancy and rank low those who keep every word at any price. The disciple Tsze-kung asks who deserves to be called a worthy officer. The highest rank belongs to one who keeps a sense of shame in himself and, sent in any direction, does not disgrace his prince's commission. The next belongs to one whom his relatives call a filial son and his fellow villagers a good younger brother (paraphrase of Legge's translation).

Only the third rank goes to those of whom it is said: “They are determined to be sincere in what they say, and to carry out what they do. They are obstinate little men.” (Book XIII, ch. 20, translated by Legge). Still, the Master adds, perhaps even they can be counted in the next rank. Fidelity to every word spoken is not a vice here, but it is not the highest step either.

Two chapters later comes a thought that seems to point the other way. Confucius approves a southern saying that a man without constancy cannot even be a wizard or a doctor, and adds that one who is inconstant in his virtue will meet with disgrace (Book XIII, ch. 22, paraphrase). And already in the first book: “When you have faults, do not fear to abandon them.” (Book I, ch. 8; the same in Book IX, ch. 24).

In our reading, there is no contradiction if the objects are distinguished. The *Analects* require constancy in virtue, in what a person lives and serves for. Obstinately carrying out every spoken word turns out to be the lowest step: better than nothing, but short of a judgment about what is right. And abandoning a fault is not a betrayal of oneself but work on oneself. Hence the meaning of the sentence on firmness with which we began: one should be firm in what is right.

The limit of the comparison: Confucius speaks of the officer and the order of his own time, and the word in chapter XIII.20 is a general principle of conduct, not necessarily an oath. Applying these ranks to present-day promises is our move.

IV. "I will not", and then he went

The Gospel parable of the two sons judges not by fidelity to what was said but by what was done. In the Gospel of Matthew (21:28–31) a father asks his two sons to go and work in the vineyard. Of the first it is said: “He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.” (Matt. 21:29, King James Version, Project Gutenberg #10; the Russian edition of this article quotes the Russian Synodal translation, azbyka.ru). The second agreed, and did not go. Asked which of the two did the will of his father, the listeners answer: the first (paraphrase).

By the measure of fidelity to words, both are inconsistent: one refused and went, the other agreed and did not go. The parable measures differently, by who in the end did what he was asked. The second son is the mirror case: his answer was the right one, and he never took it

back aloud, but the deed never came. Flawless fidelity to words without the deed does not convince the parable. In our reading, the change in the first son is not betrayal but correction: an earlier answer is revoked for the sake of what really matters. The key word here is repented. He did not simply change his mind; he acknowledged that his first word was wrong.

For our topic this means that the earlier "I will not" does not bind by itself. What binds is something else: the relationship to the father and to the work he asked for. If a change of view brings a person closer to doing what they owe, it does not break consistency but restores it.

The limit: the parable is addressed to those who did not believe John the Baptist, and right after it we read that tax collectors and harlots believed John, while the listeners, even after seeing this, did not repent and believe him (Matt. 21:32, paraphrase). It is a parable about repentance and faith, not about changing a self-description. Applying it to a change in one's view of oneself is our interpretation, and it rests on a single feature of the parable: the deed matters more than the first word.

V. The objection: an oath to one's own hurt

The strongest objection comes from texts for which keeping one's word is a mark of righteousness, even when it is costly. Psalm 15 (Psalm 14 in the Russian Synodal numbering) lists who will abide in the Lord's tabernacle, and among them names this one: “He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.” (Ps. 15:4, King James Version, Project Gutenberg #10).

In the Qur'an (16:91–92) believers are told to be faithful to the covenant of God, not to break their oaths once they have pledged them, and not to be “like her who unravelleth the thread which she had strongly spun” (translated by J. M. Rodwell, Project Gutenberg #2800), that is, not to break oaths in bad faith because one community has become more numerous than another (paraphrase of the context).

This objection cannot be dismissed in a sentence. Both the psalm and the sura say that an oath once given does not stop binding because circumstances or advantage have changed. Without this, in our view, trust is hard to imagine. But let us look at what kind of word is meant. In both texts it is an oath and a covenant, that is, an obligation to others and before God. Neither text requires a person to keep their description of themselves forever.

Hence the distinction on which this article rests. "I'm not the kind who changes jobs" is a self-description: nobody took it as a promise, and nobody relied on it. "I will see this project through to launch" is a commitment: people rely on it. In our reading, a change in one's view of oneself cancels the first and does not cancel the second. If a commitment can no longer be kept, it is not unravelled silently like thread, but renegotiated openly, with those to whom it was given. This is our working criterion, not a conclusion drawn by the texts themselves: the psalm

and the sura speak of oaths in a religious context, and a work promise is not an oath before God. We take from them only the principle: an obligation to others outweighs a change of calculation.

VI. The right to change one's views

Other texts defend changing one's views as the condition of a living mind, but they too speak of opinions, not of promises. In *The Dawn of Day* (Book V, § 573, *Casting One's Skin*) Nietzsche writes: “The snake that cannot cast its skin perishes. So too with those minds which are prevented from changing their views: they cease to be minds.” (translated by J. M. Kennedy, Project Gutenberg #39955).

Montaigne, in the chapter *Of the Inconstancy of Our Actions*, starts from inconstancy as the ordinary human condition: there is, he writes, “as much difference betwixt us and ourselves as betwixt us and others” (*Essays*, Book II, ch. 1, translated by Charles Cotton, Project Gutenberg #3600). Whitman accepts this without regret: “Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself, (I am large, I contain multitudes.)” (*Song of Myself*, section 51, Project Gutenberg #1322).

In our reading, Nietzsche and Whitman defend a person's right not to coincide with their earlier opinions and descriptions, while Montaigne does not defend this non-coincidence but describes it as the ordinary human condition. Nietzsche turns this into an almost biological rule: a mind forbidden to change stops being a mind. Montaigne offers a sceptical observation from which any judgment about people should start. Whitman offers a poetic affirmation of fullness, in which contradiction is not an error but room to move.

But none of the passages we read says that promises to others are cancelled along with an opinion. The snake sheds its skin, not those around it. The limit: Nietzsche and Montaigne write about opinions and manners, Whitman about himself as a poet; none of them discusses agreements. Another article in this series uses Montaigne and Whitman for a different question, the different versions of oneself shown to different people; here the subject is consistency over time.

VII. How stable adults' values are

If what a person gave their word for is their values, it helps to know how much values change in adults at all. Ingmar Leijen, Hester van Herk and Anat Bardi (2022) followed the values of 1,599 residents of the Netherlands over 12 years, across seven waves of one panel from 2008 to 2020; at the start the participants were aged 16 to 84.

The order of importance of values within one person was, on average, noticeably preserved: the average similarity coefficient between the 2008 and 2020 profiles was about 0.6, and the

authors call values quite stable. A person's position relative to others on a single value was preserved more moderately: the average rank-order correlation over 12 years was 0.44. The youngest generation changed most, the baby-boom generation least; with older age, in the authors' words, changes become negligible. Some values, achievement, conformity and hedonism, did not change on average in any generation. At the same time, over those 12 years the importance of security and universalism rose on average in all generations, and the need for stimulation declined; the authors allow that events in the country during these years also played a part.

The limits are named by the authors. This is one country and one panel. Only those who took part in all seven waves were included, about a quarter of the original sample, which may have pulled it away from being representative. Values were measured with items from another scale mapped onto the Schwartz framework. And most important for us: the study speaks about values, not about self-descriptions.

Hence a cautious hypothesis, not a conclusion. In our reading, what changes with a "new view of oneself" may turn out to be the description rather than what the person values. If so, a commitment that grew out of a value survives a change of description more easily than it seems at the moment of change. This hypothesis is worth testing on oneself rather than taking on faith.

VIII. When an opinion is adjusted to an action

Consistency can also be reached the other way round, by changing an opinion so that it matches what has already been done. Sebastian Cancino-Montecinos, Fredrik Björklund and Torun Lindholm (2018) asked Stockholm University students who opposed a proposal to cut student aid by 20 percent for every failed exam to write an essay in its favour, supposedly at the university's request. Everyone agreed. Opinion of the proposal was measured several days before the essay, right after it and about a week later; 106 of the 127 people recruited were included in the analysis.

On average, after the essay, attitudes toward the proposal became more favourable, and the shift persisted a week later. But not everyone moved: 38.7 percent of participants came to view the proposal more favourably, 55.7 percent did not change their opinion, and 5.7 percent came to view it less favourably. The more positive feelings participants reported while writing, the more their opinion changed. The authors stress that their data do not show whether these feelings and the change of opinion arise at the same time or one after the other.

All participants wrote the essay, and opinions were compared before and after. So, in our reading, these data cannot tell how much of the shift the essay itself produced: the study had no group without an essay. The authors themselves describe the shift as a way of reducing the

inner contradiction between conviction and action. In their first study, run online with an essay on animal testing, opinion before the essay was not measured, and the authors acknowledge that it cannot show whether there was any change at all; this is why we rely on the second.

For our topic this is a warning. A "new view of oneself" may be not a discovery but a justification of what has already been done: the opinion is pulled toward the action, and the person calls this consistency. The limit: a laboratory essay is not a life decision or a promise, and the students of one university are not all people.

IX. Consistency is not the same everywhere

The very demand to choose according to one's preferences sounds different in different cultures and may depend on the presence of others. Yukiko Uchida and colleagues (2017) asked 42 students in the US and 51 participants from two Japanese universities to rate how much they liked everyday items, cups, umbrellas, shirts, and then to choose one item from each set of four. After each choice participants indicated whether it had been easy or difficult; for some of them, assigned at random, schematic faces, a smiling one and a frowning one, appeared next to these options.

Americans overall more often chose what they themselves had rated higher. Japanese participants chose more in line with their ratings when they saw the faces; for Americans the face condition did not change consistency. In an additional online survey of 376 Japanese and 372 Americans, the Americans agreed more strongly both that it is important to choose according to one's preferences and that being inconsistent in front of others means losing face; the difference between the countries was larger for the second. The authors read this as meaning that Japanese people are not much concerned about whether others see a gap between their preferences and their choices. The mechanism of the faces' effect, they admit, remained unclear. They also recall another study in which similar subtle cues, on the contrary, reduced the consistency of choice with preference among participants from India.

In our reading, the demand to be consistent is not a universal norm of one kind. In some cultural contexts, choosing in line with one's own preference is a familiar value. In others it showed up more strongly when others were present, even drawn ones. A person tormented by the reproach of inconsistency may find it useful to ask whose norm this is and before whom they are keeping it.

The limit: everyday items and small student samples in the experiment; the study says nothing about life commitments or about changing one's view of oneself.

X. A promise and the future self

A commitment is a decision that binds one's future self, and psychologists have studied how the sense of connection with one's future self relates to the willingness to wait. Ying Yang and colleagues (2024) in their first study surveyed 370 young people aged 18 to 35. The more strongly a person felt connected to themselves ten years ahead, through similarity, vividness of the image and liking for it, the less often they preferred a smaller sum now to a larger sum later in money choices. The authors report this correlation as significant ($r \approx -0.16$) and do not rate its size; by our estimate it is weak. In the authors' model the association was statistically significant only at high self-concept clarity, and not at low clarity.

In the second study, 234 of the 262 students recruited read a text saying that a person's moral qualities, personality, beliefs and values do not change substantially over the years, or a text saying that they do, and then listed in writing the similarities or the differences between their present self and themselves ten years ahead. Those prompted to look for similarities then chose the immediate smaller sum less often on average. In the authors' full model this link ran statistically through a questionnaire measure of how much a person, at that moment, thinks about the future consequences of their actions; this measure was not manipulated in the experiment, and the indirect path was significant only at high self-concept clarity.

Limits: these are money choices on a questionnaire and a computer, not promises to people, and the samples are young. The authors themselves name the restriction to the monetary domain and suggest testing other kinds of choice.

In our reading, there is an indirect lesson here for our topic. When a person tells themselves a story of radical change, "I'm a completely different person now", it may be harder for them to stand by decisions made for the sake of the future. This is a hypothesis, not a conclusion from the data: the study examined neither promises nor changes in one's view of oneself. If it is right, it is worth saying aloud what in the new self remains from the old one: our guess is that commitments hold better when their owner sees in himself the one who made them.

XI. Changing by decision

If one's view of oneself changes, one wants the person to change along with it; a systematic review gives a cautious answer: deliberate changes in personality traits seem to be possible, but the wish alone may not be enough for them. Peter Haehner, Amanda Jo Wright and Wiebke Bleidorn (2024) brought together 30 studies of deliberate personality trait change published in 2014–2024. The samples were students or volunteers, about 26 years old on average, and slightly more than half were from the US.

The wish to change without any help, according to the authors' summary, appears to be linked to small changes, and the findings here are mixed. In some studies the wish could be linked to changes only in some traits, and in a few the wish to become more conscientious even coincided with change in the opposite direction. Programmes that helped people change, with goal setting, finding resources, reflection and behavioural tasks, produced an average effect of about d = 0.22 in the desired direction in before-and-after comparisons. The authors take this as evidence that the programmes work and offer comparisons: it is about five times larger than ordinary change over the same period and one and a half times larger than with the wish alone, without a programme (d = 0.14), but apparently smaller than in psychotherapy (d = 0.37); the 95 percent confidence interval of the estimate runs from 0.005 to 0.433. Some programmes worked, others did not, and some led to unwanted changes. Follow-up observation existed in only a few studies, and there, according to the authors' exploratory analysis, the changes persisted. In two studies close others of the participants also noticed the changes, although in their ratings the changes looked smaller than in self-reports.

The authors warn that the literature is young, that programme effects were estimated by before-and-after comparisons rather than against control groups, and that the samples are young and affluent, from the US and Europe. The review is published under a CC BY-NC-ND licence; by the rules of our series we only paraphrase such works.

In our reading, the consequence for our topic is this: a new view of oneself is not yet a new person. Between the decision and the change lies time, and the commitments given during that time do not go anywhere.

XII. The limits of the conclusion

The distinction between commitments and self-descriptions is the authors' argument; the data we read did not test it. None of the studies we read compared how others judge a person who changed their view of themselves but kept their promises with one who holds on to the old description. We speak about trust from others only as authors. Nor does our criterion settle cases where commitments collide: keeping one promise means breaking another. Such conflicts call for a separate discussion, above all with the people to whom the promises were made.

The data we relied on are each narrow in their own way: values come from one country; the adjustment of opinion from student essays without a comparison group; culture from choices of everyday items; the future self from money decisions; deliberate change from a young literature with before-and-after estimates. None of the studies examined directly what happens to commitments when a person changes their view of themselves. Nor do we make claims about how accurately people predict their own future changes: we have no support we have read on that.

We deliberately left two topics aside. The first is what makes a person the same through change: that is the question of the criteria of identity, and another article in the series is devoted to it. The second is the Buddhist view of the changing person and the consequences of their earlier actions: it is treated in the series article on anatman and the continuity of experience, and it is absent here by design.

Finally, the traditions we compared answer different questions. Emerson and Nietzsche defend freedom of opinion, the psalm and the sura the sanctity of the oath, Confucius the judgment of what is right, the parable repentance. They cannot be reduced to one teaching; from each we take only the feature that clarifies our question.

What this means in practice

Below is the authors' working sequence, which follows from the distinction between commitments and self-descriptions. These steps have not been tested in research.

1. Divide your former self into two lists. In the first, self-descriptions: "I'm not the kind who...", "I'm a person who...". In the second, commitments: what was promised, to whom and until when, and who relies on it.

2. Self-descriptions may be revised. They belong to you, and changing them is not betrayal. As in the parable of the two sons, what you do now matters more than what you once said about yourself.

3. A change of view does not cancel commitments to people. If they can no longer be kept, do not unravel the thread silently: tell those to whom the promise was made, and agree anew.

4. Ask yourself whether you are fitting the new view to what you have already done. In a laboratory study some people, after an action, shifted their opinion toward it; this does not prove that you are doing the same, but the question is useful.

5. Name what connects your present self with who you will be in a few years: which values you want to keep. In a study of money decisions, a sense of similarity with one's future self went together with greater willingness to wait; applying this to promises is our move.

6. Do not expect a new view of yourself to make you different by itself. The wish to change alone, according to a summary of the research, appears to be linked only to small changes, while programmes with tasks produced a somewhat larger average effect, in before-and-after comparisons rather than against control groups.

What not to expect. The distinction between commitments and self-descriptions does not give the right to revise promises as soon as they become inconvenient: this is exactly what the psalm and the sura oppose. Nor does it require keeping a description of oneself that has

stopped being true. If a change in your view of yourself is painful and gets in the way of life, it is sensible to consult a doctor or psychologist. If thoughts of harming yourself arise, seek help right away, and in immediate danger contact the emergency services of your country.

The man in our example can let go of the phrase "I'm not the kind who changes jobs": it was a description, not a promise. The promise to the team is another matter. He can keep it by seeing the project through to launch before he leaves, or renegotiate it honestly together with the team. In both cases he remains consistent in what he gave his word for.

Key quotation

> *“The voyage of the best ship is a zigzag line of a hundred tacks. See the line from a sufficient distance, and it straightens itself to the average tendency.”*
>
> *Ralph Waldo Emerson, Self-Reliance (Essays, First Series): Project Gutenberg #2944.*

The quotation sums up the first half of the distinction: consistency shows in the overall line, not in each tack, and a change of course does not yet mean a loss of direction. It does not follow that the course may be changed at someone else's expense: Emerson speaks of character and opinions, while promises to others hold differently, which is what the psalm, the sura and the second half of the article are about.

Connections between traditions

Comparison (side A ↔ side B)	Meeting point (similarity)	Essential limit
Emerson, *Self-Reliance* ↔ Nietzsche, *The Dawn of Day*, § 573	The right to change one's opinion is the condition of a living mind: for Emerson foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, for Nietzsche a mind that is not allowed to change its views stops being a mind	Emerson speaks of self-reliance and assumes a deep constancy of character; Nietzsche gives the image of shedding skin, without a doctrine of character; neither discusses promises to others
Analects, XV.36 and XIII.20 ↔ Ps. 15:4 (KJV)	Both sides speak of firmness in one's word	The limit is essential: in Confucius, carrying out every word without fail belongs to the third rank of officers, and firmness is valued only in what is right; in the psalm, an oath kept to one's own hurt is a mark of the righteous
Matt. 21:29 (KJV) ↔ *Analects*, I.8	Abandoning an earlier word or a fault as correction, not betrayal	In the parable, repentance before the Father in the context of believing John the Baptist; in Confucius, a rule of self-cultivation for the officer
Qur'an 16:92 (tr. Rodwell) ↔ Ps. 15:4	An oath once given is not broken because advantage has changed	The sura speaks of the covenant of God and of oaths broken in bad faith because one people is more numerous than another; the psalm of one person's oath; both texts concern an oath before God, not a self-description
Montaigne, *Essays*, II.1 ↔ Whitman, *Song of Myself*, 51	Inconstancy is a given of human life: there is “as much difference betwixt us and ourselves as betwixt us and others”; “I contain multitudes”	Montaigne draws a sceptical conclusion about judging people; Whitman accepts contradiction as fullness; neither speaks of commitments

Comparison (side A ↔ side B)	Meeting point (similarity)	Essential limit
Emerson, *Self-Reliance* (the image of the ship) ↔ Leijen, van Herk, Bardi, 2022	Constancy is visible from a distance: for Emerson the zigzag straightens to the average tendency; in the data the order of adults' values was, on average, preserved over 12 years (average profile similarity about 0.6; the authors call values quite stable)	Emerson speaks of character and actions; the study measured values by survey in one country, the average rank-order correlation of a single value over 12 years was 0.44, and it says nothing about self-descriptions
Matt. 21:29 ↔ Cancino-Montecinos and colleagues, 2018	Word and deed diverge, and one of them is brought into line with the other	In the parable the son changes his deed and does his father's will; in the study, after the essay some students shifted their opinion toward what they had written, and there was no comparison with a group without an essay

The table compares only the passages indicated. Shared motifs do not mean a shared teaching, and we do not claim any historical connection between the traditions. We deliberately leave out the Buddhist side: a separate article in the series treats it. The studies give sample averages; they should be applied to an individual with care.

Primary sources

The texts of the traditions were read in copies from Project Gutenberg and azbyka.ru; the English quotations are given in the editions listed, and the Russian edition of this article quotes Matt. 21:29 in the Russian Synodal translation. The research articles were read in full text (Europe PMC copies; the review by Haehner and colleagues in a PMC copy), and the findings were taken from the methods, results, discussion and limitations sections, not from the abstracts. The example is the authors' own.

1. Emerson R. W. Essays, First Series: Self-Reliance (Project Gutenberg #2944). The paragraphs of the essay around the words on foolish consistency: the preceding one (why look back at what was said before), that paragraph itself, the next one (character as an acrostic) and the paragraph after it (the image of the ship).

2. The Bible, Russian Synodal translation: Matthew 21 (azbyka.ru). Verses 28–32; quoted in the Russian edition of this article.

3. The Holy Bible, King James Version (Project Gutenberg #10). Psalm 15:1–5 (Psalm 14 in the Russian Synodal numbering); Matthew 21:28–31.

4. Confucius. The Chinese Classics, vol. 1: Confucian Analects, tr. J. Legge (Project Gutenberg #4094). Book I, ch. 8; Book IX, ch. 24; Book XIII, ch. 20–22; Book XV, ch. 36.

5. Nietzsche F. The Dawn of Day, tr. J. M. Kennedy (Project Gutenberg #39955). Book V, § 573, Casting One's Skin.

6. Montaigne M. de. Essays — Complete, tr. Ch. Cotton, ed. W. C. Hazlitt (Project Gutenberg #3600). Book II, ch. I, Of the Inconstancy of Our Actions.

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9. Leijen I., van Herk H., Bardi A. Individual and generational value change in an adult population, a 12-year longitudinal panel study. Scientific Reports, 2022, 12 (PMC9596497). Method, results, discussion, limitations; LISS panel, 1,599 people, seven waves; CC BY 4.0.

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Tags

Consistency, view of oneself, self-description, commitment, promise, keeping one's word, changing one's views, foolish consistency, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Self-Reliance, Confucius, Analects, firmness in what is right, obstinacy, constancy in virtue, parable of the two sons, Gospel of Matthew, repentance, Psalm 15, oath, Qur'an, sura The Bee, covenant, Friedrich Nietzsche, The Dawn of Day, Montaigne, inconstancy, Walt Whitman, stability of values, cognitive dissonance, fitting opinion to action, cultural differences, preference-choice consistency, future self, self-concept clarity, deliberate personality change.

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